Intégrité: A Faith and Learning Journal

Editor
John J. Han, Missouri Baptist University

Editorial Review Board
Matthew Bardowell, Missouri Baptist University   Todd C. Ream, Taylor University
C. Clark Triplett, Missouri Baptist University

Advisory Board
Bob Agee, Oklahoma Baptist University & Union University
Jane Beal, University of La Verne   Andy Chambers, Missouri Baptist University
Jerry Deese, Missouri Baptist University   Arlen Dykstra, Missouri Baptist University
Hyun-Sook Kim, Yonsei University   Darren J. N. Middleton, Texas Christian University
Janice Neuleib, Illinois State University

Editorial Assistants
Mary Ellen Fuquay   Ethan King

Webmaster
Katlyn Moncada

Intégrité: A Faith and Learning Journal (ISSN 1547-0474 and 1547-0873) is published in spring and fall by the Faith & Learning Committee and the Humanities Division of Missouri Baptist University, One College Park Dr., St. Louis, Missouri 63141. Published both online <http://www.mobap.edu/integrite/> and in print copy, the journal examines historical, philosophical, theological, cultural, and pedagogical issues related to the integration of Christian faith and higher learning. All submissions are critically reviewed for content and substance by the editor and the editorial review board; in some cases, scholars in specific fields are invited to evaluate manuscripts. The opinions expressed by individual writers in this journal are not necessarily endorsed by the editor, editorial board, or Missouri Baptist University. Intégrité (pronounced IN tay gri tay) is a French word translated into English as “totality,” “integrity,” “honesty,” “uprightness,” or “integration.” In his doctrine of the Christian life, John Calvin considered “intégrité” as whole-hearted or integrated commitment to God. A Christian with such a commitment aims for single-minded devotion in Christ. Publication of the print edition of Intégrité has been made possible by funding from Missouri Baptist University.

SUBMISSIONS: Submissions of scholarly articles, short essays, review articles, book reviews, and poems are welcome. Send your work as an e-mail attachment (Microsoft Word format) to the editor, John J. Han, at john.han@mobap.edu. We accept submissions all year round. For detailed submission guidelines, see the last two pages of this journal.

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BOOKS FOR REVIEW: Intégrité subscriptions, renewals, address changes, and books for review should be mailed to John J. Han, Editor of Intégrité, Missouri Baptist University, One College Park Dr., St. Louis, Missouri 63141. Phone: (314) 392-2311/Fax: (314) 434-7596. Subscription rates: Individuals $10 per year; institutions $20 per year. An additional shipping fee ($5-15 per year) is charged for international subscription.

INDEXING: Intégrité is listed in the Southern Baptist Periodical Index and the Christian Periodical Index.

Volume 17, Number 2, Fall 2018
© 2018 Missouri Baptist University. All rights reserved.
ARTICLES

3  Scenes of Patristic Life: Contemporary Literature and the First Christian Theologians
   Darren J. N. Middleton

15  Theological Roots of the Abolitionist Movement in Frederick Douglass’s “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” and Angelina Grimké’s “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South”
   Mark Eckel

   Jane Beal

THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

39  Literature and the Limits of Materialism
   Matthew Bardowell

44  Hospitality: A Mark of Christian Higher Education
   Aaron Lumpkin

BOOK REVIEWS

50  John G. Palfrey. Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces: Diversity and Free Expression in Education.
   Jessica Martin

52  Alan Noble. Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age.
   Julie Ooms

   Julie Ooms
    Matthew R. Bardowell

    C. Clark Triplett

    C. Clark Triplett

POEMS

72  “Mother to Son” and “After Caravaggio’s *The Crucifixion of St. Peter*”
    Paulette Guerin

73  “It’s One in the Morning” and other poems
    Mark Tappmeyer

77  Medieval Bestiary Poems
    Jane Beal

83  Harold Bell Wright’s Two Ozarks Novels: Introductions, Haiku Summaries, and Shepherd of the Hills Photos
    John J. Han

97  NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

100 CALL FOR PAPERS AND BOOK REVIEWS
Scenes of Patristic Life: Contemporary Literature and the First Christian Theologians

Darren J. N. Middleton

Introduction

By re-telling the situations and re-creating the contexts within which Christian theologians emerged and their doctrinal formulations developed, historical novelists and literary hagiographers have been introducing lay Christians to their faith’s forebears since the nineteenth century. Such stories have tried to caution as well as educate the faithful. During the Victorian era, for example, successful Christian romances acquainted devoted readers with the early and sometimes cold-hearted thinkers who formed standard theological belief. A pivotal player in the Council of Ephesus in 431, Cyril of Alexandria serves as both protagonist and antagonist in Charles Kingsley’s *Hypatia, or New Foes with an Old Face* (1853). Here, Cyril acts as an intelligent patriarch eager to solve the Christological controversies of his time, and yet he also instigates the salacious mob that murders Hypatia, ancient Alexandria’s most famous female philosopher. Kingsley’s fiction warns against church corruption, then, even as it teaches about the messy making of Christian doctrine in one of the three Christian capitals in the early church (Uffelman).

Christian historical fictions also promote the idea that the right sort of reading can fortify as well as educate and caution believers. Blessed John Henry Newman’s *Callista: A Sketch of the Third Century* (1855) connects Christian integrity in the throes of frenzied mid-third century persecution under Emperor Decius, for example, with the gritty resolve of the then-fraught English Roman Catholic community in the 1850s. If Kingsley’s story stirred up anti-Catholic sentiment, and literary critics now admit this intended effect, then Newman’s tale acted as a lively rejoinder. *Callista* appealed to the risky yet noble lives of the early Christians as a way to encourage as well as reassure Newman’s embattled flock. Victorian Catholics studied *Callista*, in other words, and in time the novel’s alchemy of originality, realism, and priestly care worked its strange magic and inspired the religious to proceed out from reading and into informed, active discipleship (Dorman; Hill).

Similar novels—from Louis de Wohl’s *The Restless Flame: A Novel about Saint Augustine* (1951) to Arlon Stubbe’s *Apple of Gold, Settings of Silver: A Novel Based on the Life and Times of St. John Chrysostom* (2013)—have appeared in the last century and our own, each one just as eager as those of former times to show that past Christian lives can engage today’s faithful (Middleton 2018). De Wohl’s work serves as an instructive instance of this aim and trend. After World War II, de Wohl converted to Catholicism and, in short order, he surveyed Europe’s ruins and questioned the relevance of the lives of the Catholic saints. “Soon enough I discovered that the problems of the saints – and all around them – were the problems of our own time, and that they and only they were able to solve them. Who of us has not heard the rubbish about ‘Christianity having failed’ or ‘Christianity no longer being modern’? That was exactly what Emperor Julian the Apostate thought and it was St. Athanasius who put him right. So I wrote my novel *Imperial Renegade*,” de Wohl remarks. Until he died in 1961, de Wohl wrote like a man on a mission, publishing one Christian historical fiction after another. He continues:
We all worry about the danger from the East. So did the Western world when Attila, King of the Huns, broke into Germany, France and Italy, until Pope Leo I stopped him and his huge army single-handed. So I wrote my novel *Throne of the World*. The most vital necessity of our time is the rediscovery of the Cross in our hearts. So I wrote *The Living Wood*, the story of St. Helena who rediscovered the True Cross. Then, in May of 1948, I went to Rome, had my first audience with that living saint, the Holy Father, and asked him whom he wanted me to write about next! He said “St. Thomas Aquinas.” Two years later I gave him the finished book, *The Quiet Light*, and asked him for his next order. This time he said “Write about the history and the mission of the Church in the world.”

And that will keep me busy as long as I live. So far it has resulted in my novels on St. Augustine (*The Restless Flame*), St. Ignatius Loyola (*The Golden Thread*), and St. Longinus (*The Spear*). My most recent book, *The Last Crusader*, is not the story of a saint, although St. Pius V appears in it too at a decisive moment. But it certainly is dealing with “the history and the mission of the Church in the world,” and it gives an example of the importance of the lay apostolate so dear to the Holy Father. Besides it shows a decisive phase in the struggle against Islam—a struggle that is by no means at an end as the latest developments go to show!

De Wohl’s publisher, Ignatius Press, reports that his stories continue to sell, long after his passing, and judging by the reading tastes of those in church book clubs across the nation, Protestant as well as Catholic, something similar seems true of other stories in this genre. Readers recommend as well as purchase Christian historical fictions for at least two reasons. First, they enjoy how literary art reacts against the so-called dry, tedious textbooks of Christian theology. Novels offer flesh-and-blood descriptions of human yearning. In particular, Christian historical fictions showcase theologians and the quotidian contexts that surround them both vividly and compellingly. Such theologically informed stories often “endue the poetics of doctrine with the energies of mystery and imagination,” stimulating ancient-future faith possibilities that somehow resonate deep within the believer’s soul, often beyond her or his voicing (Jasper 8). Second, readers like Christian historical fictions because they succeed. Popular religious stories work because they somehow create a spiritual alchemy in the faithful, helping them feel allied to the church’s past witness as well as closer to God, less fretful or alone, and also because such novels inspire readers to step out into the future, keen to become well-versed in the study and transformative practice of good theology.

Even though recent studies reveal an increasing interest in how popular religious books foster life-application hermeneutics (Douglas; Frykholm; Hedstrom; Prior; Smith), few critics have addressed Christian historical fiction. My article corrects this oversight by probing as well as identifying three such novels, which showcase several theological actors in scenes of patristic life, 100-451 CE. Here, I attend to Theodore Vrettos’s *Origen: A Historical Novel* (1978); Tim J. Young’s *The One, the Many: A Novel of Constantine the Great, Athanasius of Alexandria, and the Battle to Unify the Roman Empire and the Christian Church* (2014); and, Jostein Gaarder’s *Vita Brevis: A Letter to St. Augustine* (1997). All three texts are ambitious, meticulously observed narratives. In what follows, I show how they educate, caution, and fortify Christians in three ways.

First, each novel acts as a portal to the past, inviting folk to journey in the mind’s eye to witness the complex culture as well as the impressive mind that conditioned and inspired theology in the early centuries of the Greek-speaking Eastern church or the Latin-speaking Western church. Origen drew
heavily on Alexandria’s nuanced neo-Platonism, as we will see, and despite the fact that fourth- and then sixth century theologians railed against and then denounced Origen, his own hard-won theology—that all of creation flows from God, that we are all divine, and that each of us is journeying back to God—still influences what Christians believe, especially in the Eastern church. In a phrase: Christian historical fiction educates readers.

Second, each novel offers vivid and candid accounts of the battles and struggles between various characters, and because of this unfriendliness and untidiness readers find themselves cautioned and are, at least in principle, better able to disabuse themselves of a naively providential or an overly pious view of history. The theologians assembled at the Council of Nicaea, such as Arius and Athanasius, hammer out their disagreements, as we will see, but not always in a kind way. Invitations to a greater generosity sometimes go ignored. Protagonists as well as antagonists often appear severe as well as gracious, ruthless as well as tender, which is to say that they are neither impossibly saintly nor unsatisfyingly sinful—just human, all too human. Such deft characterization means that readers can see how the Christian church’s mixed character inexorably flows from the subtle and not-so-subtle personality traits—the vice as well as the virtue—that play into any given story’s alliances, rivalries, defeats, and rejoicings. Christian historical fiction often features imperfect or sinful women and men—a strategy that serves, on the one hand, to stress the anthropological character of theological understanding, and, on the other, to advise against absolutizing confessions, creeds, or other doctrinal declarations. In a phrase: Christian historical fiction cautions readers.

Third, each novel chronicles the life of a theologian, or sometimes an apology of theologians, whose work has exercised an animating influence over Christians across the centuries, provoking those searching spiritual questions who answers do not come easily, if they come at all: what is spirit’s relationship to the body, for example, and how has this affected, or how ought it to affect, ideas of female and male? Augustine was a worldly man, as we will see, and his many lifestyle choices, such as giving up his career and then refusing to marry, created the personal distress from which his beliefs eventually emerged. Such convictions have been controversial. And yet, Augustine’s desire to battle with his own emotions, even his weaknesses, and to treat his personal narrative as a small but not insignificant chapter in a cosmic epic of fall-and-redemption, has helped to mold and embolden many believers in their own fidgety search for Jesus as the final source of truth, help, and salvation. Christian historical fiction regularly re-presents past shapers of Christian theology, those women and men whose work as well as life reads as freshly now as it did then. In a phrase: Christian historical fiction fortifies readers.

Reading Christian historical fiction makes theology seem less opaque, less obtuse, and reading a fast-paced or winsome novel about Augustine’s struggle with not marrying, Nicaea’s in-fighting, or how Origen sourced pagan philosophy, empowers Christians to somehow see themselves, their ideas, and their story against a richly textured history of theological inquiry and spiritual struggle, one that continues to unfurl.

Scene I: Origen

Trained at The Holy Cross Greek Theological Seminary and Harvard University, the Greek-American classics teacher Theodore Vrettos (1919-2004) was Director of the Creative Writing Program at Salem State College in Massachusetts, from 1970-79, before serving as Writer-in-Residence at Boston’s Simmons College from 1980 until he retired. He also founded the New England Writers Conference in the 1970s, which featured his friends John Updike and Stephen King. Like his more
famous pals, Vrettos exhibited an edgy approach to literary theology. “My maternal grandfather was poet laureate of the Peloponnesus, and maybe some of his spark rubbed on me,” Vrettos once explained to Updike. “My paternal grandfather however was a priest, and there you have it. At times, I feel like Oedipus; or worse still, Sisyphus.”

*Origen* appeared in 1978. In this novel, his second, Vrettos explores the uneasy life and divisive legacy of one of the most thought-provoking of all the early Christian writers. Today’s Eastern church Christians, like Vrettos, regard Origen as the third century’s major mystical theologian, but many other believers know so little about him. History has not been kind to Origen. Various ecclesiastical leaders turned on him in the fourth century, he was condemned as a heretic in the sixth century, and his numerous scripts were mostly destroyed. Even so, Vrettos holds that Origen’s theology—for all its alleged heterodoxies—still has something significant to teach Christians in the modern struggle to raise the mind and heart to God (297-98).

The novel’s opening pages plunge readers into the academically and spiritually diverse city of Alexandria in Roman North Africa, one of the three Christian capitals in the patristic period. It is here, we learn, that Alexandrians entertain Gnosticism, fatalism, neo-Platonism, or Christianity. This is an energetic society. And well-heeled Ambrosius, who first befriends Origen and then finances his writing career, seems to epitomize such bustling intelligence and religious disquiet: “Like a leaf in the wind, I have alighted from one doctrine to another…Plato, Marcion, Montanus, Valentinian,” he announces (46). Other Alexandrians, such as Lady Paula and Ammonius Saccas, may also be seen twisting and reaching for meaning with a nervous dissatisfaction. Even Plotinus shows up to bewail the numerous “sooth-sayers” and “vendors of horoscopes” on every street corner (127). Whatever else it is, the Alexandrian community is a character in Vrettos’s story.

As for Origen, we are told that he is born of Christian parents, and within the Roman Empire, Christians suffer. Some centurions eventually execute Origen’s father, Leonidas, for his faith. Other soldiers murder as well as rape Herais, Origen’s fictional courtesan, who first meets Origen when they consult the Natron Desert’s pillar hermits. Origen struggles with such losses. His tormented sorrow for Herais clarifies, at least in part, his choice to self-castrate. His wistful prayer to Leonidas’s spirit, located at the novel’s close, disputes Demetrius, Alexandria’s bishop, who in the end excommunicates Origen for heresy. In these instances, as in others, Vrettos uses Origen’s emotional wounds as a window into his theology, which displays the following three features.

First, Vrettos’s Origen typifies the Eastern church’s penchant for neo-Platonism, which teaches the eternal creation and pre-existence of souls. Since creation flows out of God, the world and God may best be grasped as unified rather than divided. On this then-strange view, sacredness suffuses all things. Correspondingly, women and men are either moving toward or away from God, and life’s purpose lies in partnering with the divine in the world’s redemption. Each rational soul is an independent agent, divinely prompted to freely become like God (*theosis*). Vrettos’s Christian historical fiction teaches its readers by emphasizing how impossible it is to overstate the influence of neo-Platonist ideas on the early church. In this novel, readers learn that Origen taught such ideas during his time as head of Clement of Alexandria’s catechetical college. However, Demetrius’s quarrel with such avant-garde theology soon forces Origen to travel overseas (84-87, 197-200, 205, 213, 260-62). In Greece, he enlarges his contentious views, arguing that God first created a world of spiritual beings who, until they became worn-out, revered God without ceasing. Such exhausted beings finally fell from God’s realm and became either angels, humans, or demons. Whatever their status, the fallen soon shared one common trait: they forgot God. This said, Origen thinks Christ signifies the one being who did not turn away from the divine, the one being who remembered God, and Christ’s example now blazes a trail for all to follow. Women and men are like God, Origen holds. They are on life’s arduous journey back to the
divine. Such is Origen’s neo-Platonist soteriology, where even Satan will one day experience universal restoration’s prospect (*apocatastasis*).

In outlining Origen’s theology, Vrettos wants readers to think that his hero’s psychological disequilibrium—the stress that accompanied the loss of his father and lover—is the clue in Origen’s life that tells of his spiritual struggle, and that it explains Origen’s sense that Christian discipleship is and remains a costly, as well as rocky, road to travel. Vrettos’s protagonist seems satisfyingly human, unavoidably imperfect, and as believably real as the erring, careworn (and quite possibly Christian) readers who come to this novel looking for insight. This Christian historical fiction thus displays a cautionary as well as instructional character.

Second, Vrettos’s Origen discusses God the Father and the Son as “two distinct essences, two substances and beings,” which means he thinks the Persons of the Trinity operate on different levels. Using words that offset orthodox Alexandria theology, which accentuates Jesus’s divinity, Origen proclaims that “Christ should not be the object of supreme worship. Prayer must never be addressed to Him. It should be offered only to the God of the universe, to whom Christ also prayed” (158). Origen stresses the significance of Christ’s life as a full human being. “If Christ has no humanity,” he tells Beryllus, the bishop of Bostra, then Christ “holds no interest for me. I am drawn more to His human nature than to His divine” (289). Like iron filings to a magnet, Origen also finds himself drawn to Christ’s words, as the scriptures record them (189).

Third, Vrettos’s Origen spends hours pondering as well as reading scripture, which he interprets allegorically—his preferred method for finding meaning in a world that seems meaningless. Scripture has its surface meaning, he says, but this stands apart from its deeper or symbolic sense. Space precludes exploring several examples of this hermeneutical style, which has shaped the Eastern church across the centuries, but one illustration may prove instructive. When Alexandria’s bad-tempered prelate, Demetrius, informs Origen that “there are too many instances where the literal meaning cannot be adulterated by mystical interpretation,” he cites the apostle Paul’s illumination and declares that “indeed [Paul] was blinded by God’s light on the road to Damascus.” Origen demurs. “He was going there to persecute Christians, my Lord. It was his guilt that really blinded him, not God” (119).

This appeal to allegory implies that the fictional Origen’s most inventive work prowls at the edges of theology and literature, which, if true, points us back to Vrettos, the novelist-grandson of a priest and a poet, as well as to the historical Origen. “It sounds rather eccentric to call [the historical] Origen a ‘narrative theologian,’” Rowan Williams admits, “but that is in an important sense what he was” (141). Perhaps reading Vrettos stimulates Christians to acknowledge that every Christian is a narrative theologian, reading her or his story of longing and loss in the gospel’s truth as well as light. This idea may best be seen as a fortifying one. Whatever else Origen accomplishes, perhaps it shows *how a novel might read Christians* by educating them about their doctrinal makers and remakers, even the nonconformists, and by gesturing towards the poetic traits embedded within each Christian’s storied theological life.

**Scene II: Athanasius**

Although the famous saying *Athanasius contra mundum* (‘Athanasius against the world’) implies that the fourth century Egyptian theologian fared far worse than Origen, quite the reverse is true. Athanasius certainly struggled throughout his life, often against Arius, the well-liked Alexandrian priest who followed Origen in denying Jesus Christ’s divine Sonship. Athanasius also suffered a total of seventeen years in five exiles under four emperors, including almost three years in Gaul (now Trier in
Germany) at the order of Constantine the Great. This said, church history has tended to be kinder to Athanasius than Origen. Athanasius saw that only a divine Son could redeem the world. And so he championed Christ’s divinity, helped frame the Nicene Creed, and defended the Trinity, eventually emerging from his battles somewhat bruised but acclaimed as “the Father of Orthodoxy.” In 1568, Athanasius was made a Doctor of the Church, canonized, that is, for his intellectual as well as spiritual contributions to traditional Christian belief and practice, Christopher Rengers notes (1-11).

When he wrote *The One, the Many* over ten years ago, theologically-trained and Texas-based author Tim J. Young recognized that even though “both Constantine and Athanasius irrevocably changed their world,” many contemporary believers know little about them (449). Consequently, Young researched both primary and secondary materials in an attempt to publish as well as pen a novel with two aims. First, he hoped his historical fiction would “remain faithful to a plausible and fair account of what occurred [before, during, and after the Council of Nicaea] given the sources we have” (450). Second, he wanted his novel to stimulate those “Christians who would not otherwise read about the history of the Church or development of doctrine.”

As he reveals in our 2017 interview, Young initially wanted his historical fiction to teach others (1-29). *The One, the Many* was released in 2014, and the reaction has been positive, although Young once informed me that “the irony of the novel is that I intended it originally to be a faith booster, and after research, I found it impossible to make it such.”

Herein lies his novel’s cautionary note. Sleuthing patristic history reveals the knotty and entangled mess of Christian doctrinal declaration and Roman power struggle that marks the period, Young admits. Of course, literary critics know that such disarray is the stuff of which so much historical fiction is made.

Athanasius, Arius, and Constantine reside at the center of this chaos, in Young’s fiction as in the fourth century, yet *The One, the Many* also relies on two major fictional characters to teach and then help readers comprehend the Council’s complex narrative. The first of these is Arnobius of Carthage, son of an ambitious Alexandrian merchant, and a pensive writer as well as speaker in a city renowned for its intellectual excellence, as we witnessed with Vrettos’s *Origen*. Young bases Arnobius “upon a nameless man who, according to the *Ecclesiastical History* of [fifth century historian] Sozomen, interpreted for Constantine at the Council of Nicaea” (450). Another key fictional character is Theophilus, the professed author and monk postulant at Egypt’s Tabennisi Monastery. This monastery modeled the cenobitism that Abba (and later: Saint) Pachomius made famous; and, from here, shortly before 340 CE, Arnobius recounts his life to Theophilus.

*The One, the Many* spans 297 to 337 CE and, among other things, it charts Christians’ anxious but eventual embrace of third century neo-Platonist ideas, such as the association between the One (the unchanging, impassable and absolute reality [God]) and the Many (temporal life’s flux and mutability). When we first encounter Arnobius, he personalizes talk of the One and the Many, interpreting them as existential impulses that he struggles to coagulate within his careworn soul. He craves permanence, for example, but a friend’s tragic death only underlines impermanence’s horror. Like Young’s implied readers, those Christians keen to think through their faith, Arnobius often feels entangled in life’s haunting web of contingency, and he desires answers to his questions about God and meaning, as many Christians do (48-51).

Constantine’s friendship helps Arnobius cope with life’s insubstantiality. In time, though, events and people test their bond’s limits. We see this when Constantine enjoys a swift ascent to power, consolidating diffuse Roman territories into a centralized state, an act he treats as divinely decreed, certainly after the Milvian Bridge moment in 313 CE. Arnobius disfavors such particular providence, because he upholds the pronounced distinction or contrast between the One and the Many, and thus he expresses uneasiness when Constantine invokes the One as the origin of his vocational impulse to unify
Rome. Arnobius also repudiates Constantine’s appeal to the Incarnation as proof of the bridge between the One and the Many. The difference between these two characters becomes a difference in theological overlay, Young implies.

Constantine sees Jesus the Christ, and particularly his crucifixion, as the One’s radical choice to become tangled in temporal affairs. Since he believes the One is impassable, though, Arnobius finds Constantine’s overlay absurd. Arnobius also bemoans how the blurring or collapsing of the ontological distinction between the One and the Many has the regrettable consequence of sanctifying the earthly, which becomes challenging when Constantine’s imperiousness leads him to murder his wife and son for perceived disloyalty. The friendship between Arnobius and Constantine therefore falters, which serves to reinforce the feeling of life’s instability, and Arnobius eventually leaves Italy and returns to Roman North Africa, where the jarring sounds of another quarrel—a doctrinal dispute between Alexandrian and Antiochene protagonists—are heard for the first time (64, 128, 146, 187, 203, 210-13, 282-89). Enter Athanasius and Arius.

Born at the third century’s close, when Egyptian Christianity’s embrace of neo-Platonist notions, many traceable to Origen, was impressively robust, Athanasius served as bishop of Alexandria for almost fifty years, and died in 373 CE. His ministry, however, was seldom trouble-free. Throughout his life, he contested Arianism, Young reveals. An Alexandrian priest with Libyan roots, Arius taught that Jesus was a creature, like every human, and so must have had a beginning. Since there was a time when Jesus was not, Jesus did not share in the eternal Godhead. Arius opposed talk of Jesus’s divinity. When Christians referred to Jesus as God or the Son of God, for example, Arius declared that such titles must be seen as honorific, the believer’s distinctive way of paying metaphysical compliments or giving cosmic courtesies to Jesus. In *The One, the Many*, the Eusebi at Caesarea Nicomedia and at Tyre support Arius’s subordinationist Christology, and since Arius endorses the idea of divine impassability, Arnobius favors him at the outset of the doctrinal dispute with Athanasius (271, 325, 331).

In contrast to Arius and his supporters, Athanasius held that Jesus of Nazareth’s divinity anchors the Christian faith. Against those neo-Platonists who stressed the unbridgeable gulf between God and the world (One and the Many), Athanasius believed that a credible christology inspires an effective soteriology: only a divine Jesus Christ, through whom creation was lovingly fashioned, could enter into and restore a felonious creation. This theology of God’s benevolent revelation liberates Athanasius to love wastefully (272, 321, 408). Toward the novel’s close, we see how Athanasius’s charity to non-homoousion theologians, including Arius, coupled with the compassion expressed by Athanasian Christians like Ulfila and Luxilla, sways Arnobius (272, 296, 302, 325, 404, 428, 437).

A new picture of the divine emerges. God is not a Ruling Caesar, majestic and untouchable, but an Artist, self-limiting yet sensitive. “It takes everything to make something. You must pour yourself into what you’re creating. You must live it and love it,” Arnobius confesses to Theophilus at his story’s close. “And in doing so, you become what you’re creating, its limitations and all, so that it might become something beautiful. I thought that maybe, just maybe, that was like God” (432).

*The One, the Many* places readers into Nicaea’s crosshairs, stressing the period’s numerous ecclesiastical and political battles—the use of force, treason, lies, and violence in Christian doctrine’s development as well as Church-State relations. Readers learn that the fourth century’s first quarter is an unholy mess, although hardly a universe removed from our own turbulent times. To my mind, Young does not shy away from cautioning and then fortifying his Christian readers, helping them learn from as well as comprehend their own history’s scrappy and confused vicissitudes. Young also makes a compelling case for Athanasius’s importance, even if Young does not heroize or sanctify his subject. The novel displays a cautionary as well as instructional character. Readers pick up on Athanasius’s signal contribution to the maturing of early Christian theology, but when the novel ends, circa 337 CE,
they also discover that he remains hard at work repairing a reputation tarnished by his own misbehaviors and the accusations of others. Athanasius is sinner and saint, sensing the call to grandeur and feeling the depths of misery, as seems to be the case with almost every teller of the Christian story, whether major or minor, across the centuries (335-39, 362).

Scene III: Augustine

Jostein Gaarder’s successful Sophie’s World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy (1991) serves as a beginner’s guide to Western ideas about God, reality, and meaning. In Vita Brevis: A Letter to St Augustine (1996), this contemporary Norwegian writer invites readers to ponder the authenticity of a letter that he buys from a used bookstore in Buenos Aires, Argentina’s capital city. Written in Latin, the enigmatic epistle purports to be from the fourth-century pen of Floria Aemilia, Augustine’s former lover, yet Gaarder is skeptical, so he photocopies the “Codex Floriae” before mailing the original to the Roman Curia in Italy. Gaarder hopes the Catholic Church’s leaders will scrutinize and then confirm the letter’s contents. But the Vatican never replies. Readers are left, therefore, with Floria’s story, an impassioned rewriting of her relationship with the Bishop of Hippo, perhaps the most enduring theological influence on the Western, Latin-speaking church.

The mother of Adeodatus, Augustine’s son, Floria is aware of the Confessions, Augustine’s lively account of his early life. Augustine started his memoir in 391 CE, and this ancient story of someone who wrestled with his own limitations still has something valuable to say, modern readers often claim. Confessions is an enthralling book. It tracks the journey of a man with a restless intellect traversing different thought-terrains, such as Manichaeism and neo-Platonism, and it highlights a soul gifted to grasp its own tiny tale as illustrative of creation’s much bigger story—the fall into disarray, and then the radical conversion to God’s love and return to harmony. Akin to earlier novels on Augustine by Louis de Wohl (1951) and Henry W. Coray (1957), Vita Brevis re-presents this doctrinal side of Augustine’s life-work thoughtfully, so it educates its readers, like most Christian historical fictions, and yet Vita Brevis stands apart from Coray’s and de Wohl’s stories by its refusal to assign a lower profile to his discarded concubine. Gaarder’s refusal therefore caution readers: approach Augustine warily, he seems to say.

Floria emerges from her letter as a proto-feminist heroine. Her correspondence cites Greco-Roman myths and philosophies, for example, and Adeodatus’s premature passing—vita brevis, life is short—provokes her to ponder life after death, as well as the purpose of divine providence (67-79, 89-91, 101-05, 123-25, 131). Floria also doubts the sincerity of Augustine’s convictions, viewing his leaving her and their son as its own form of infidelity, and she regards his theology as world-negating, even misanthropic (15, 25, 39, 59, 79-83, 109). “But you [Augustine] do not dwell on this [being a child of God] as something beautiful and good, straightaway you start fretting again about being born in iniquity and your mother conceiving you in sin,” Floria says (31). In her mind, Augustine feels only shame when he thinks about humanity; and there is more of the sense-denying Manichees and neo-Platonists in Augustine than Augustine seems prepared to admit (23, 25, 33, 37-39, 49-53, 83, 135, 141).

The Confessions show that Augustine was an agile thinker on a quest to discover Truth, Gaarder implies, and yet Augustine’s conversion did not involve forsaking all the viewpoints he encountered on his journey to the famed garden in Milan. On the contrary, philosophies like Manicheanism fostered an anti- or inhumane worldview, which Floria sees on every page of Augustine’s spiritual classic. There is a coldness to his work, she declares, and there are many times when it lacks warmth and tenderness; it
seems overly or needlessly abstract. Readers tempted to lionize Augustine would do well to remember such features of his life and work, Gaarder infers.

Floria thinks Augustine’s callous mother, Monica, explains Augustine’s so-called hard-hearted theology. Readers learn that Monica bears the blame for the demise of the relationship between Augustine and Floria, for example, and that God became Monica’s substitute after Augustine’s mother dies (15, 49, 63-69, 93-99, 101, 123, 131). A selective memory also explains Augustine’s faulty thinking—it clarifies how and why he neglects biographical details that do not serve his agenda, such as his fleeting reunion with Floria after Monica’s death (19, 23, 71, 79, 121-29, 135-41). In the end, then, Floria’s letter shows that she is troubled—she dismisses Augustine’s *Confessions*, because it seems to conceal as much as it reveals.

Customary church readings of Augustine present him as at first wholly human-centered and then, after God’s pursuit of his agitated soul, entirely God-centered. We see this traditional reading in *Vita Brevis*, at least in part, and for this reason, Gaarder’s novel may best be seen as serving an educational purpose. However, it also cautions its readers. I say this because *Vita Brevis* uses Floria Aemilia as an advisory or reproving mouthpiece—a device to warn others, certainly Christian readers, to avoid participating in the fiction of thinking that Augustine was a sinner one minute, saintly the next.

The “Codex Floriae” is not a screed, however, for there is tenderness as well as frustration in Floria’s prose. She entreats Augustine to explain why he rejected her, why he gave up on their union, and why he believes that a woman’s body poses problems for, and makes her subordinate to, men. Floria queries the gendering of Christian doctrine, in other words, and she cautions against the genius of thinkers—like Augustine—who blend the Gospel and Greek philosophy to form ideas about reason and rationality that reflect a bias against women. This said, Floria also pleads with Augustine to enter sympathetically into her experience of loss, the loss of their son as well as their love, and she clearly longs for Augustine to learn from his shortcomings and share as well as craft a more generous-minded theology. But his empathy never surfaces, not in this story, and her unfulfilled longing aches. Gaarder concludes his text by insinuating that Augustine’s “inability to deal with his mistress led to a misogynistic streak in early Christianity,” Peter Liebregts holds (125).

Whatever else it is, *Vita Brevis* is a postmodern feminist text. In Gaarder’s hands, Floria’s alleged manuscript reflects a late twentieth-century critical awareness, one that suggests Christian doctrine’s efforts across the centuries to connect women, sensuality, and sin have been ruinous. Floria’s letter discloses a hard-won wisdom, this much I think we can say, because her verities are forged on the tough anvil of rejection and loss, and such truths interrupt conventional or received certainty. “What I write will perhaps be equally a letter to the whole Christian church, for today you are a man of great influence,” Floria announces, and thus “I pray to God that a woman’s voice too may be heard by men of the church” (29). Such words may be as fortifying as they are cautionary and educational, since they work to energize contemporary Christian readers to trouble gendered hierarchies in the church, and given life’s shortness, to vow never again to treat women as silent outsiders to divine revelation.

**Conclusion**

Assessments of Christian historical fiction remain divided. While some critics question the genre’s literary and theological merit, other scholars endorse how and why imagination matters for doctrinal reflection (Gandolfo; Vanhoozer). For my part, I value fictions like the ones I have discussed. Of course, I respect that their authors are resourceful storytellers, not professional theologians, and yet I think their artful portrayal(s) of faith issues has inspired, dare I say provoked, multilayered religious
responses, certainly among the adults in the Christian education workshops and book clubs that I have led. Three basic judgments seem to surface, which only space and time preclude exploring in detail.

First, Christian readers stress Christian historical fiction’s pedagogical function. Novels instruct. Stories educate. It is not unusual to find believers finishing novels such as Amy Rachel Petterson’s *Perpetua: A Bride, A Martyr, A Passion* (2004) or Evelyn Waugh’s *Helena* (1950) and realizing why certain theological ideas were thought of at all, and wherein lies their present-day significance. Learning also comes in other ways. Christian readers emphasize how fiction informs them not simply about past stories, but also how it teaches them to appreciate the narrative quality of their own Christian existence. We all live by the stories we tell, they learn, and historical fictions about theologians wrestling with discipleship’s demands help readers come to terms with how they are living their own spiritual tale in light of a biblical and theological story still in the making.

Second, Christian readers uphold how novels frequently humanize theologians and their ideas, leading them to proceed out with prudence when considering the lives and work of Christian doctrine’s many makers and remakers. Such readers have often acknowledged, for instance, that novels such as Henry W. Coray’s *Against the World: The Odyssey of Athanasius* (1994) or Peter Rodgers’s *The Scribes: A Novel about the Early Church* (2012) have convinced them that all theologies emerge as local overlays, or what we might call situational picture-preferences, and that theologies are not timeless, even if they endure across the centuries. Theological timelessness is an elaborate fiction, certain Christian readers go on to say, because novels, with their flesh-and-blood descriptions and their human-all-too-human characterizations, caution us to think that theology’s proper stance in relation to history is thoughtful re-assessment, never timid obsequiousness.

And finally, Christian readers often disclose that historical Christian fiction has inspired them to debate as well as identify the issues in their own time that make some restatement of Christian doctrine imperative. Reading empowers believers to ask: Why did the early Church Fathers blend Greek philosophy with the emerging Christian faith? Did they do the right thing? And how do we—living into the challenge that all Christians must present the Gospel truth afresh to each new generation—balance faith and reason? How do we read the Bible? How do we grasp God’s character and purpose? Or the meaning of created life? Reading inspires the good theological life. In other words, reading Christian historical fiction motivates contemporary disciples to pay attention to how the questions posed by their forebears in faith are still being asked, and to realize that they, today’s Christians, need the ability as well as the desire to think well and then decide how to speak about Jesus Christ in their own language and for their own world.

Notes


2 Ignatius Press representative, Eva Muntean, e-mail to the author. 19 Sept. 2018. For the past twenty-five years I have, on an annual basis, taught 30-40 adult Christian education classes, seminars, and book clubs around the United States. I use such occasions to teach selected examples of ‘faith and fiction,’ since my work lies in comparative literature and theology. I was an ordained Protestant minister before becoming Catholic in 2013.
3 Theodore Vrettos, in a letter to John Updike, dated 30 Apr., 1994. This letter is housed at the Peabody Institute Library in Danvers, Massachusetts. Other Library items include a letter (Nov.1989) from Vrettos explaining how he drafted Origen at the Institute, the novel’s typescript with handwritten corrections and changes, publisher’s proofs with various corrections, an inscribed copy of the novel’s first edition, and a Boston Globe book review of Origen. I thank Mr. Richard B. Trask, the Institute’s Town Archivist, for sharing this and other, related information with me.

4 Although readers have found Vrettos’s novel hard to find, it now appears through a POD program: http://bookstore.iuniverse.com/Products/SKU-000007742/Origen.aspx (accessed 10/26/2018).

5 Tim J. Young, e-mail to the author. 21 Jan. 2015.

6 Young, e-mail to the author. 21 Jan. 2015.

7 Young, e-mail to the author. 21 Jan. 2015.

Works Cited


Liebregts, Peter. “‘Late have I loved you’: Augustine and Modern Literature.” The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine, volume one. Eds Willemien Oteen, et.al., 117-26.


Young, Tim J. *The One, the Many: A Novel of Constantine the Great, Athanasius of Alexandria, and the Battle to Unify the Roman Empire and the Christian Church*. Sugar Land, Texas: SunWard Books, 2014.
Theological Roots of the Abolitionist Movement in Frederick Douglass’s “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” and Angelina Grimké’s “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South”

Mark Eckel

“The blood of two generations of abolitionists waxed hot in my veins.”

(Alcott 42)

“The faith of black people was thus grounded in the authenticity of God’s Word revealed through the scriptures.” (Cone 34)

Introduction

History can only teach so much. Understanding another’s time and place necessitates a full comprehension of individual mindsets: an impossibility. Attitudes and dispositions may rise to the surface of a person’s writing; glimpses of intentions and motivations may be witnessed there. Therefore, acknowledging the internal and external complexities of a person’s beliefs is appropriate in any historical study. The persons in this essay, Frederick Douglass and Angelina Grimké, are no different. What complexities compel a former slave and a former slaveholder’s daughter to write and speak as abolitionists? According to Ian Finseth, complexity was not an issue since “The American Civil War was caused by the national fight over Southern slavery” and “the great question of ‘human bondage’” (15). Grimké and Douglass did not question how the war was caused but rather gave an answer to and reason against slavery. Complexities aside, Grimké and Douglass sided with simplicity: slavery was wrong in part because Christian theology—which they accepted as transcendent, universal law—forbade it. This paper will examine Grimké’s and Douglass’s Christian theological beliefs, part of the scaffolding for their refutation of slavery. The conclusion will demonstrate that belief first compels affection, then affiliation, then action.

Biographical Context

Theology helped to shape both Douglass and Grimké, creating the ethos and sustaining the pathos of a long fight against slavery. Two people from disparate backgrounds came to the same conclusion about slavery. Angelina Grimke’s letter from 1836, “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South,” commences from a white woman having lived in the South. Growing up with privilege, Grimké revolted against her forebears’ commitment to slavery, moved north, and began to work in the abolitionist movement (Bordewich 367). Any number of external circumstances impacted Grimké’s life. Her strict pro-slavery father died in her teen years; the patriarch’s living influence was gone. Grimké was the last of fourteen children and spent much of her time immersed in adult conversation. She dialogued with her pastor Rev. Mr. McDowell who was a Northerner and held strong reservations about
slavery, which led Grimké to question the “morality of the system” itself. When her own Carolinian Presbyterian church refused to take a public position against slavery, she became a Quaker. Having personally witnessed white brutality against blacks, she left the South altogether in a self-imposed “exile” (Lerner 60). Angelina Grimké lived a life in pursuit of what she believed to be a just cause. Grimké’s background is essential to understand some of her external compulsions, which intersected with her theological commitments to abolitionism.

Frederick Douglass’s speech in 1852, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” complements Grimké’s work because Douglass had firsthand knowledge of what it meant to be a slave. Perhaps the most famous African-American of the 19th century, Douglass had opportunity to lead, write, and speak into American history in a way that few could. Douglass escaped various masters, attaining his freedom in 1838 (Stauffer 27-47). He was a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in New York where former slaves and black abolitionists Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth attended (Earnest 63). Appearing at anti-slavery rallies as early as 1839, Douglass began speaking to the public in 1840. The famed anti-slavery spokesperson William Lloyd Garrison began mentoring Douglass. Outside influences include his own understanding of Christianity. Sabbath school for black children was the first step of Douglass’s path in the Christian walk. His difficulty with the religion so closely tied to slavery “remained important to Douglass in his freedom.” In Douglass’s view, Christianity had become unmoored from its original intention, so he often referred to his belief as “the Christianity of Christ,” (Earnest 62-67) drawing upon its “ideals [of] love, morality, and justice” (Martin 20).

Culture and context are essential markers for anyone’s background. In both cases, Grimké and Douglass were denoted by circumstances of time and place beyond their individual control but took control of their own narratives. Biology and biography, too, weave strands of belief through everyone’s person. Grimké and Douglass inherited disparate lineage yet stood with each other against the tide of their own backgrounds. Beyond the inherited pall of degraded attitudinal mindsets, these two abolitionists were transformed in their thinking—designed not by humanistic calibrations but by theological renovations of the heart.

Historical Context

It is hard to unravel spiritual, political, cultural, philosophical, and historical threads from the fabric of any social construct, much less the life of any individual. Time, place, history, and culture may impact interpretation, but they do not set aside the yearning to fill the void, complete incompleteness, to make whole the fracture. Threads which create theological predispositions are multifaceted. Douglass himself argued, “The American slave-trade [is] sustained by American politics and America religion” (“Slave” 61). Douglass ties his argument directly to the U.S. Constitution, calling it a “glorious liberty document” (69); at the same, he uses the Levitical concept of “Jubilee” in his speech to speak of liberty (55-57). So, too, Grimké in her seven propositions (147) weaves the threads of national and biblical documents to make her case. Both writers are embedded in their time and place.

One must not forget the backdrop to Douglass’s speech and Grimké’s appeal. The First Great Awakening of the 1730’s and 1740’s helped procure an abolitionist spirit. John Wesley, Jacob Green, Jonathan Edwards Jr., and Samuel Hopkin all sought the eradication of slavery. Albert Barnes established anti-slavery hermeneutical arguments in his “Inquiry into Scriptural Views of Slavery.” The Second Great Awakening (1790-1840) birthed the theology of abolitionist Charles Finney. Wesleyan Methodists founded abolitionist colleges. While no extant written communication is known to exist (McKivigan), Frederick Douglass does reference Angelina Grimké in his speeches (“Address” 301).
Grimké and Douglass had lives that overlapped historically and missionally. Both had firsthand knowledge of slavery. Both preceded and lived through the Civil War. Both were abolitionists. Both were influenced by and depended upon Christian theology to support their positions against slavery.

Yet, Christian theology does not preclude the problem of human depravity. The history of the Civil War is laid against the backdrop of decidedly Christian thinking: yes. But twisted theology has been ever-present since Adam and Eve were in the garden. Theology impacts history because of its Transcendent Source while history impacts theology because of its interpretive fallibility. Grimké and Douglass were present “for such a time as this” (English Standard Bible, Esther 4:14). Overthrow of slavery and thorough re-formation of political-social-economic institutions have the source of Divine theological justice to thank.

Theological Context

Northern and southern religionists were split not by their acceptance of biblical authority, but by the cultural wrappings of that authority. Mark Noll summarizes the complicated nature of biblical hermeneutics within the socio-historic context leading up to the Civil War. He shows how economics, individualism, experiential knowledge, “common sense,” and sidestepping clear biblical teachings created a path for two groups who believed the same Bible to come to diametrically opposed conclusions (74). Harlow reports that for white Southerners, the inspiration of Scripture conformed to a “literalistic hermeneutic . . . influenced by the common sense moral reasoning of the Scottish Enlightenment, and steeped in the American principle of democratic individualism” (Harlow 111). For multiple reasons many abolitionists began, then, to separate reason from revelation, depending on an ethic removed from a biblical foundation. William Lloyd Garrison, for one, jettisoned the Bible altogether, calling it “bold fiction” that required the “suspension of the reasoning faculties” (Harlow 119-21). In the North, “evangelicals generally fused Enlightenment philosophy and a reading of the Bible to declare slavery a ‘dark spot upon our national character’” (Carwardine 72). A “secular version of Christian salvation” (Stout 17) came to supplant a sacred anti-slavery vision of redemption, fracturing abolitionists into various views of ethical authority. Douglass and Grimké were stirred within the pot of a hermeneutical-theological soup medley.

Nonetheless, the North and South had an assumed sense of right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable. Codified ethics arise from a source. The origin of what slaveholders and abolitionists believed to be true, whether or not each was correct from the other’s vantage point, is not as important as the fact that belief compels affection, then affiliation, then action. Grimké and Douglass were compelled by belief. The origin of that belief, based on their own writings, is rooted in Christian theology. Whether others’ biblical interpretation diverged from theirs does not alleviate or eliminate what bore them along in their literary offerings. Based on their writings, Grimké’s and Douglass’s abolitionist beliefs were seeded in the soil of Christian Scripture, convincing them to reject slavery.

Acceptance or rejection of any postulate is created from a mindset. Use of phrases such as “human rights” and “human dignity” assume origin: from what source do human rights and dignity arise? Being made in “the image of God” carried dignity’s weight in Genesis 1:26-27. To have God’s essence, nature, and characteristics meant both God-given authority within the world while still being subservient to God’s authority. Divine dignity forms the basis for human rights, assuming all God’s image-bearers are considered equal. In a fallen world – The Image marred – judgment is necessary to right the wrong of withheld rights. So, the employment of terms such as injustice or wrongs belies the antecedent of ethical beginnings (Sinha 3-5). Ethics asks, “What should be done?” assuming a source,
separate from the person. The plagued human race cannot sustain belief in any ethic by itself. Grimké’s and Douglass’s abolitionist beliefs were born and bred from Christian belief, the formative reason for their writing. Douglass concluded his “Kansas-Nebraska Bill” speech from 1854 this way:

Truth is eternal. Like the great God, from whose throne it emanates, it is from everlasting to everlasting, and can never pass away. Such a truth is man’s right to freedom. He was born with it. It was his before he comprehended it. The title deed to it was written by the Almighty on His heart; and the record of it is in the bosom of the Eternal . . . this mighty government of ours will never be at peace with God, unless it shall practically and universally embrace this great truth as the fountain of all its institutions. (107)

“Wealth,” Douglass understood, flows from a stream outside human endeavor. Attacking the human creation of slavery can only be buttressed by a theology, the wellspring of which is God-created abolitionism.

The Theological Beliefs of Frederick Douglass Refuting Slavery

Institutions, governments, and nations mark their heritage with holidays. Frederick Douglass uses the opportunity to speak on July 4, which marks America’s independence from England. He declares that prized American liberty is refused to a large segment of its own population. Douglass’s background, experience, upbringing, and belief all coalesce into a pronouncement of woe on America, on America’s holiday.

All men want freedom, a call sustained throughout Douglass’s writing by repeated references to the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. Declaring “a natural right” (“Slave” 59), Douglass attacks slaveholders on the slant, citing the manhood of the slave, a latent reference to Genesis 1, which establishes that all men and women are made in God’s image. He shows the vapid nature of laws to sustain the unlawfulness of slavery. The slave is a “moral, intellectual and responsible being” (“Slave” 58); so, why should laws exist to keep him from reading? At the apex of his argument, he confesses and worships “the Christian’s God” to show his equality with all others who call themselves Christians.

Literary vocabulary is a marker of cultural context. Douglass uses the second person pronoun as a judgmental bludgeon. “You” and “your” accent the air of Douglass’s oratory. The pattern of prophetic defamation smiting unrighteous behavior has its precedent within the pages of the Christian Bible. Hebrew prophets – such as Elijah against Ahab in 1 Kings - utilized the pronoun of condemnation over and over as a signature of indictment. Statements such as “your National Independence” and “your political freedom” (“Slave” 50) strike the inconsonant chord. Direct address uses the humiliation of guilt to challenge listeners. The prophetic voice against injustice is the abolitionist’s consuming fire.

Ethical verbiage such as “wisdom,” “justice,” and “truth” pockmark the proclamation. “Jubilee” (“Slave” 55) depends on the biblical book of Leviticus for its full telling. Allusions to God’s storm, whirlwind and earthquake represented in 1 Kings 19 abide in Douglass’s text. Words of oppression mark the free man’s speech: tyranny, Mammon, folly (55). The false sounds of “prayers,” “hymns,” and “sermons” fall on deaf ears (55, 60). Douglass cries a “lament,” citing generational “woe” (57). His imprecation turns to Psalm 137 for foundation (57). A crime against the slave is a crime against God (59). The fact that slavery is called a “trade” reminds the reader that ministers, too, are susceptible to the impact of “filthy lucre.”
Biblical imagery abounds in Douglass’s speech. References of release from Egyptian bondage from Exodus 12 confirm that slaves were left out of Independence Day celebrations. The slave is declared to be an exile, a stranger in a land not his own. False prophets (“doctors of divinity”) are called to account just as were the “false shepherds” of Ezekiel 34. Ministers referred to as “stupidly blind” (“Slave” 63) brings to mind Jesus’ excoriation of “the blind leading the blind” in Matthew 23. Douglass references the same passage exposing slave market profit as the compelling motive, spices as more important than the life of a man (64). Hypocrisy is repeatedly denounced with allusions from major biblical prophets through the gospels. Douglass uses the optical style of biblical argument: visual-verbal portrayals of daily life for chained men, women, and children. One is reminded of vivid illustrations, cases made by Jeremiah (“the sword shall devour and be sated,” 46:10), Amos (“let justice roll down,” 5:24), or Zephaniah (“neither will their silver or gold deliver them,” 1:18). Rhetorical flair sustains Douglass’s biblical argument: questions asked and answered. “Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery?” (66) has an obvious answer.

The Church as a whole gave assent to slavery by abiding by laws that are at “war against religious liberty.” The Church gave compliance to slavery by its economically generated hermeneutic siding “with the oppressors.” The Church gave itself to the guilt of “omission and commission” in its refusal to abolish slavery. The Church gave its voice to commerce, but its media voice could “scatter to the winds” American blood crimes. The Church gave its pulpits to authorities, who denude theological authority. The Church gave blasphemy a new name by obeying “man’s law before the law of God” (“Slave” 66).

Douglass shames America in its war for liberty from English taxes while ignoring the liberty the English give to “the West Indian slave” (“Slave” 67): the very essence of Levitical law of both Sabbatical and Jubilee years. As Moses in Deuteronomy 28, Douglass prophetically pronounces warnings of curses yet to come upon America. Slavery as a snake reminds the reader of Genesis 3: “hissing,” “a horrible reptile coiled,” “the venomous creature,” “a hideous monster,” something to “crush.” Douglass’s centerpiece proposal concerning the Fourth of July was to confront its sacrosanct acceptance by Americans. If there was one thing all might agree to, it was freedom. In so doing Douglass could claim the most human argument, the most intentional of all pre-fall Genesis 1-2 dictates – the equality of every person having been born free.

The Theological Beliefs of Angelina Grimké Refuting Slavery

The word Christian in “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South” frames Grimké’s theological assumption that slaves should be free. Every paragraph, almost every line, is premised upon biblical principles. To report each and every biblical citation would necessitate an addendum to this essay. Central to her premise was what she could never forget: “slaves were human beings, with rights and needs” (Lerner 80). Contrary to innate human dignity, God-given human rights, natural law, and the teachings of Jesus, slavery was an abomination to Grimké. But she wanted to tailor her “Appeal” to knit a Southern female audience to her position.

Grimké’s tact is to warm and welcome, an introduction on par with the Apostle Paul’s New Testament epistolary greetings. Grimké seeks to woo women with “sympathy,” “sincerity,” and “calmness.” She motivates with “tenderness and love,” claiming allegiance with her audience, being fellow “members” and “one in Christ” (126). Like Douglass, Grimké travels outside the Bible, borrowing the words of others such as Jonathan Dymond in his Principles of Morality to make her case. She returns again and again to America’s founding documents to buttress her rationale; a connection
between her and Douglass which ought not to be lost. Her opening eases into the conversation. Grimké’s voice is anything but sarcastic or caustic; rather the “light” is allowed to illumine man’s “puny efforts” (128).

Grimké immediately cites biblical origins as both motive and objective against the ownership of humans. Her references to Genesis 1 and 9 with corollaries from Psalm 8 establish “the first charter of human rights . . . given by God” (128-29). Lacerating the hermeneutics of those who would find functionary slavery in the Bible, Grimké logically resets the argument in the plain sense of Scripture apart from any “Enlightenment language of experience [or] individualism” (Brekus 17-43). Grimké submits her tactic through the biblical authority judgments of “woe.” She finalizes her approach with seven propositions, weaving Divine imperatives with human law (147). Her propositions include, but are not limited to, the following: 1. Slavery’s antithesis with the American Declaration, 2. The reverse of God’s original intent in Genesis 1-2, 3. The lack of slavery within the Hebrew patriarchs, 4. The repudiation of slavery throughout the whole Old Testament teachings, and 5. Slavery’s antithesis with Jesus and His apostles.

For those who would then ask what women could do to “overthrow the system,” Grimké posits four approaches: read, pray, speak, and act (148-50). Returning to biblical authority as her source, she implores others to “search the Scriptures” as Bereans (Acts 17:11) allowing the “words of Jesus” to adjudicate slavery’s sanction. Prayer, then, Grimké tells her readers, should “open your eyes” (Ps. 119:18) to slavery’s sinfulness. As elsewhere, she piles Bible references one upon another, each a conviction on its own to any caring Christian. Convinced of its sinfulness from prayer and Bible reading, Grimké now calls on her hearers to speak, “pleading the cause of the oppressed.” Action focused, Grimké requests numerous times to educate slaves if for no other reason than “that they might read the Bible” (149), that they may act for themselves.

Grimké knows her audience well. Pro-slavery opponents reason that teaching slaves to read is against state law. Again, Grimké applies her abolitionist apologetic-evangelism. Stacking passage upon passage, Grimké’s questions are given answers directly from Scripture (150). Countering yet another objection, Grimké says the wrong consequences of right action on the part of her hearers are not their concern; they are responsible to God’s law.² Returning to the importance of law, Grimké disavows the slaveholder’s “dangerous” and “heretical” response to what she sees is the clear teaching of the Bible. She will accept jail time through an unjust system over the wanton sinfulness of slavery (162-63).

Speaking from a position of strength, willing to “endure persecution” for her belief, Grimké links all women to strong women in the Bible who have gone before them: Miriam, Deborah, Jael, Huldah, Esther, Elizabeth, Anna, Mary Magdalene, women at the empty tomb, and even Pilate’s wife (165). The heroism of biblical women is then seen in the lives of Elizabeth Heyrik (the progenitor of English abolitionism) and multiple Anti-Slavery Societies. Here Grimké utilizes all she has established thus far to heap affective words of conviction upon her audience: moral suasion, conscience, and repentance against evil, oppression, and wrong. Her intent is to wake up the “sleeper,” focused on God-given “unalienable rights” and away from God’s “retributive justice” (159).

To save themselves and the South from “the sins of the people,” Grimké revisits the promotion of strong women from the past who have stood “in the majesty of moral power.” Biblical markers reappear as well: line after line of biblical reference propel Grimké from origins (all people are made in “the image of God”) to outcomes (care for “the widow and the orphan”). Grimké sets the record straight, obliterating the claims of those who contend the claims of abolitionists are a lie, or worse, insurrectionist. Grimké’s finale comes from a woman who has firsthand knowledge of a “horrible system,” who unmask the “frightful features” of “Juggernaut,” the blood-letting of American slavery. As in her opening, her closing reflects a biblical approach. Grimké recalls her “duty” accordingly
“sowing seeds of truth” with “fervent prayer,” sending “blessings” with a concluding flurry of biblical allusions (157).

Conclusion

Synthesizing the abolitionist beliefs of Douglass and Grimké must take into account a Christian persuasion premised in the Bible. From this study, some tentative theological roots take hold. First, plain to every literary connoisseur, the contribution of any writer is born of deep personal commitment. Douglass’s ability to read, write, and speak unlocked his own shackles. Actual knowledge of servitude was the emotional wellspring of his abolitionist drive. Grimké’s slaveholder household was the wedge her conscience needed to lift her own thinking up and out of slavery’s dirt. Writing and speaking born of individual resolution dug a new planting, a renewed root, replacing the weed of bondage with the flower of abolitionism.

Second, nothing could be plainer than the importance of the Bible for abolition’s apologists. Argumentation from Douglass and Grimké found its sustenance from minds fertilized with Scriptural nutrients. The culture of 19th century America was suffused with a captivity-oppression mentality; it cannot be argued otherwise. Yes, those already given to a suppression mentality misinterpreted, misconstrued, and misapplied Bible passages to maintain their dominant claims. Yet, preachers, pundits, and printers of the day gave evidence diametrically opposed to said discriminatory claims. Slave owner hermeneutics had an economically, culturally tinted lens. A verbatim, history-based interpretation of biblical texts, however, is premised upon the original intention of the author for the original audience. Appropriating and imposing 19th century zeitgeist on Scripture corrupted the Bible, making it say whatever anyone wanted it to say.

To the third point, hermeneutical differences in biblical interpretation, which posit divergent ethical grounding, need to be understood within the context of diverse ethnicities. A white slaveholder will fashion “right and wrong” based on an economics-centered reading. A black slave will understand good and evil based on a justice-centered reading. It is no surprise, then, to discover any group’s theology can be driven by its sociology. Scaffolded built on the second point above finds originalism to be the key component of any interpretation, no matter ethnicity, nationality, linguistics, or geography. Abolitionists held that theology is the foundation for sociology, not the other way around.

Fourth, a belief born of transcendent principle, yet allied immediately to immanent concerns, was followed by both authors. Yes, a biblical vantage point has a Heavenly origin. But a biblical vantage point without personal, relevant, universal application is direction deprived of accountability. Again and again, Douglass and Grimké posit their principles on a literal-historical hermeneutic (e.g., written in a time-space context) for ubiquitous application. Both authors depend on the authoritative voice of Scripture’s text. If the Bible has no authority, why quote it, why believe it, or why say “Thus says the Lord”?

Persuasiveness born of personal travail, both of conscience and circumstance has motivational value in the fifth place. Application to life is sustained by conviction. If an authority is to be believed and its tenets enacted, evangelists for the cause should promote its principles. Some, in the vein of Job, hence Douglass, have sustained the personal blows and beatings which drive one’s motivation. Others, in the vein of Saul-turned-Paul, Grimké’s case, are motivated by a mindset transformation. Both parties confirm their allegiance, albeit driven from different pressures. An outside text, properly interpreted in its originalism, making humans responsible to an authority from which ethical accountability is drawn,
now becomes a message to the masses. Any movement needs both kinds of speakers; those driven from the outside by their experience and those enthused from the inside, by their change of heart.

However, it should not be supposed that right belief automatically leads to right behavior. In the sixth place, the historian notes the complexity of rooted, intertwined origins of conflict between the dogmas of North and South. A person may subscribe to an authority while casting a blind eye toward the practice of righteous, personal responsibility. Holding others to standards of conduct is much easier than following through on personal commitments. The best of intentions, well-adorned external displays of piety, can be circumvented by an unconscious reticence to acknowledge its personal application. What one says and how one acts may or may not align with one’s own theological pledge.

Whatever else might be said, in the seventh place, motivation, intention, and passion to speak, write, and act on behalf of others for the perceived ethical rightness of abolitionism was the end result of adherence to biblical mandates. One can note the hypocrisy of one historic perception in retrospect but must also give credence to the corrective. Scripture can be twisted, but that does not mean its validity is compromised. If Douglass and Grimké are to be lauded for their views of abolitionism, the Bible must be understood as the progenitor of their stance.

Considering that the texts studied in this essay were written in the early years of both Douglass and Grimké, it should be noted that belief and action do not necessarily remain in stasis. Just two years after her famous “Appeal,” Grimké married fellow abolitionist Theodore Weld. Her most influential writing came that same year: *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*. She spoke and wrote less frequently thereafter, though her witness emboldened many others to maintain abolition’s cause (Abzug 210-11). Frederick Douglass continued his abolitionist speaking and writing for decades more after his famous “Fourth of July” speech. His path, however, led him toward more of an activist approach. Giving his speech in 1852, Douglass was frustrated by the seemingly small impact of his words, in attempts to move others to his position (Oakes 279-85). Approach and method are crucial. If one views their former tact to have had no effect, they may opt for an engagement, which seems to offer a swifter solution.

Nevertheless, Biblical authority catapulted abolitionist sentiments forward. Abolitionists such as Douglass and Grimké rooted their arguments in Christian theology to stand against the atrocities of slavery. They seeded the delivery of their writings by sowing transcendent principles from the Christian scriptures. What is assumed to be authoritative, however, can easily devolve into arguments advanced because of external pressures. Noll demonstrates that experiential, individualistic, materialistic, and ethnic perceptions did supplant unbiased interpretations from Scripture (Noll 62). If cultural conformity is allowed to sustain views antithetic to Christian theology, the very standard is denigrated. Those privileged and positioned, leading up to The Civil War, held the reasoning of a free rational mind as a cultural distinction. Logic ruled, words mattered, and cogent thought was esteemed. A culture suffused in such literary commitments still came to such disparate positions on slavery, supposedly premised on the Bible.

In the present context, similar ideological and theological bifurcations can be found. Groups, depending on their doctrinal or sociological persuasion, bend toward one set of biblical paths while minimizing or eliminating equivalent parallel directives in the other direction. Some would consider that law and order born of God’s creational edicts should take precedence in any discussion concerning illegal immigration, for instance. The same topic, seen through the lens of another group, will find the assembly standing on passages that promote a universal care for strangers. Interactions with other ethnicities find Christians agreeing that all people are made in God’s image. Depending upon the group, however, some would focus concerns on historical problems reverberating through law enforcement treatment. Others who view life as a matter of personal responsibility over ethnic experience will side
with police. The future of ecclesiastical authority can speak into 21st century issues when relational, conversational opportunities are taken. Instead of emotive, echo chamber, “othering,” The Church as a whole can establish baseline biblical declarations to which all believers can accede. The examples of Douglass and Grimké provide deep theological roots for abolitionism as The Church plants the seed of The Word in any cultural context.

Works Cited

Alcott, Louisa May. *Hospital Sketches,* n.d.
______. “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” *The Essential Douglass: Selected Writings and Speeches,* edited by Nicholas Buccola, Hackett, 2016, pp. 50-71.


McKivigan, Jack. “Re: Frederick Douglass Papers.” Received by Mark Eckel, 15 April 2018.


Jane Beal

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings...

~ from “Pied Beauty”

I caught this morning morning’s minion, king-
dom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy!

~ from “The Windover”

And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

~ from “God’s Grandeur”

Gerard Manley Hopkins (July 28, 1844 - June 8, 1889) was an extraordinary English poet and a Jesuit priest with a naturalist’s eye for the flora and fauna of the landscape around him. He detailed his observations of the natural world in journals, which include his pencil sketches alongside verbal descriptions of what he saw. The potential of his observational practice is realized in many of his poems and especially in three sonnets that he wrote in 1877: “Pied Beauty,” “The Windover,” and “God’s Grandeur.” Taken together, the poems reflect his Trinitarian orthodoxy, for the first concerns God the Father; the second, God the Son, Jesus; and the third, God the Holy Spirit. They convey the poet’s profound recognition of the transcendent God’s Presence in Creation.

The religious, meditative quality of these poems is well-known and widely-acknowledged. So too is their starting point and source of inspiration: the beauty of the natural world – especially its avifauna. Hopkins certainly noticed the “finches’ wings” he mentions in “Pied Beauty” and the Common Kestrel he describes in “The Windover” in nature. The traditional, biblical comparison of the Holy Spirit to the dove also appears to have a direct connection to his lived experience, for he wrote in a
letter to his friend, a fellow student from Oxford and England’s poet laureate, Robert Bridges, of birds brooding and making their nests in boughs. As this essay will show, the birds in these poems are revealed through Hopkins’s poetic descriptions, but their significance is heightened, and indeed, transformed, to align with the themes of his poems. These themes are God’s immutability, God’s immanence, and God’s intimate care for the created world.

Three major cultural developments in Hopkins’s Victorian society provide contexts for interpreting these sonnets and their avian imagery: theories of natural selection, the invention of photography, and the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Evidence from Hopkins’s life and letters shows his awareness of “Darwinism”; ephemera associated with Hopkins and his extended family, including the carte de visite, show his familiarity with the popularity of portrait photography. The poet certainly echoes the complaints of other nineteenth-century poets about the damaging effects of industrialization. The evidence of his general knowledge of these wide-spread cultural shifts in Victorian England lends support to a literary-critical investigation of how Hopkins may be responding to such developments in his sonnets in ways that previously have not been recognized.

As this essay will suggest, Hopkins’s reference to “finches’ wings” in “Pied Beauty” can be read as a subtle response to Charles Darwin’s use of “Galapagos finches,” described in a study Darwin published as a prelude to On the Origin of the Species (1859); this reading is consonant with the theme of God’s immutability celebrated in the poem. In “The Windover,” Hopkins appears to be incorporating Henry Fox Talbot’s pioneering developments in photography in his description of a Common Kestrel. In his book, The Pencil of Nature (1844-46), Talbot described photography as “light” that “draws” pictures. Likewise, Hopkins writes of how the dawn has “dawned” the windover that he equates with Christ, a comparison which supports the theme of God’s immanence in the poem. Finally, in “God’s Grandeur,” Hopkins contrasts the effects of industrialization, which he associates with the Fall, to the ongoing, intimate, and creative care of the Holy Spirit for the world, which he depicts in terms of a mother bird’s nesting behavior.

In order to explore how Hopkins does all of these things in his 1877 sonnets, it will first be useful to understand more about the poet as a naturalist, especially in relation to the development of amateur ornithology in Victorian England.

**Hopkins and the Art of Birdwatching**

How did Hopkins develop his interest in birding among his other interests in nature, in “sunsets, cloud effects, water, bluebells, the varieties of surface effects” to which “he gave permanence in words as in drawings in the Journal” (Harrison 449)? Certainly his own family, especially his father, fostered Hopkins’s love of the natural world. Hopkins’s father Manley Hopkins was a poet himself, publishing a volume he called A Philosopher’s Stone and Other Poems (1843) a year before Hopkins was born, from which Hopkins later copied eleven poems into his own Oxford notebooks. Lines from “To a Beautiful Child” particularly suggest that Hopkins’s father wanted his own children to have a love of Nature:

---

1 For further discussion of the influence of his father on his poetry, see “Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844-1889,” The Poetry Foundation. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gerard-manley-hopkins. The quotation from Manley Hopkins’s “To a Beautiful Child,” cited in this essay, is taken from that source.
... thy book
Is cliff, and wood, and foaming waterfall;
Thy playmates – the wild sheep and birds that call
Hoarse to the storm; – thy sport is with the storm
To wrestle; – and thy piety to stand
Musing on things create, and their Creator’s hand!

Just as Wordsworth wrote, “the Child is Father to the Man,” so surely did Manley Hopkins’s child, Gerard Manley Hopkins, grow into a man who was an acute observer of nature with a reverence not only for it but also for its Creator-God.

Hopkins developed the love of nature and love of God that his father hoped he would, but he also developed specific concepts to help him perceive and describe nature. He invented a set of two key terms familiar to readers of Hopkins’s writings: inscape and instress. Inscape has to do with individually distinctive beauty; instress, with the human capacity for recognition of inscape, which Hopkins understood to be a sudden apprehension as of an electrical impulse or divine spark (Ramazani 65).

As Stephen Greenblatt has written: [Hopkins] felt that everything in the universe was characterized by what he called inscape, the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity. This identity is not static but dynamic. Each being in the universe “selves,” that is, enacts its identity. And the human being, the most highly selved, the most individually distinctive being in the universe, recognizes the inscape of other beings in an act that Hopkins calls instress, the apprehension of an object in an intense thrust of energy toward it that enables one to realize specific distinctiveness. Ultimately, the instress of inscape leads one to Christ, for the individual identity of any object is the stamp of divine creation on it. (2159)

Thus, when Hopkins looked at birds (or, indeed, anything in the natural world), he sought to perceive their inscape, their unique individuality, which he believed was given to them by their Creator, in an act of instress that could lead him to write startlingly beautiful poems.

Beyond his father’s influence, his own remarkable sensitivity, and his theological-theoretical language for perceiving created things in the natural world, Hopkins also lived at a time when ornithology was developing as a scientific discipline and birdwatching was becoming popular among Victorians. His familiarity with this pastime is evident in his own life, but it was not unique to him. Many English people were active birders, and with leisure time and money enough to invest in a pair of “opera glasses” (which could be used as the equivalent of modern-day binoculars, albeit without the high visual resolution modern lenses are capable of), they set out to see English birds and foreign birds alike. Unfortunately, birding in Victorian England, as in America at this time, often meant killing and


collecting dead bird specimens, then stuffing and preserving them in order to put them on display. Fortunately, our poet was not this kind of birder; he preferred to observe live birds, admiring them and writing about them and occasionally drawing them as well.

Ironically, Thomas Harrison has written that Hopkins “had no acquaintance with many varieties of birds; in fact, he named a total of only twenty-six: nineteen in the Notebooks; seven new ones in his verse” (448). Harrison’s remark can be made in light of our present-day knowledge of birds, which is quite extensive, but by Victorian standards, Hopkins actually could be considered a respectable amateur birdwatcher. Among the birds he certainly knew were the Cormorant, Corncrake, Cuckoo, Domestic Pigeon, Duck, Eagle, Golderest, Grouse, Heron, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Nightingale, Owl, Pheasant, Rock Dove, Raven, Rook, Skylark, Starling, Swallow, Swan, Swift, Throstle, Woodlark, and Woodpigeon, all of which, as Harrison observes, Hopkins names directly. 4 Of course, Hopkins may have known other birds by sight, sound, or reading that he did not have occasion to name in his journals, notebooks, poems, letters, sermons or other writings. In fact, Harrison’s list is incomplete, as Hopkins certainly knew something about finches, which he mentions in his poem, “Pied Beauty.”

With this detail in mind, along with the other contexts briefly discussed above, it is possible to turn to a consideration of “Pied Beauty” itself, after which will come a consideration of “The Windover” and, finally, a reading of “God’s Grandeur.”

“Finches’ Wings”: Darwinism, Creative Fathering, and Unnecessary Beauty in Nature

Seven months after Charles Darwin published On the Origin of the Species (1859), on June 30, 1860, the book’s thesis was hotly debated at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Although it was a group discussion, two men stood out in the vehemence with which they took opposing sides: Thomas Henry Huxley, arguing for the scientific validity of Darwin’s book, and Samuel Wilberforce, arguing against the idea that man could be descended from a monkey. This event became known to history as the “Oxford Evolution Debate,” and it presaged later debates. Yet despite the stir caused in educated scientific circles, Darwin’s ideas were little noted by the general public, at least in the first twelve years after publication. 5

4 From the first footnote to Harrison’s 1957 essay in Studies in Philology: “The Note-Books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Humphry House (London and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937): heron (pp. 8, 166); rook (p. 8); lapwing (“peewit”) (p. 10); cuckoo (pp. 123, 144, 175, 176) ; duck (p. 144); cormorant (p. 162); hawk (pp. 162, 166, 179, 203, 209); gull (p. 166); golderest (p. 169); pheasant and grouse (p. 171); corncrake and swift (p. 175); domestic pigeon (p. 176); wood- pigeon (p. 186); nightingale (p. 191); owl (p. 209); starling and swan (p. 215). Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, first ed. Robert Bridges, third ed. W. H. Gardner (London and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948): domestic pigeon and rock dove (no. 10); swallow (nos. 10 and 97); nightingale (no. 21); woodpigeon (“dove,” “wooddove”) (nos. 11 and 46); rook (no. 11); thrrostle (nos. 33 and 42); skylark (nos. 25 and 39); cuckoo (nos. 42, 44, 77, and 108); kestrel (“windhover,” “hawk”) (nos. 36 and 121); eagle (no. 78); woodlark (no. 100); kingfisher (no. 57); raven (no. 79).” (448).

5 See Alvar Ellegard, Darwin and the General Reader: The Reception of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution in the British Periodical Press, 1859-1872, which shows although Darwin’s book caused immediate reactions in the scientific journals of the time, the popular press generally ignored it; only when the theological implications were realized did wider-spread debate ensue.
Darwin argued in his book that the existence of differing, but related, species could be explained through the process of natural selection. By this he meant that certain species adapted to their environments: the traits that helped them to survive were passed on to their descendants; those later generations competed more successfully for limited resources in the environment (food, water, shelter); and so, by this kind of natural selection, species diverged from one another and multiplied. All species, Darwin theorized, could be traced back to only a few (perhaps only one) species while the “struggle for existence” determined which of the differentiating species would be perpetuated and which would become extinct. Darwin explicitly denied the compatibility of his theory with “natural theology” or “intelligent design,” and this is what later led to more general debate in Victorian England, where the state religion was Anglican Christianity and the explanation for the origin of the world and all its creatures was understood to be found in Genesis 1-3, wherein it is depicted that God spoke all things into existence.

Hopkins was fifteen years old when Darwin published *On the Origin of the Species* and his ideas were beginning to circulate, but by August 18, 1888, when he was forty-three, Hopkins was answering a letter to his friend Robert Bridges who had claimed that “everything is Darwinism.” His answer to his friend’s claim was to agree that although Darwinism (sic natural selection) was widespread (presumably in its operation in nature, not just in the knowledge of Victorian Englishmen), “something more than mechanical” was implied by the work of bees in creating the intricacies of their honeycombs:

Grant in the honey bee some principle of symmetry and uniformity, and you have passed beyond mechanical necessity ... at the present stage of the bee’s condition, [it has] nothing to do with mechanics, but it is like the specific songs of cuckoo and thrush.


Hopkins seems to be alluding here to the idea that not every trait or adaptation of a species can be explained by mechanical necessity, that is, by the need to survive in a particular environment. Instead, species like bees and birds exhibit “something more than mechanical” in their hives and their songs: beauty. Beauty is unnecessary to the survival of the species. Hopkins implies that beauty cannot be explained by natural selection. Indeed, given his Christian worldview, it is really not surprising that Hopkins believed that the beauty manifested by diverse creatures in nature is better explained by the work of a creative Father-God.

This idea was not new to Hopkins when he wrote this letter. He seems to have been considering it as early as 1877, when he wrote his curtal sonnet, “Pied Beauty.” In the poem, Hopkins lists several “dappled things,” several aspects of the created world that are “pied,” and which therefore catch the attention of the senses, especially the sense of sight, with their unnecessary beauty. He begins the sonnet by saying, “Glory be to God for dappled things—”; he ends it by saying, “He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: / Praise him.” These declarations make his sonnet a poem of praise in the tradition of the biblical Psalms that Hopkins loved. In addition, “Pied Beauty” may also be a subtle counter-argument to the Darwinism that was first debated at Oxford in 1860, where Hopkins himself went to be educated between 1863-67 at Balliol College, studying classics and making the decision to become a Roman Catholic in 1866.

The main contrast developed in the poem is between the pied, dappled, changeable world that God has “fathered-forth” and the creative Father-God himself, who is “past change.” Among the

---

“dappled things” that Hopkins lists are “skies of couple-colour” (line 2), the “rose-moles” on “trout that swim” (line 3), falling chestnuts and “finches’ wings” (line 4), landscapes that have been “plotted and pieced” (line 5) – and indeed, “all things counter, original, spare, strange; whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)” (lines 7-8). Hopkins’s description of the pied beauty in the world evokes that beauty’s “counter” (sic contradictory), “strange” nature, and the poet specifically asks, “Who knows how ...?” it came to be as it is. This question seems to leave open the many ways that the very God his poem praises could have allowed his creative speech acts to bring his creation and his creatures into existence.7 The reference to “finches’ wings” is subtly instructive.

Before he published On the Origin of the Species, Darwin wrote about Galapagos finches in a significant precursor study: The Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of H. M. S. Beagle, 2nd ed. (1846). Darwin suggested in this study that the Galapagos finches’ beaks, which appear to be adapted to allow them to obtain different types of food in varied environments around the islands, provide evidence in support of his theory of natural selection. He specifically wrote, “Seeing this gradation and diversity of structure in one small, intimately-related group of birds, one might really fancy that, from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species had been taken and modified for different ends” (2: 147-8). To this day, the variation in the beak shapes of Galapagos finches remains a key example in teaching about the adaptation of traits in species due to natural selection in their competitive environments.8 Darwin, however, did not comment on finches’ wings.

Yet the beauty of finches’ wings is one vivid example among Hopkins’s many instances of unnecessary “pied beauty” in the natural world that so delights him. That beauty is, as Hopkins wrote of bees’ hives and birds’ songs, “something more than mechanical.” Hopkins is particularly interested in the unnecessary beauty that suggests the involvement of a creative Father-God in the making of the world. It is this interest which may be his own subtle response to the Darwinism that had been debated at Oxford only a few years before he arrived there. Certainly he was reflecting on many things in 1877, the year he wrote “Pied Beauty” and was ordained as a Jesuit priest, soon after which he became a teacher at Mount St. Mary’s College in Chesterfield and then, in December 1878, a curate at St. Aloysius’s Church, Oxford. His plans to return to the city of dreaming spires may have put him in mind of many things he had encountered there during his undergraduate education.

7 For more on this point, see Cary H. Plotkin, “Towards a Poetics of Transcendence after Charles Darwin,” Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review 2 (1995); made electronically available here: http://www.gerardmanleyhopkins.org/studies/charles_darwin.html. Plotkin cites a letter Hopkins wrote to his mother in which Hopkins implies it might be possible to remain theologically orthodox and yet still accept some aspects of Darwin’s ideas.

This may help to explain why “Pied Beauty” reveals the particular beauty of finches’ wings rather than the wings of any other dappled bird. Hopkins is using a revelation of avian imagery in his poem to make a subtle argument about unnecessary beauty. This is deliberately done to effect the transformation of his reader’s understanding of God’s immutability in a mutable world— even a world in which Darwin’s theory of natural selection may cause debate about the origins of the species.

“Dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon”: Photography, the Christ-Knight, and the Colors of the Crucifixion

A few short years before Hopkins was born, in the same years that Darwin was sailing on the *H.M.S. Beagle*, Henry Fox Talbot was inventing photography in England. In tribute to this new art, and to show what photography was capable of, Talbot published six installments of the very first book to be illustrated with photographs, a book that he called *The Pencil of Nature*. Publication took place between 1844–46, which were the very same years in which Hopkins was born and grew to be a two-year-old toddler. During Hopkins’s lifetime, the art of photography would spread throughout England and make a deep impression on Victorian culture.

This was not only generally true, but also specifically true of the micro-culture of Hopkins’s family, which was an artistic one. Hopkins seems to have inherited his poetic inclinations from his father, who was publishing poems before and during his son’s life, while Hopkins’s penchant for drawing was fostered by a creative aunt; his sisters painted and had their paintings shown publically.

9 See “Hawfinch,” available at: [http://voice.gardenbird.co.uk/all-about-the-hawfinch/](http://voice.gardenbird.co.uk/all-about-the-hawfinch/). According to the British Woodland Trust, there are twelve types of finches in the UK, including the Brambling, bullfinch, chaffinch, common crossbill, goldfinch, greenfinch, hawfinch, linnet, redpoll, twite, Scottish crossbill, and siskin. For photographs of these finches, which Hopkins may have known in his day, see [https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2017/03/british-finch-identification-guide/](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2017/03/british-finch-identification-guide/).

10 Talbot called his photographs “calotypes.” At approximately the same time, the daguerreotype was being invented in France. However, the process of producing these photographic images is very different. Thus Talbot is rightfully credited with inventing photography in England.
(“Gerard Manley Hopkins”). His knowledge of photography, however cursory, is undeniable: he had his own photograph taken more than once, and he received from others their portrait photographs in the form of carte de visite, that is, in the form of small photographs the size of a visiting card that were made of albumen and mounted on paper. His friend Robert Bridges once sent his photograph to Hopkins in a letter, and Hopkins replied in another letter thanking him for it (Letter XVI). Although Hopkins himself did not become a photographer, like writer Lewis Carroll or Julia Margaret Cameron (whose soft-focus portrait photographs influenced the Pre-Raphaelites and sought, as she said, “to capture beauty”), Hopkins was certainly aware of developments in the art of photography.

A significant development was Talbot’s aforementioned Pencil of Nature, the title of which highlights his primary metaphor in the book. Talbot supposes that light is like a pencil, the pencil that Nature uses to draw photographs – that is, when using the photographic techniques Talbot pioneered to produce images on paper. In a note that he inserted with his book, Talbot wrote, “The plates of the present work are impressed by the agency of Light alone, without any aid whatever from the artist's pencil. They are the sun-pictures themselves, and not, as some persons have imagined, engravings in imitation” (“The Photography Criticism CyberArchive”). This presented to the public the idea that Nature draws with light.

It is an interesting but worthwhile exercise to read “The Windover: To Christ Our Lord” with this idea in mind, seeing the poem as a whole as a kind of verse-photograph and specific lines in it as possibly alluding to Talbot’s metaphor. Unlike “Pied Beauty,” which lists many beautiful aspects of nature, “The Windover” focuses on only one: the Common Kestrel, also called the European kestrel (Falco tinnunculus), which was known in plain English as the windover. Using vigorous language, alliteration, and his signature “sprung rhythm,” Hopkins vividly depicts the bird. He calls the windover “morning’s minion” (line 1) or messenger and “the kingdom of daylight’s dauphin” (line 2) or prince, observing its “hurl and gliding” (line 6) in a “big wind” (line 7) and praising its “mastery,” “brute beauty and valour” (lines 8-9).

Hopkins also called the windover a “dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon” (line 2). In “Pied Beauty,” we have already encountered Hopkins’s delight in things that are “dappled” or “pied,” and here again, he uses the word dapple to describe, apparently (as suggested by the hyphenation), both the dawn and the falcon. However, he also uses another adjective, drawn, to describe how the Falcon is either drawn to the light or by the light. Both senses are possible; the latter reading is in keeping with Talbot’s metaphor. When interpreted in the second sense, how specifically does the “light” draw or depict the windover? As subsequent lines suggest, the light draws the bird as a type of Christ.11

11 Thomas Harrison compared this “drawing” to painting: “The opening of the sonnet depicts the windover similarly as if it were a painting: ‘I caught up this morning ... dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon.’ The bird has been drawn by dawn (to his hunting), he is now ‘caught’ motionless against the dappled dawn, drawn, etched, by reason of his hovering, as if […] ‘painted on the air.’ The act of hovering is now described as ‘his riding / Of the rolling level underneath him steady air.’ The poet has dwelt upon the hovering act – the unique habit which has enabled him to catch the bird flying and yet not flying but drawn against the morning sky” (759). See Thomas Harrison, “The Birds of Gerard Manley Hopkins,” Studies in Philology 53:3 (1957), 448-63.

12 This is the view of Norman MacKenzie, who argues, as Hilda Hollis paraphrases, “that the falcon is an image of a strong Christ descending to earth to save humanity and an image that demands strength from the poet to lead a life of suffering” (434). See Hilda Hollis, “Another Bird?: Counterpoint in ‘The Windover,’” Victorian Poetry 40 (2002), 433-43. See also Norman H MacKenzie, A Reader’s Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 76-84.
In the second half of the sonnet, Hopkins directly addresses the windover as “O my chevalier!” Calling the windover his “chevalier” is particularly significant in light of the poem’s subtitle or dedication, “To Christ Our Lord.” A chevalier is, of course, a knight; the word entered the English language from French (ca. 1250-1300).\textsuperscript{14} In addition to the archaic meaning of \textit{knight}, the word denotes a chivalrous man or a cavalier (horseman), a title of rank in the old nobility, and a member of certain orders of honor or merit.\textsuperscript{15} Thus the word has connotations of honor, nobility, and chivalry, and to the extent that Hopkins identifies the windover with Christ, these denotative and connotative meanings of \textit{chevalier} present a picture of the bird as an avian Christ-Knight.

Especially in medieval literature, Jesus was not only the Good Shepherd, but also the Christ-Knight, understood in terms of courtly conventions as a faithful lover and a noble cavalier, ready to do battle on behalf of those faithful to him and to whom he is faithful.\textsuperscript{16} Rosemary Woolf has observed, “One of the commonest allegories in medieval preaching books and manuals of instruction is that of Christ the lover-knight ... The popularity of the theme undoubtedly arose from its exceptional fitness to express the dominant idea of medieval piety, that Christ endured the torments of the Passion in order to

\textsuperscript{13} See “Common Kestrel or European Kestrel (Falco tinnunculus),” available at \url{https://www.pinterest.com/pin/34410384633404141/?lp=true}.

\textsuperscript{14} Hopkins’ rhyme scheme makes clear that he intends the English, not the French, pronunciation in this line – rhyming with “here,” not “day.”

\textsuperscript{15} “Chevalier,” \textit{Dictionary.com}. See \url{https://www.dictionary.com/browse/chevalier}.

\textsuperscript{16} On this subject, see Rosemary Woolf, “The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature,” \textit{The Review of English Studies} 14, No. 49 (1962), 1-16.
win man’s love” (1). It is in this sense that Hopkins appears to be addressing the windover as Christ, for what follows this apostrophe is a description of the colors of the kestrel in the morning light. The colors Hopkins sees, and the way he evokes them in words, recall the colors of the Crucifixion.

Hopkins emphasizes in the final line of the poem those colors traditionally associated with Christ’s Crucifixion in medieval iconography: gold, symbolizing holiness, and vermillion, symbolizing the atoning blood and everlasting love of God.

No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion. (lines 12-14)

Just as the plough overturning the soil makes the underside of the earth shine when exposed, so the “blue-bleak embers” of the kestrel’s blue-gray head are imagined as falling as the bird dives downward in air, and then turning into the fire-bright “gold-vermillion.” Literally, the colors of the kestrel’s back and upper-wings are ruddy, and in the light of morning could also be golden. But more significantly, gold and vermillion (a brilliant red) are the colors associated with the Crucifixion. By using the verbs gash and gall to describe how these colors suddenly become visible in the morning light as the kestrel flies, Hopkins evokes Christ’s suffering at the time of the Crucifixion. That the poet cries out “ah my dear!” as he sees the kestrel’s colors gives readers an idea of the poet’s own affective piety: his strong, emotional devotion to his Christ-knight, vividly recalled as he meditates on the flight of the windover.

In his sonnet “The Windover,” Hopkins thus reveals a vivid picture of the Common Kestrel, one that could be characterized as a kind of verse-photograph. This revelation in nature, “drawn” by the light of dawn, is paired in Hopkins’s thinking with transformation: he uses avian imagery in this case to depict the windover as a type of avian Christ-Knight. The kestrel thus represents far more than other birds in Victorian poetry. Hopkins’s windover is a symbol of Christ, whose colors remind the poet of the Crucifixion and call forth the poet’s own strong, emotional devotion to the Savior, his “chevalier.” Thus the transcendent God, made manifest in Christ and depicted as a kestrel in Hopkins’s poem, is revealed as immanent in Creation: drawn by the dawn light.

“Over the bent / World broods”: Industrialization, the Holy Spirit, and Divine Care for Creation

Even before the decades during which Darwin was formulating his theories and Henry Fox Talbot was experimenting with photography, England was rapidly becoming an industrialized nation. The invention of the steam engine, the proliferation of factories, and the urbanization that depopulated the countryside and resulted from the employment of poor men, women, and children in cities caused English life to change perhaps more drastically in the Victorian era than ever before. Industrialization created new economic opportunity, often at the cost of human rights and dignity, and Victorian reformers eventually sought to place some limits on the exploitation of workers. Meanwhile, English poets reacted against industrial excesses even before the turn of the century, as can be seen in William Blake’s two versions of “The Chimney Sweeper” in Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, as well as in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft and, later, her daughter, Mary Shelley (in Frankenstein), among others.

17 One example of a bird more or less literally described in Victorian poetry is the golden eagle of Tennyson’s poem, “The Eagle,” famous for the last line, “like a thunderbolt, he falls” (line 6).
Hopkins’s sonnet “God’s Grandeur” can be read in light of the problems of industrialization in Victorian England. As a Christian, Hopkins sees industrialization in terms of the curse of Genesis 3, which obliged men to work by the sweat of their brow to bring forth crops from the soil because of their disobedience in the Fall. The curse had negative effects not only on humanity, but on the earth itself. At the same time, Hopkins sees Nature, created by God before the Fall, as “never spent” – an idea not uncommonly found in the writings of earlier Romantic poets, including poems by Charlotte Smith, the mother of English Romanticism, who in her poem “St. Monica,” says that Nature is “ever lovely, ever new.”

The interplay of Hopkins’s Christian beliefs about the Fall and the influence of Romanticism on his thinking about Nature are reflected in his sonnet, which, in its conclusion, moves beyond the problems of industrialization to contemplate the role of the Holy Spirit in divine care for the created world. That care is particularly pictured as mother bird brooding, warmly, over the nest of the world.

“God’s Grandeur” opens with a powerful declaration: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God” (line 1). Hopkins continues by saying that God’s grandeur will “flame out like shining from shook foil” (line 2) and that it “gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil / Crushed” (line 3-4). These images of “foil” and “oil” can be accidentally read by 21st century readers as “industrial” rather than “natural.” When 21st century readers think of foil, they most often imagine the aluminum foil found in their mothers’ kitchens, but the foil Hopkins describes here may be gold foil or gold leaf. The oil, likewise, is not gasoline or motor oil, but the oil found in nature from plants: olive oil, sunflower oil, or the like, which is produced when plant parts (fruit, seed, etc.) are crushed; in other words, this is not the oil that is drilled out of the ground. Both the gold foil and the plant oil have larger, Christian symbolic resonance: gold-leaf was used in Catholic iconographic paintings of the Holy Family and the saints to show their holiness, while anointing oil in the Scriptures has particular significance for the ordination of priests and kings, which had been adopted into early Christian ecclesiastical practices and continued in the Victorian age (as, indeed, it does to this day).

These opening images of God’s grandeur as shining light, evoked by the shaken foil and the gathered ooze of oil, are soon contrasted with a question: “Why do men then now not reck his rod?” (line 4), that is, why do people not respect God’s authority, heed his word, or obey his law? The answer, Hopkins suggests, is the result of the Fall: “... all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil ... the soil is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod” (lines 6, 7b-8). The allusion here is to both Genesis 3 and the realities of industrialization in Victorian England.

Yet in the volta of “God’s Grandeur,” Hopkins writes, “And for all this, nature is never spent; / There lives the dearest freshness deep down things” (line 9-10). This is a surprisingly hopeful turn, apparently echoing William Wordsworth, one of the fathers of English Romanticism, who in his poem “Tintern Abbey,” says that, in Nature, with “the deep power of joy / We see into the life of things.”


19 It is possible that “foil” and “oil” have dual referents. Gold foil is fragile and can break when shaken; tin foil can be shaken and, in light, will give off the “shining” Hopkins describes as well. While olive oil is indeed produced by crushing, so were other oils, including oil from coal that was used to light the first gas lamps in London in Victorian England. Both tin foil and coal oil were produced by industrial processes. I believe Hopkins is thinking of the gold foil and olive oil produced from nature in “God’s Grandeur.” Yet if there is a dual referent in these lines, it could be part of Hopkins’ redemptive theme in the poem. If metaphors to describe God’s grandeur can be drawn even from foil and oil produced from industrial processes, Hopkins could be trying to indicate that God is in the process of redeeming the worst excesses of industrialization.
Hopkins’s meditation in the sestet, the second half of the sonnet, subsequently expands to imagine the disappearance of the “last lights” (stars) from “the black West” (line 11) as morning springs up in the east. The way the stars vanish in the darkness is contrasted with the emergence of the light of dawn. The “black West” is symbolically parallel to the world “bleared” and “smeared” by toil in the preceding octave; the “morning” springing eastward is symbolically parallel to God’s grandeur “flaming out like shook foil.” The light-in-the-dark imagery is certainly expanding, on a global scale, but the final lines of the poem expand Hopkins’s meditation and the perspective of readers even further – to a perspective above the earth in the heavenly realm:

because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings. (lines 13-14)

Without using the word dove here, Hopkins nevertheless directly compares the Holy Spirit to the bird with which the Third Person of the Trinity is most commonly compared in the Scriptures and in Christian iconographic tradition. Hopkins imagines the dove of the Holy Spirit brooding as he did in Genesis 1, when he hovered over the face of the waters, but here specifically and uniquely with a “warm breast” and “bright wings.” This imagery is maternal, representing the Holy Spirit’s divine care for the created world as ongoing, intimate, and regenerative. It is also beautiful: the “bright” wings catch the light that readers have seen earlier in the poem in the “shook foil” and the “last lights.”

The poet’s exclamation “ah! bright wings” may remind readers of earlier exclamations by Hopkins: “O my chevalier!” and “ah, my dear.” There is strong emotion here, too, in “God’s Grandeur,” as before in “The Windover.” It is in response to another kind of strength that God has and that God demonstrates: not just his “fathering-forth,” or his Christ-knight-likeness, but his maternal ability to brood over a world negatively affected by both the Fall and industrialization – his breast warm with love, his wings very bright.20

So Hopkins’s avian imagery reaches its apotheosis in this third sonnet from 1877. Whereas finches were pictured among other pied things of earth, and the windover was regarded on high between heaven and earth, the dove of the Holy Spirit is in “God’s Grandeur” imagined entirely above the earth in a heavenly realm. The Spirit of God is not far from earth, however, but brooding over it, as close to the world as a mother-bird is to her clutch of maturing eggs in a carefully built nest. This was something Hopkins had seen himself in nature; as he wrote in a letter to his friend Robert Bridges, “... a bird built her nest first in one, then in another bough of the same bush” (Letter XXX, p. 40, dated 3 April 1877).21

Hopkins draws on long Christian tradition when he uses avian imagery to depict the Holy Spirit in “God’s Grandeur.” The details of the “warm breast” and “bright wings,” however, come from his observations in nature. As in his other two sonnets, the revelation of the bird is intended to transform his readers’ understanding. God’s immutability was clear in “Pied Beauty,” and his inmanence in “The Windover,” but in “God’s Grandeur,” it is God’s intimate care for the created world that shines through. It is a divine, maternal care that cannot be disempowered by the Fall or industrialization, which are associated with man’s toil, but rather it empowers God’s handmaiden, Nature, which is “never spent.”

20 It should be noted that some male doves brood over their clutches, trading off with their female partners. Whether Hopkins knew this is uncertain.

21 It should be noted that in the context of the letter, Hopkins makes this statement to use it metaphorically in reference to the “Puseyites” rather than about a direct observation in nature; nevertheless, it points to the fact that he did observe such things as birds making their nests and brooding in the boughs of bushes in nature.
Conclusions

Gerard Manley Hopkins once wrote in another letter to Robert Bridges, “I remark that when American poets introduce native trees, flowers, birds, etc. into their verse, the effect to us is of a ‘ciphering’ note on an organ” (Letter CXIII, p. 192, dated 16 April 1884). A ciphering note on an organ is a note that is sticking or sounding all the time (i.e., “ciphering”). This is a rather vivid metaphor, especially as it here relates to the natural world, of which Hopkins was so acute an observer. Hopkins was highly aware of English flora and fauna, but could not visualize as easily American “trees, flowers, birds” on the other side of the Atlantic, with the result that references to them in American poetry stood out in his mind like a musical note out of place that would not stop sounding.

It would be fitting if the same could be said today for American readers of English poetry, and especially the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, which make vivid and often distinctive use of English landscapes, flora and fauna, particularly avifauna. It would prompt further investigation; it would lead to clearer interpretations. For while the “finches’ wings” of “Pied Beauty” could be those of an English hawfinch, they are unlikely to be those of an American Goldfinch, which Hopkins never saw in nature. Furthermore, that the “windover” is not just a generic falcon, but specifically a Common Kestrel, is key to understanding the color symbolism of the poem. The details involved in describing the avian attributes of the Holy Spirit in “God’s Grandeur” come from Hopkins’s attention to brooding birds in nature, and not just Christian iconographic tradition, and this is also significant for appreciating the poem fully.

In general, a better understanding of the revelation of avian imagery in Hopkins’s 1877 sonnets deepens reader appreciation for Hopkins’s transformation of the same imagery. The poet endows his avian imagery with symbolic significance and puts it in dialogue with major developments in Victorian culture, so that it is possible to interpret “finches’ wings” as a response to Darwinism; the “dappled-dawn-drawn Falcon” as a metaphor borrowed in part from the inventor of English photography, Henry Fox Talbot; and the “warm breast” and “ah! bright wings” of the Holy Spirit as the necessary remedy not only for the Fall, but also the rapid industrialization of England. This naturally leads to a greater appreciation of Hopkins’s themes in the poems.

The unnecessary beauty of “finches’ wings” is a reminder of God’s creative fathering and contrasts with God’s immutability in “Pied Beauty.” The windover becomes a picture, a kind of verse-photograph, of the Christ-Knight – Hopkins’s own “chevalier” – and represents God’s immanence in nature in “The Windover.” The Holy Spirit, like a dove brooding over the nest of the world, is continually, maternally, intimately caring for the created world in “God’s Grandeur.” This trinity of sonnets ultimately reveals sacred aspects of the trinitarian Creator-God that Hopkins worshipped, doing so with surprisingly close attention to birds in nature, and making revelation serve to effect the spiritual transformation not only of the poet, but his readers as well.

Works Cited


“Hawfinch,” *Garden Bird.*  Available at:  http://voice.gardenbird.co.uk/all-about-the-hawfinch/.


I am honored to be with you all today, and I would like to thank President Ross and Aaron Lumpkin for the opportunity to share some of the things I have been thinking about with you. My name is Matthew Bardowell, and I am assistant professor of English here at Missouri Baptist University. For the next twenty minutes or so, I want to ask you to think with me about why you are here at MBU—why you are at any university at this time in your life. It is all too common today to think of college as a necessary delay before getting on with your adult life. The thinking seems to be that we need to take this time out from working and making money now so that later we will be able to get jobs to put food on the table. What I would like to propose to you today is this: what if college is not just a delay before entering the “real world”? What if college is a time during which you learn to see what is real so that you will be better able to enter a world full of false appearances?

It is this kind of personal formation—being able to discern what is true, and good, and beautiful—that I want to talk to you about today. And I want to show you how literature can help you become someone who attunes themselves to truth. On the topic of discerning truth in the world, there’s a story about a famous American psychologist, William James, who once gave a talk about the structure of the universe. After the talk, an old woman came up to him and said, “Mr. James, I think your theory about the sun being the center of our solar system and the earth being a ball that revolves around it is very interesting, but it’s wrong. I’ve got a better theory.” James very politely asks, “Well, what is it, madam?” She says, “The earth is not floating around in space, but rather it sits supported upon the back of an enormous turtle.” Thinking about this a moment, James ventures a question: “Well, if that’s true, what is the turtle sitting on?” The woman doesn’t miss a beat. She replies, “I knew you’d ask that, Mr. James, and I have a very good answer: the turtle sits on the back of a second, far larger turtle.” James presses on: “And then what does the second turtle sit on?” he asks. “It’s no use, Mr. James,” says the old woman, “it’s turtles all the way down.”

The story is amusing because, like the old woman, sometimes we accept explanations of the world that seem to make sense in the moment, but, when we’re pressed on the consistency of our views we find that we have taken certain ideas for granted that we rarely if ever reconsider. The reason we don’t reconsider our conceptual bedrock is understandable enough. It takes up a lot of time. It doesn’t produce much of an immediate, practical result. And, after a while, we do have to go to work and put food on the table. But here’s the problem: the world we live in provides us only with appearances. We must inevitably do the work of fitting these appearances into reasonable and coherent ways of thinking, ways of finding value, and ways of determining which of these appearances are good and desirable and which of them are bad and to be avoided. This is where literature can help. As an English professor, I often talk to people about what they like to read, and I often hear that people avoid fiction because they prefer to read things that actually happened. The suggestion seems to be that things that actually happen are of more value to a serious-minded person than a story somebody made up. This sentiment is not at
all new. There have been folks throughout history who have believed as much. In the sixteenth-century an English poet, philosopher, and soldier by the name of Sir Philip Sidney felt that poetry was so devalued that he had to defend it. Listen to what Sidney says when he speaks of those whose area of study is bound to the material world: “the astronomer looking to the stars might fall into a ditch, . . . the inquiring philosopher might be blind in himself, and the mathematician may draw forth a straight line with a crooked heart” (Sidney 190). The poet, however, does not simply show us “what is, but what should and should not be” (199). According to Sidney, the astronomer, the philosopher, and the mathematician are all limited to dealing with whatever they find in the physical world, and if we take only what we see in the physical world as real, then we are materialists. We usually think of materialists as people who love material possessions, and this is true, but a materialist is also someone who only accepts as real what we can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. The poet, on the other hand, is not restricted to the material world. The poet, like our own divine Maker, can invent things of his or her own creation, and in doing so can show the reader not just the world as it is but the world as it should be, could be, might be if we saw past appearances to spiritual truth.

So, the next question would be, how does the poet do this? I suggest that the poet can lead us to the truth behind material appearances through the invention of metaphor. A metaphor is the transfer of names between objects that are different but have some analogous relationship (Drabble 643). For instance, when Jesus calls himself “the good shepherd,” he is using a metaphor (John 10.11). Jesus is not a shepherd, but in naming himself a shepherd he helps us to understand a few things about his nature. The point at which the ideas “Jesus” and “shepherd” come together make up the analogy. Like a shepherd, Jesus cares for his people. Like a shepherd, he will protect us from predators—even to the point of laying down his own life. And notice what Jesus naming himself “the good shepherd” does to us. It makes us sheep. We are transformed into weak, needy creatures. Like sheep, we need to be led. And without the benevolence of the good shepherd, we are hopelessly lost. It’s important to remember that, in terms of appearances, Jesus is not a shepherd. But this is where appearances fail us. Appearances hide deeper, spiritual meaning. Just as Sidney links the poet to God’s creative abilities, we see a similar idea in play when Paul says that God “giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were” (Rom. 4.18). Think about that. In God’s creative act, he calls all that he created from nothing. We literally, “were not,” and because he names us and calls us forth, suddenly, “we were.”

So, literature, then, in its ability to make meaning from metaphor, can help us see truth that the world around us so often conceals. Years ago, when I was an undergrad, I discovered two writers who understood this. And, I’ll say as a side note, discovering thinkers who articulate things you have suspected but did not quite know how to express is one of the joys of a liberal arts education. I hope each of you gets to make a similar discovery during your time here. For me, these thinkers were J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. You probably know a little about them already, if at least from the Lord of the Rings movies and The Chronicles of Narnia. They’re famous for their fantasy literature, but they were also both professors who produced really excellent scholarship. What’s even more remarkable is that they were both friends. They both lectured at Oxford in the mid-1900s, and for many years they and a group of friends known as the Inklings would meet together in the evenings in the back room of their favorite restaurant and share the stories they were writing with one another.

People often associate C.S. Lewis with Christianity perhaps because he became more of a public intellectual than Tolkien did. He would do radio interviews for the BBC, and he wrote several books on the Christian faith and apologetics. But many people don’t know the history of their friendship and how, at the time when Lewis and Tolkien first met, Lewis was a pretty staunch atheist. He did not believe in God, but he loved old stories and the mythologies of distant cultures, and so did Tolkien. The two of them would often take walks through the grounds of one of Oxford’s colleges, and, just so you know
when you take walks in England they’re not called walks, they’re called constitutionals. It was on one of these walks that Lewis, a staunch atheist, raised the topic of mythology with Tolkien, who was himself a staunch Catholic, and with another friend named Hugo Dyson (Carpenter 42-5). They both knew classical mythology, and they were also fond of Norse mythology, and Lewis remarked that he loved the old myths but said exactly what I told you people tell me when they discuss fiction. He said that these old stories were all lies and therefore useless. Tolkien disagreed. He said these old myths are not lies and they are not useless. To illustrate what he means he points to a tree as they pass by. He tells Lewis that we call this a tree, but that is only a name we have given it. We understand this, right? Words are just signs that we give to objects. Each language has its own system of signs that refer back to things. Tolkien continues, “Our words aren’t true in the sense that they actually describe the essence of the objects we talk about. They are tools for speaking to each other so that we can understand one another. “Well,” Tolkien says, “our words are like these myths. Each culture has a different set of myths and of course some of them are interrelated. But just as our words are used to speak about the world, myths are used to speak about the truth.” Consider what this means. Made up stories like the myths Tolkien and Lewis loved so well contain within them some bright spark of reality. They are not themselves the truth, but they help us move beyond the physical things we live among to the spiritual things that live in us. Lewis up to this point had always had a difficult time understanding and accepting the way Jesus’s death and resurrection could have saving power for people who are alive today, but he did always love myths in which gods sacrifice themselves for others. After this conversation, Lewis returns to his home and writes a letter to a friend. He says:

What Dyson and Tolkien showed me was this: that if I met the idea of sacrifice in a Pagan story I didn’t mind it at all . . . I liked it very much and was mysteriously moved by it . . . provided I met it anywhere except in the Gospels; The reason was that in Pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp even tho’ I could not say . . . ‘what it meant’.

Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference[:] that it really happened. (Lewis, Letters, 288-9)

From Lewis’s story, we see that limiting what is true to material things led him astray. The myths he loved all pointed to the reality of Christ, his death and his resurrection, but he couldn’t see the value in them. Is it any wonder that both Lewis and Tolkien turned to fantasy literature in order to describe truth beyond the walls of the physical world?

This idea—the notion of pushing past what we can see to get to truth—is deeply ingrained in both their academic writings and their creative work. They both knew that it was necessary to escape from the confines of the material world, and they also knew how people who only believed in the material world were likely to view such an escape. The term escapism, for example, is usually used in a negative way. It often refers to people who try to escape the real world so they can live in a fantasy world. The thinking goes: the real world can be harsh sometimes, but it’s better than fantasy worlds which are just a lie anyway. Does this sound a bit familiar? In an essay Tolkien writes about fantasy literature, he challenges this negative idea about escape. Tolkien says that when it comes to escape, it matters very much what you’re escaping from and where you’re escaping to. Tolkien writes: “Why should a man be scorned, if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls. The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it” (148). Tolkien here challenges us to reconsider what
we call “the real world.” Often what people mean by that phrase is the world we can see. But what if, just like the prisoner, we only believed in the world right in front of our eyes? Notice what Tolkien says: “the world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it.” And think even further than this: who is it that would love for prisoners to think only about jailers and prison guards? Jailers and prison guards! If we forget the reality, the truth, of the world beyond what we can see, then we have made a prison of the physical world and we have made the Jailer very, very happy.

While Tolkien considers the idea of escape in his academic work, Lewis allows this idea to play out in his fiction. In book four of *The Chronicles of Narnia, The Silver Chair*, the heroes of that story descend to a place buried in the earth called Underland. There they find a young man strapped to a chair—the silver chair from which the book gets its name. The prisoner in this case is young Prince Rilian, who is being held there by an evil witch. The protagonists help to free Rilian and he destroys the silver chair, but the witch still poses a threat. When they tell her that they are leaving Underworld, she takes out a small instrument and begins to lull them into a sleepy enchantment. The entire purpose of this enchantment is to convince Prince Rilian and the two children that there is no outside world. She asks them where they think they will go. When they tell her they plan to go to Narnia, she says, “I have often heard your Lordship utter that name in your ravings. Dear Prince, you are very sick. There is no land called Narnia” (Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 151-2). All the time, she’s thrumming on her instrument, and the spell begins to take hold of them all. She tells them the world they remember is just a dream. When they resist her, she says “There never was any world but mine” (154). Whenever the children fight against the idea that this underground prison is the only real thing, she presses them to tell her what the Overworld is like. But these poor children have been underground for so long, and the witch’s spell is so powerful, that they can barely remember.

They have only half-remembered images of the world above ground. They can remember the sun and they can remember Aslan, but they can describe neither very well. All they can think to do is say what the sun is like. It is like a lamp, the Prince says, “it is round and yellow and gives light to the whole room” (155). Except, the sun is only a little like a lamp, and both Rilian and the witch know it. Rilian becomes frustrated because he can only reach for the real world above ground by analogy—by metaphor—and the witch knocks down every one of these comparisons as false. The witch asks next about Aslan—what is he like? Rilian responds with metaphor again: “Well a lion is a little bit—only a little bit, mind you—like a huge cat—with a mane. At least, it’s not like a horse’s mane, you know, it’s more like a judge’s wig. And it’s yellow. And terrifically strong” (157). Of course, this description sounds absurd to the witch, and, under her spell, it begins to sound absurd even to the children. You see, from Underworld, the very idea of the sun seems absurd. Everything is so dark down there. How could there be a sun? The idea of an animal like a lion, not to mention one like Aslan, sounds ridiculous. We can’t see him now, so maybe he never existed in the first place. The memories these children have are distant. They are hazy. They seem so improbable and foolish. But they are, every one of them, true. They are true in a way that the children can only grasp at with metaphors. The world around Prince Rilian is a prison, but he has lived there so long that it seems like home.

I wonder: can you relate to this story? Have you ever felt that the world is more than just what we can see, hear, taste, smell, or touch? Do you have people in your life who try to urge you only to accept what you can see as true? Do you feel stirred by old stories, even if you don’t know why? I want to suggest to you this morning that if you can relate to any of these things, then maybe you have more in common with C.S. Lewis as he walked with Tolkien than you realize. There is truth lodged in your heart that the material world has tried its best to remove. It’s hidden, not because it’s hard to find if you are seeking it but because we’re so used to our prison bars that we hardly even know they are there. If Lewis and Tolkien are right about myths, and I think they are, then you have likely felt the pull of a reality that
lies beyond those prison walls. I urge you to think and pray about where that pull comes from. What if the reality that gives those stories their power is the reality of Jesus Christ, who died for the world and was raised to life again so that we could be raised with him? The possibility of life beyond the walls of this world is true, too. Just as God calls things that are not as though they were, he can look at us in our mortal bodies and call that which is dead “alive.” If you already believe this, be on guard because, like the witch, the world will not stop trying to make you forget it. We who believe also live in a captivity of sorts. And if you find yourself needing to practice the kind of thinking that will help you see the truth beyond materialism, pick up a good book every once in a while.

Notes

1 This paper was presented at Missouri Baptist University’s fall chapel series—Converge: Faith, Family, Work, and Culture—on November 1, 2018.


3 This anecdote is adapted from J. R. Ross, “Constraints on Variables in Syntax.” Diss. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1967. iv-v.

Works Cited


Hospitality: A Mark of Christian Higher Education

Aaron Lumpkin

Introduction

Hospitality—Common Assumptions

If I were to ask you, “What is hospitality?” what would you say? As a good southern boy, I naturally think of hospitality involving sweet tea and lemonade on a hot summer day for friends and neighbors. I recall seeing my mom reading articles from *Southern Living Magazine*. While these are fond memories, this is shallow and far from a true understanding of hospitality, although it may display various components of it. The cultural charm of the South, if you believe there is one, is an image of moral conditioning, in many ways like the image we gain from considering Pavlov’s dog.

At the same time, you may think of culture’s view of hospitality. Currently, our culture argues that we must accept everyone for who they are and to approve of everything that makes them “them.” The court cases related to Hobby Lobby, the Baker’s right, and others suggest that our communities desire to implement a culture of hospitality that forces someone to accept everything about a person. This betrays the nature of hospitality in its attempt to diminish convictions and demolish diversity.

Another understanding of hospitality is seen in the hospitality industry. This is a marketed hospitality. Hotel chains tell of the luxuries they offer and attempt to persuade each of us to use their services, from their incredibly plush pillows and soft sheets to their one-of-a-kind spas. But here, people pay for treatment. Generally speaking, the more one spends, the better the service. Yet, notice in this context all days are the same. Typically, there are no supreme displays of hospitality in these settings. This, in many ways, betrays the very nature of hospitality.

We can also consider general definitions of hospitality. One comes from *The Salem Press Encyclopedia*, which says,

The concept of hospitality has strong roots in many cultures around the world. In the simplest terms, hospitality refers to the cordial treatment of guests and strangers. More importantly, hospitality is centered on the relationship between a host and his or her guest. With its Western roots in ancient Greece, hospitality is often seen in ancient texts as playing an important role in a culture by not only ensuring the safety of travelers, but also as a religious practice that honored the gods by overseeing this safety. According to the religion of the times, people were encouraged to be hospitable to others and looked favorably upon those who extended hospitality to others. In modern times, hospitality has become an industry that is deeply rooted in the tradition of showing respect for guests. In the travel and tourism industry, also known as the hospitality industry, guests expect to be treated equally, have their needs fulfilled, and be on the receiving end of stellar customer service.22

---

Through these examples, several characteristics of hospitality emerge. Hospitality is by its very nature relational. One party acts as host while another party acts as guest. And, it involves safety, care, and accommodation.

By beginning with Scripture, one may arrive at a robust and Christian understanding of hospitality. If the Scripture is sufficient for all of faith and practice, this must certainly extend to grasping the nature and practice of hospitality. Abraham Kuyper, founder of Free University in Amsterdam, sought to show Christ’s lordship over all of life. He wrote, “Oh, no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘mine!'”

If Jesus is Lord over all aspects of life, then believers must consider how his person and presence direct them in relation to hospitality.

A Biblical Vision of Hospitality

God Displays Hospitality

The importance of hospitality becomes apparent in the first pages of Scripture and it continues until the very last page. In fact, the story of the Bible is one marked by God’s hospitality toward mankind, and especially his people. God both displays and demands hospitality.

First, consider God’s hospitality through creation. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). In reviewing the creation of the world (light and darkness, water, land, sky, vegetation, sun and stars, and living creatures), the first five days of creation describe the preparation of the world for God’s grand creation: man and woman. God prepared a place for his people to live, love, and create. Before he created man and woman, God said that his creation was good. It did not become very good until creation itself was filled with man and woman (Gen. 1:31). Thus, the apex of God’s creation was man and woman, and he prepared a place for them. God serves as our host, creating good gifts for his family and providing for their every need. There is food, safety and security, a dwelling place, and ultimately, an intimate relationship. God has shown hospitality through creation.

The Scripture also shows God’s hospitality through his revelation. He revealed himself to us not only through creation but also through his Word. God has spoken, making himself known to us. He does not remove himself from us to become unreachable and unknowable. Though he is mysterious, he is not unknowable. Though he is all-powerful, he is not unapproachable. Instead, he clearly communicates his identity through both his words and his works. In creation, God spoke the world into existence. God spoke to Abraham, promising to bless him and make a great nation through him. When his people were suffering, he spoke to Moses, telling him he knew of the suffering of the Israelites and that he had a plan to save his people from oppression. He spoke to Jonah, instructing him to go to Nineveh. And, he has spoken to us through his Son. God has shown hospitality through speaking, making himself known to us through his words.

In this speaking, God invites. During the fall of man, God acted by providing clothing for Adam and Eve. God worked to allow man to restore his relationship with God through the sacrificial system, though temporarily. He invited Adam and Eve to be reconciled to him. God continued in faithfulness, even as his people doubted him in the wilderness just six weeks after he delivered them from slavery. God worked to shut the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown into that terrible

den of death. God displayed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. In this, God has acted, making himself known to us through his works.

As God acted, Jesus came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. As he came for both of these purposes, he did so by eating and drinking. Jesus lived among us; he ate with us; he struggled with us; he brought victory for us. In his time on earth, he invited us to join his family. Apart from Christ, all people live as enemies of God. Yet, he summons all people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to join his family and to participate in his grand story of redemption. Through faith, sinners are united with him and are seated at his table. They are no longer sinners but saints, family members of the household of God, sitting at the table of peace, blessing, fullness, righteousness, and glory. God invites all people to his table.

God creates. God speaks. God invites. The Christian story is one marked by God’s hospitality toward mankind. Grace, the unmerited favor of God, is the hospitality of God, welcoming sinners into his family.

God Demands Hospitality

Hospitality is grounded in the very nature of our faith, and God demands hospitality from his people. In Genesis 12, God promised to make Abram’s name great and his family a great nation. Then, God explained that they will be great in order to be a blessing to others. God’s very design for his people is to bless others. Later, in Leviticus 19, God tells his people to care for the sojourner, to do him or her no wrong, and to love him or her as oneself. Why? The motivation is given – because they were strangers in Egypt and God delivered them. God’s hospitality and kindness toward his people serves as the foundation of their display of hospitality to others.

There are two examples worth considering in the Old Testament. First, in 2 Samuel 9, consider David’s kindness to Mephibosheth. David, now the king, invited Mephibosheth to eat at his table. Mephibosheth, in the line of Saul, did not previously become king because he was a baby and was lame. He was likely an outcast in many ways, and he was a descendent of the former king. Yet, David graciously kept his promise not to destroy Saul’s descendants, and he invited Mephibosheth to his table.

Second, consider the story of hospitality in Daniel 1. Here, King Nebuchadnezzar had taken over Jerusalem. Rather than destroying all the peoples, he spared many lives. From the Israelites, he called out of several people to eat the king’s food, to drink the king’s wine, and to be educated. Among these were Daniel (Belteshazzar), Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego). Though he was not a believer in God, he displayed hospitality to the people of God. Ultimately, this serves as a testament to God’s hand of blessing and preservation on the lives of the Israelites.

In the New Testament, a number of instructions are found regarding hospitality. In the context of describing the lifestyle of a faithful Christian, Paul in Romans 12:9-13 wrote,

> Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

---

In the seeking to love, serve, and remain faithful, Paul argued believers ought to show hospitality. Peter echoed this exhortation in 1 Peter 4:8-9. Yet, he added that Christians ought to show hospitality “without grumbling,” a temptation experienced far more often than one might recognize. Further, the author of Hebrews wrote that believers should not “neglect” to show hospitality to strangers because they could be entertaining angels (13:1-2). Further, the importance of hospitality may be observed in the fact that hospitality is included in the list of qualifications to be a pastor both in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Pastors ought to lead the way in showing hospitality. Without a doubt, the practice of the Christian faith includes hospitality.

Hospitality Defined

In considering these biblical foundations for hospitality, it is helpful to arrive at a clear definition of hospitality. Hospitality may be defined in this way: the overflow of God’s love to the sojourner through his people for his glory and their good by caring for physical, spiritual, and emotions needs. In this definition, hospitality is rooted in God himself. Believers seek to show and display God’s love to the sojourner, just as God called his people to in both the Old and New Testaments. Hospitality is fundamentally an obedience issue, and this ultimately is a lordship issue. Hospitality, originating with God, is for the people of God and the good of the world.

Hospitality in Higher Education

In considering hospitality in the context of Christian higher education, attention can be given to two areas of emphasis. First, this section will examine institutional applications of hospitality. And second, this section will explore individual applications of hospitality in Christian higher education. In each of these, I will affirm that the things universities create, speak, and do must model God’s hospitality toward them and invite others to participate alongside them.

Institutional Application

First, hospitality in Christian higher education must be spiritual in nature. This is what makes it distinctly Christian. To return to the quote from Abraham Kuyper, all of life falls under the Lordship of Christ. As such, all of Christian higher education must submit to his lordship. Christian higher education is marked by a distinctly Christian faith that informs and seeks to persuade students of the truth and glory of the gospel. Hospitality is a tool through which this occurs. Elizabeth Newman, Associate Professor of Theology at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, explains that hospitality is shown to us by God. In this, he is our host and we are his guests.\(^{25}\) Worship then becomes a response to God’s hospitality. For Christian higher education, institutions must be inviting students to join them in responding to God’s hospitality. At the same time, they display hospitality by extending opportunities to their students, who are sojourners among them, to believe the gospel. From admissions to graduation, Christian universities must boast in nothing except the cross of Christ.

Second, hospitality in Christian higher education must be economical. In practicing hospitality, universities seek the good of those around them. Student sojourners have a variety of needs and

experiences, and administration, faculty, and staff must seek to serve, accommodate, and equip them for a life of service to God. They show hospitality by working to keep school affordable. So, by economical, I do not mean economical to the university’s benefit. Instead, the benefit is focused on those whom we serve. Avoiding unnecessary costs and spending in order to best serve our students and provide a God-glorifying experience is essential. Here, institutions are not working and creating a culture simply for their benefit. Yes, the mission of the school must press forward; they must be committed to their cause. But ultimately, their work is for the good of others. Hospitality creates a culture of stability by displaying love and acceptance. Yet, they do not forsake their own identity in this process. This models God’s display of hospitality toward his people and the world.

Third, hospitality in Christian higher education must be social. As mentioned and alluded to several times before, hospitality is by nature relational. In order for colleges to promote expressions of hospitality on campus, they must work to create a culture of authentic and reliable relationships. This does not mean that they are constantly doing extravagant gestures. Nor does it mean that they shift their focus from their primary endeavor, which is to provide a strong, Christian education to all who come to them. Instead, it means that they emphasize the importance of each person through considering their needs, wants, and desires. Christian universities develop a culture that fosters relationships marked by trust and wisdom. Friendship and companionship is essential to Christian higher education. Having various offices on campus labor together to invite these types of relationships is essential to their display of hospitality. In this, their love for one another shines through and God’s glory is magnified.

Fourth, hospitality in Christian higher education must be political. This does not mean institutions align themselves with one political party or force a political agenda on its students. Instead, it means working to develop particular beliefs and convictions within the institution, not only about the gospel but also regarding service and leadership. Here, they instill values and beliefs about love and service through displaying love and service by caring for students. Faculty, staff, and administration encourage a pursuit of the truth while remaining firm in their convictions. They labor and dialogue about cultural issues, and they honor those with whom they both agree and disagree. Individuals work together to cultivate character in order to see students go forth and serve their families, friends, and communities as Christ has served us – through sacrificial love.

Individual Application

Having contemplated hospitality in Christian higher education at the institutional level, consider hospitality at the individual level. Here are six suggestions to practically implement hospitality at every level of contact.

1) Expand your guest list. Jesus exhorted his followers to invite people unlike them to their parties and celebrations. Believers must begin to reach out to those who are not like them in order to obey Christ’s command and to display love to all. Who is missing from your guest list? Is it a group of people? A certain type of person?

2) Focus on serving rather than impressing. Entertaining is about the host. Hospitality is not about the host, but rather about guests. God, in his infinite love, displayed his hospitality toward the

world by giving himself up for his people. How can we not also display hospitality towards those around us?

3) Get out of your safe zone. It is easy for Christians to remain in their safe zones, whether that be their offices or workspaces or their own homes. They must see that all places they reside are being stewarded to them by God. Believers must look to engage those around them, and they may even need to do so outside of their safe places.

4) Be aware of the needs of those around you. By providing unexpected gifts or meeting tangible needs, Christians reinforce the gospel and the mission of their universities. Look to see how you can serve those around you, whether it be helping someone to their car or by eating lunch with someone sitting alone. Do you keep snacks or drinks in your office for when you have visitors? Do you intentionally seek to buy someone a cup of coffee on campus each week?

5) Customize your hospitality. Hospitality is expressed culturally. The way in which you practice hospitality doesn’t have to match another person. Make it your own. Be yourself.

6) Greet warmly, engage sincerely, say goodbye thoughtfully. From the first encounter to the final goodbye, see how you can love and serve those around you, particularly students. Develop genuine relationships with peers and mentor a student. Find ways to engage where you are.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have sought to show that hospitality flows from the very nature and person of God. After recognizing the various interpretations of hospitality in culture, and seeing how they reflect aspects of God’s hospitality, we sought to establish a biblical understanding of hospitality. Hospitality was defined as “the overflow of God’s love to the sojourner through his people for his glory and the good of others by caring for physical, spiritual, and emotions needs.” Then, the essay sought to apply this understanding of hospitality to Christian higher education, both at the institutional and individual level. I hope that through this, your desire to display hospitality is increased and that you begin to consider ways to see this carried out at your university.
Book Reviews


Reviewed by Jessica L. Martin

Amidst an abundance of false claims of “fair and balanced” analysis, John Palfrey delivers an evenhanded and thoughtful assessment of two seemingly disparate realities on college campuses: diversity and free expression. As administrators, teachers, students, and activists seek to answer which reality ought to prevail—the world has watched some of the most contentious disputes play out on campuses like William and Mary, UC Berkley, and University of Utah. With the timely release of his new book *Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces: Diversity and Free Expression in Education*, Palfrey presents a compelling case for the necessary coexistence of both free expression and diversity. In doing so, he offers a hopeful vision of an educational landscape moving towards the goal of “liberty and equality, free expression and diversity, in more or less equal measure for all citizens” (129). Though Palfrey’s speaks to all higher education professionals, the conversation he proposes is one Christian educators, specifically, need to continue.

*Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces* begins with an introductory chapter providing readers scaled-down versions of almost every argument made throughout the remainder of the book. As such, the first chapter serves as a helpful reminder and point of reference for educators in the continuing debate over diversity and free expression. Chapter two addresses topics serving as “flashpoints” on many campuses: safe spaces, trigger warnings, microaggressions, disinviting speakers, and renaming prominent campus spaces and symbols. As Palfrey discusses each topic, he clearly articulates common criticisms and supports before suggesting that carefully structured processes for resolving various conflicts turn “flashpoints into periods of introspection and learning” (44).

In chapters three and four, Palfrey tackles diversity and free expression as completely separate topics. Palfrey’s decision to do so is an intentional means of building his argument that the two cannot be viewed in isolation of one another. By providing a compelling case for each, Palfrey invites readers to look at diversity and then free expression without peering through the fog of the present debate. Though side by side in the text, Palfrey avoids drawing strong comparisons between the two until the end of chapter four. He steers readers away from viewing diversity and free expression as existing on a spectrum and gently leads readers to consider the absolute necessity of each. Only once satisfied with the cases built for each does Palfrey bring the two back together in saying, “The interests of [both] point in the same direction, toward a more tolerant and democratic society in which we support the flourishing of our citizens, a genuine search for truth, and the conditions for sound civic decision making . . . ” (83).

Attempting to flesh out some of the realistic tensions existing when holding diversity and free expression together, chapter five is given to an extensive conversation on how to think about the problematic issue of hate speech. In chapter six, Palfrey interrupts the logical flow of his argument to offer a few words on the First Amendment as it pertains to free press and freedom of assembly—a related, but distinct conversation. Finally, Palfrey brings his argument full circle by concluding the book with a chapter devoted to establishing a convincing rational for the importance of the debate between diversity and free expression.
Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces serves the primary function of providing a framework for having much-needed discussions concerning free expression and diversity on campuses today. Drawing upon his extensive previous knowledge and expertise pertaining to matters of media and technology, Palfrey points out how emerging media exacerbates already high social, cultural, and political tensions in the United States. The presence of such tensions underscores the need for institutions to carefully weigh both sides of the diversity and free expression debate when deciding how best to respond to controversial conversations, debates, student protests, and activist movements taking place on campuses.

Unfortunately, Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces is largely theoretical in nature and may leave educators desiring more tangible advice concerning how to practically approach the challenging decisions necessitated by the previously mentioned campus controversies. Early on, Palfrey promises a book “centered on the choices we, as educators, must make in our academic communities” (4). Regrettably, Palfrey grossly underdelivers on this promise, never progressing beyond thinking rightly about matters of diversity and free expression. After reading the book, I am thoroughly convinced of the importance of maintaining both diversity and free expression on our campuses. However, I am left wondering how leaders might actively facilitate and protect both safe spaces and brave spaces as a means of valuing diversity and free expression. Consequently, Palfrey’s work feels somewhat unfinished. Equipped with appropriate language—and understanding the importance and necessity of both diversity and freedom of expression—educators must bring the conversation started by Palfrey to completion by finding ways to effectively apply such knowledge in various institutional contexts.

In light of the many institutional types represented in United States higher education, Palfrey asserts, “context matters enormously,” further explaining that while, “our schools and universities have many things in common; our institutions also have distinct histories, values, and mission statements” (5). Accordingly, Palfrey gives institutions the freedom to “react differently to the challenges associated with free expression and diversity” (5). In doing so, Palfrey encourages leaders to “wherever possible, [let] educational goals and values . . . guide our decision making as institutions” (5). Given the significant role institutional mission often plays in the decision-making of Christian institutions, such a charge carries more weight for educators working within these contexts.

Citing mission, Christian institutions often excuse themselves from engaging in the hard conversations taking place around them. Participating in potentially conflict-ridden conversations is perceived as the antithesis of virtuous Christian living, but—in today’s context—silence proves more damaging than disagreement. Moreover, most Christian institutions have missions that actually deepen, rather than excuse, their responsibilities to engage conversations necessitating the convergence of diversity and free expression. When Palfrey claims free expression is necessary in order for a society to find and embrace truth (11), Christian educators must hear the emphasis on truth-seeking that is present in their own institutional missions. Similarly, when Palfrey suggests equity and fairness for all cannot exist without diversity, Christian educators must consider Scripture’s enduring celebration of diversity through a gospel message that is ever expanding to include, care for, and redeem the marginalized.

Precisely because of their unique missions, Christian institutions are called to higher standards when considering matters of diversity and free expression. Promoting free expression and diversity is no longer about creating a “more tolerant and democratic society,” as Palfrey argues. Instead, promoting free expression and diversity on our campuses proves vital in establishing kingdom-like communities—communities willing to dialogue openly, honestly, and lovingly on a variety of important issues, extending the very grace to others that Christ extends daily to us.

Though seemingly unfinished, given the absence of practical guidance, Palfrey presents a powerful case for the importance of both diversity and free expression and invites readers to think critically about how the two relate. Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces equips and challenges educators at all
levels to thoughtfully engage important conversations currently taking place within institutional contexts in the United States. The need for such thoughtful engagement has never been more apparent than now. Because right thinking serves as the basis for both right speaking and acting, Palfrey’s book is a must read for those working in higher education contexts. Christian educators, especially, will benefit from reading and reflecting on Palfrey’s timely work, seriously considering how promoting diversity and free expression allows Christian institutions to become the exemplars of faithful living to which their institutional missions compel them.

Reviewed by Julie Ooms

Walking into the classroom before a class session begins, I almost always see my students engaging with their smartphones instead of with each other (and, if I’m quite honest, this tendency isn’t limited to the minutes before class sessions, either). Of course, this tendency is irritating, but I am hardly guiltless when it comes to allowing myself to be distracted by the siren song of social media when I should keep my attention focused on grading or research. In his book *Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age,* Alan Noble argues that this state of being constantly distracted, constantly in search of new stimulation, to the point that we find ourselves having to work harder to sustain our focus and think deeply about things that matter, is a common human problem bloated by secularism and mutated by twenty-first-century technology. And while it affects my students’ abilities to focus on their coursework, and my ability to focus on my own work, its reach extends beyond academia to affect how the Christian witness is heard—or isn’t—amidst our cacophony of easy entertainment. We need, Noble argues, a witness that disrupts these tendencies of our age in order to turn others toward the eternal truths of Christ.

To make his argument, Noble divides his book into two main sections; the first focuses on diagnosing the problem and the second on ways in which Christians can address it. Throughout, he relies on the work of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, and the emphasis on Taylor’s ideas is both the book’s strength and its weakness.

Chapters one and two each define a different barrier to bearing witness in our secular, distracted age; chapter three charts how most Americans, even Christians, tend to find meaning and fullness in life amidst these barriers. The barrier Noble defines in chapter one is “endless distraction”—the tendency, shared by me and my students, to use the ubiquity of distractions afforded us by modern technology to avoid thinking deeply about ourselves, our work, our relationships, and other matters of meaty and eternal significance. In Noble’s view, our discomfort with contemplation—especially if it means thinking deeply about our own shortcomings—and our attempts to distract ourselves is a persistent human problem not limited to recent decades; however, though modern technology did not create the problem, it has exacerbated it. Our devices and the apps we run on them are built to hold our attention, so that we are engaged all the time, hopping from one distraction to another, always seeking new stimuli. And, Noble argues, these “rhythms and practices of our modern world militate against reflection” (25), because for reflection to occur, we need to stop, take time, and focus on our beliefs and how they connected to our actions. Moreover, they affect how we believe: “Why does our avoidance of slow, careful introspection matter? The gospel is cognitively costly. […] The kind of work the gospel does in our lives tasks our minds with unsettling assumptions and habits” (27-28). And they affect how we share our faith, and so can result in our willingly flattening our own beliefs into a shareable meme or marketing email, rather than relating the unsettling, disruptive message of the gospel in a robust, embodied form.

The second barrier to bearing witness that Noble outlines is the “buffered self,” a term he borrows from Charles Taylor and uses to define how 21st-century Westerners—Christians and not—are and are not able to define fullness and the good life. As “buffered selves,” we, unlike our forebears in the Middle Ages and a few centuries after, “measure our self-worth by an internal standard” rather than sharing a “cultural belief with transcendent origins” (36). In other words, because we do not live our
lives with the constant awareness of a transcendent reality and a telos that, like that reality, exists outside ourselves, and because we instead live enmeshed in an immanent reality cut off (or “buffered”) from transcendent reality, we have a tendency to look within ourselves for our ultimate identity and for our own definitions of what makes our lives meaningful and good. In this kind of cultural landscape, our beliefs—even those of Christians—become less about ultimate, transcendent Truth and the identity of our Savior and more about individual, immanent truth and our own identities. Moreover, non-Christians’ perceptions of Christians’ beliefs may be less hostile toward Christianity, but this is mainly because they see those beliefs as just another performance of individual identity—e.g., I chose from a wide menu of options to identify as Christian, the way another might identify as goth or blue-collar or a host of other identities. This barrier of the buffered self, alongside the barrier of distraction, conspires to make the project of witnessing a very difficult one. We are not only trying to keep the deep, focused attention of nonbelievers when we are all prone to distraction; we are also, once we have their attention, attempting to convince them that Christianity is not one more option, but it is the option, and has a capital-R Reality greater than our own individual worlds.

Having established these two barriers to evangelism in our distracted age, Noble closes this first section with a chapter on ideas of fullness (introducing Taylor’s concept of the “nova effect” along the way) before segueing into his second section, in which he offers some ways of offering the “disruptive witness” of the book’s title. He summarizes his recommendations early in the fourth chapter: “The best strategy for addressing our society’s condition is to offer a disruptive witness at every level of life,” meaning that we should shape our personal habits, our church practice, and our cultural participation in ways that disrupt the barriers described in the book’s first half. In our personal lives, Noble recommends that we work to shape our lives around the Gospel in disruptive ways. For example, when we see or do something that is good, we should draw our and others’ attention to it in order to acknowledge its goodness and give glory to God, the ultimate source of every good thing. We should take a Sabbath rest, disrupting the cultural tendency to see every day as the same and to allow work to invade every corner of our lives. In the church, Noble advocates a return to liturgical church practices that find their source in historical patterns of the Body rather than in contemporary entertainment fads. Such practices disrupt our buffered selves; they draw us out of ourselves, showing that we are part of a larger narrative with God at its center, rather than confirming and catering to our own individual desires. In our cultural engagement, finally, Noble focuses on stories and on our responses to tragedy, which often reflect the ways in which we “feel the tension between modern life as we know it within the immanent frame and our awareness of or longing for some vision of fullness that goes beyond it” (149). We act as disruptive cultural agents when we create stories that disrupt, but also when we participate in other people’s stories to help others “challenge the buffered self by showing that ‘part of being good is opening ourselves to certain feelings; either the horror at infanticide, or agape as a gut feeling’” (157). We also disrupt others’—and our own—distractions and buffered selves in how we respond to tragic events, such as death; we “experience the cross pressure between the closed, immanent frame’s finality and our sense that love demands eternity” (167). These practices, in these three areas, combine to allow us to bear witness to the transcendent reality of Christ in a distracted, buffered world.

Overall, Noble’s book is interesting and engaging, raising good questions and beginning to provide good answers. Noble’s diagnosis of our cultural moment and the problem of bearing witness specific to it is, in my view, the more strongly argued aspect of the book; I am myself inclined to agree with Taylor’s arguments about our secular age, and find Noble’s application of Taylor’s ideas astute, interesting, and helpful. The second half of the book, while its suggestions are worthwhile and do indeed represent examples of the kind of “disruptive witness” Noble argues modern Christians need, seems to be less than substantial enough when weighed against the heaviness of the problem. Noble’s
suggestions for how to bear a disruptive witness, focused as they are on Christians’ personal habits, church practices, and cultural engagement, will certainly help Christians themselves disrupt the barriers of distraction and the buffered self that they experience as much as their non-Christian neighbors do. However, following these suggestions will not, in my view, necessarily result in Christians’ disrupting non-Christians’ own barriers, unless those non-Christians regularly respond to invitations to attend church, engage in discussions of story or share tragic experience with Christian friends, and witness a Christian disruptively pausing to take in the beauty of the world on a walk without their phone’s camera to filter that experience. While many Christians might have networks of non-Christian acquaintances (at work, at school, etc.) and even close non-Christian friends, others may not engage directly or deeply with many non-Christians, and may do so by choice. Before these patterns of witnessing disruptively can be put into practice, then, Christians themselves need to disrupt the barriers they put up between themselves and non-Christians, and seek relationships outside Christian circles.

This imbalance between diagnosis and cure is not, however, my main critique of what is on the whole a strong book. I opened my review with a description of my freshmen students’ tendency to seek constant stimulation and distraction. My students would benefit greatly from the ideas in Noble’s book, because at the very least they would help them consider the effects our constant distractions have on our relationships and our witness. But unfortunately, Noble’s book will likely not be accessible to them. As I noted above, I am persuaded by Taylor’s ideas and think Noble’s use of them is cogent and strong; however, they can be difficult to understand. As I noted in an earlier review of James K. A. Smith book on Taylor, How (Not) to be Secular, Taylor’s ideas are useful and applicable for a wide range of people in church and lay positions within and outside of academia; what is difficult is making them understood to people who have not been exposed to them before. And thus, undergraduate students, for whom this book would be immensely helpful, would need considerable time and guidance while working through this book, and some of its ideas may still elude their grasp. That’s a shame.

But perhaps this flaw is, in itself, indicative of the truth of Noble’s analysis: we live in a distracted age, and one of its symptoms is our reluctance—even our inability—to think deeply and engage with difficult ideas that demand our time and our attention. If that is true, and I’m inclined to believe it is, then wrestling with this book’s ideas and exploring ways in which we can bear a disruptive witness is worth doing despite the resistance we will encounter.

Reviewed by Julie Ooms

The title and subtitle of Jacobs’s brief book both read as arresting and hyperbolic at first glance. But the claims made by its title and addressed throughout its pages are comforting to teachers of writing and argument, like myself, who might increasingly despair the effectiveness of their own work and the possibility of thought itself in our divided age. They also engaged my students, nineteen- and twenty-year-olds whose familiarity with the frequent disintegration to which online discourse is prone made them simultaneously hungry for and jaded in their approach to any idea that clear, charitable, and thoughtful dialogue is possible. *How to Think* is not an exhaustive study of thought or rhetoric, but it does not aim to be. As a short guidebook that gives students, their professors, and other members of their communities clear terms and reliable strategies, *How to Think* succeeds; I hope it is widely read, particularly in high school and college classes on rhetoric and argument.

Throughout the book, Jacobs names concepts helpful for framing what good thinking is, and what pitfalls it helps would-be thinkers avoid. In the following paragraphs, I will name a handful of these, focusing on the ones I find most helpful, as well as those that most piqued my students’ interest. My goal is to give teachers of reading and writing an overview of what I have found most helpful in my classes in an effort to help them decide whether Jacobs’s book would be a valuable text for their own courses.

The first concept—one my students kept returning to in the four class days we devoted to Jacobs’s book—appears in the introduction to the book; Jacobs, citing Daniel Kahneman, discusses “System 1” and “System 2” thinking. System 1 is fast, intuitive thinking; this system “provides us with snap judgments, instantaneous reads on a given situation, strong predispositions toward approving some ideas and disapproving others” (16); this type of thinking is the “program” we are running most of the time to get through each day. Occasionally, though, System 2, “conscious reflection,” kicks in “when we perceive a problem, an inconsistency, an anomaly that needs to be addressed” (16-17). Jacobs, citing Jonathan Haidt, uses the metaphor of a rider steering an elephant to illustrate System 2 directing System 1, an image Jacobs finds hopeful: “The idea is that our intuitive thinking is immensely powerful and has a mind of its own, but can be gently steered—by a rider who is truly skillful and understands the elephant’s inclinations” (17). My students immediately latched on to this image because it felt very true to them; it feels true to me, as well. So much of our responses to ideas are knee-jerk, reflexive, unaffected by careful thought. The speed at which we can share our thoughts and responses to others in the age of social media only exacerbates this tendency to depend on System 1 rather than taking the time to turn on System 2. But it is in System 2, Jacobs points out, that we slow down, sit with ideas (and with our interlocutors) and begin to think well. In responses to this opening section of Jacobs’s book, nearly all of my students mentioned this framework for thinking about thinking, and it became fodder for fruitful discussion about what it means to think well and why we often avoid it.

Another of Jacobs’s ideas that my students and I found helpful came from an example Jacobs shares in chapter two, “Attractions” (this chapter is best assigned along with chapter three, “Repulsions,” for obvious reasons). The example is of a group of students at Yale University who are involved in a debate society called the Yale Political Union (YPU); the idea is called being “broken on the floor,” which in the context of the YPU means to change one’s mind in the middle of a public debate in front of everyone; it is “a token of good faith and an indication of a willingness not just to accept but
to live out the values of the community” because it indicated “you were vulnerable to changes of your own mind” (53). My students and I wrestled with this concept a bit—after all, if we enter every discussion ready to change our minds, doesn’t that mean we aren’t maintaining our convictions?—but we recognized its importance, especially when faced with its opposite. A person who enters every discussion primed to disagree, refusing to listen to other perspectives in a way that might affect him or her, we all clearly saw as a person who, finally, is refusing to think.

The idea that we should be cultivate a willingness to be “broken on the floor” dovetailed with two ideas in chapter four, “The Money of Fools,” that in turn connected with my students, who mentioned both in their responses to this section of the book. The first, which Jacobs takes from Robin Sloan, involves a suggestion for formatting debates, just like the YPU example. In this model, the first of two debaters makes her argument; then, the second debater must summarize the other’s argument to the satisfaction of the first before he can continue with his own argument (108). This model for debate interested my students because it is so at odds with how they—how we all, I imagine—usually experience argument. Our experiences are usually in line with the second idea my students found noteworthy in this chapter: that not only do we often conceive of arguments using metaphorical language, but one of the “most deeply embedded metaphors in our common discourse…identifies argument as a form of warfare” (97). This metaphor leads to, among other things, a tendency to dehumanize our interlocutors, because they cease to be other people from whom we wish to learn and with whom we hope to achieve some kind of understanding; they become, instead, “mouthpieces of positions we want to eradicate” and we, “in our zeal to win…[sacrifice] empathy” (98). My students all recognized that the “argument as war” metaphor is alive and well in their own experiences; I think this may be why the idea of having to summarize another interlocutor’s argument to their satisfaction during a discussion was so appealing to them, because it gave them the opportunity to develop a new metaphor for argument that was less about warfare and more about neighborliness.

Neighborliness brings me to the fourth idea from Jacobs’s book that my students and I found worth engaging deeply. This idea comes up in the first chapter, “Beginning to Think,” and is threaded through every subsequent one; it’s introduced with the provocative section heading “Why Thinking for Yourself Is Impossible.” Jacobs argues that, whatever we might think about the mightiness and primacy of the individual, none of us thinks independently of other humans. “Thinking is necessarily, thoroughly, and wonderfully social,” he says, and “Everything you think is a response to what someone else has thought and said” (37). My students were—as, I’m sure, many of us would be—resistant to this idea. Indeed, when one is used to praising people for thinking for themselves, and when one lives in a cultural landscape where most privilege the original thought over the viewpoint that seems unoriginal or overly influenced by others. But as we discussed it further, it became clearer that indeed, we are all part of communities with which we think—faith communities, school communities, family communities, and others. In my own discipline of English, my best academic arguments are made when I intentionally engage with a scholarly conversation rather than trying to form an original thought outside of the wider discussion. Once we learn to see ourselves as members of thinking communities, and recognize that we truly do not think for ourselves, we are better able to understand the limits of our own knowledge and to recognize that we, as much as anyone we agree or disagree with, cannot say we are beyond the influence of others. And once we recognize our indebtedness to other people, we can start to see neighborliness and charity as essential pieces to any act of argument or thought.

Jacobs’s book provided my students and me with the language to explore the process of thinking and argument in fruitful ways. The book is not perfect—its organization is more topical than strictly logical, and was occasionally confusing; its frequent mentioning of current trends in social media discourse were well woven into the overall argument but run the risk of being outdated very soon. But
as a classroom text, this book works well; it stimulated good discussion, and would be useful alongside other relatively recent books such as Esther Lightcap Meek’s *A Little Manual for Knowing*, Marilyn McEntyre’s *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*, and Richard A. Holland and Benjamin K. Forrest’s *Good Arguments*. Overall, *How to Think* is a helpful tool for professors, their students, and for any other person who wants to think more deeply about thinking.

Reviewed by Matthew Bardowell

In titling his 2016 translation of Gerpla, Halldór Laxness’s 1952 novel, *Wayward Heroes* Philip Roughton trades irony for earnestness. Although it is a small feature of a sprawling undertaking, this title underscores one of the book’s main themes: the cold reappraisal of once-heroic figures. In the original Icelandic, the term *gerpla* derives from the term *garpr*, which means ‘a warlike man’ (*An Icelandic-English Dictionary* 193). While Roughton’s translation is the second in English, it is the only one to be translated from the original Icelandic. In his novel, Laxness retells two Old Norse sagas, *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers* and *The Saga of Saint Olaf*. For readers of *Intégrité*, perhaps the most interesting feature of this novel is Laxness’s treatment of religion—both the Norse paganism held by the main characters and the nascent Christian faith that rivals it. In both cases, Laxness shines a light on the destructive consequences of pursuing domination in service to an ideal.

Laxness’s retelling takes a critical look at the nostalgic hero-worship so often encoded in the Old Norse sagas themselves. His depiction offers a sobering appraisal of such nostalgia and the consequences it can have for those who endeavor to model their lives after the gauzy impressions it imparts. The irony of framing the protagonists of Laxness’s novel, Þorgeir Hávarsson and Þormóður Bessason, as heroic men is that they are most prominently small-minded, backwards men clinging to a warrior ethic that suits them poorly in their current social context. These broken notions of heroism emanate from the stories of heroes passed down from parent to child. Þorgeir, for instance, learns at his mother’s knee that “the only persuasions capable of solving a dispute are the truths spoken by swords” (Laxness 24). Þorgeir conceives of values in similar terms, as his mother instructs: “nobleness means enduring no man’s taunts, avenging injury, making open foes of traitors, and striking first” (24). The foundation for these bequeathed ideals is a lie about Þorgeir’s father: “as a rule, she spoke of [him] as an intrepid hero who ravaged distant lands with fire and fought at the forefront in the battle of noble kings” (24). In reality, however, Þorgeir’s father died not in glorious, distant battle but “fell by his homefield wall without raising a hand in his own defense” (24).

The distance between reality and ideal is a recurring theme in Laxness’s novel. One such illusory ideal is the courageousness of the Viking raiders. Laxness gives voice to an Irish slave brought to Iceland on a raiding voyage. His name is Kolbakur, and he is often mistreated by the other Norsemen. In one scene, a young girl sees Kolbakur stolidly bearing a beating by a group of Icelanders. Afterward, she asks him why he does not cry when he is beaten. Kolbakur’s response exposes the cruelty of the Norsemen with a poignancy that descriptions of their battles seem so often to miss: “I do not cry because heroes and skalds burned down my house; because they slew my father in his field and thrust a spear through my grandfather, just a frail old man. My grandmother was on her knees praising her beloved friend, the blessed Columbkille, when a man bashed in her skull with a blow from his ax. That is why I do not cry” (36). Indeed, throughout the book the Norsemen are portrayed less as heroes than as brutish and ignorant people who wield dull and rusty weapons. The rust on their weapons mirrors the corruption that has likewise encrusted their anachronistic notions of bravery.

The lifetimes of these men play out against the backdrop of a tumultuous period in Icelandic history. The pagan religion and the gods that animate it faced challenges by the Christian faith, which at the time in Iceland was not the monolithic religion it would later become. One of Laxness’s achievements in *Wayward Heroes* is his unstinting examination of the self-interest of religious
adherents. Laxness’s devout characters have an unsettling way of pursuing ideals without considering how these ideals ought to transform their minds and lives. The result is a religious environment in which tenets of faith serve as pretext for violence and domination. In keeping with his mother’s teaching, Þorgeir sees violence as the only worthy means of persuasion, and he applies this standard to religion as well as to himself: “I learned from my mother that many an outstanding man has challenged White Christ to single combat, and he has dared to fight with none. He must be a milksop, and I would rather serve almost any other king than him” (45). While Þorgeir and Þormóður cling to the notion of violence as honorable, numerous other characters take a more sardonic view. In one scene, after Þorgeir rejects domestic comforts in favor of raiding, a woman tells him, “You have chosen as I expected you would, and it is just as well. Off with you, then, to perform deeds befitting a warrior: setting fire to people’s houses and killing everything that draws breath for your sea-kings or sovereigns—all in order to rule the world” (244). The speaker offers an explicit rebuke to Þorgeir and those who think as he does. Whereas in some places, the violence of the main characters seems tied to a Germanic heroic ethic rather than pagan religion, this woman perceives a relationship between the ethic and the faith. It is the gods—or the sovereigns—on whose behalf, or for an excuse, these senselessly violent deeds are done. Her final comment shows the simultaneous grandiosity and foolhardiness of their aim. For men like Þorgeir, these violent acts are performed out of a death-oriented desire to dominate.

One might think that the peaceable kingdom of Christianity would offer an alternative to the goal of domination, but Laxness does not let Christians off the hook so easily. Indeed, the early conversion stories of Icelanders are not without their own brand of cruelty. Olaf Tryggvason, the missionary-king of Norway, was well known to secure conversions by means of torture and put to death those who refused. As Þorgeir seeks fame and fortune abroad, he is brought into the service of a Norman king who requires that he and his compatriots accept the Christian faith before fighting in his army. Such requests were fairly common for the time, but Laxness offers a lengthy depiction of the mass baptism that reveals the absurdity of the act:

There, cloaked in white linen, were gathered numerous scruffy old friends of Þórr, their locks tangled and beards matted, walking in procession with their great broad shoulders hunched, heads hanging, chins thrust out, brows knitted and mouths turned down in frowns, glancing here and there as if following the advice from Sayings of the High One: “Before crossing a threshold, take a good look around you.” Together with these were squat men with pot-bellies, bandy-legged, bull-necked, pale-haired, ruddy-cheeked rascals, their tongues flapping with praise and eyes glistening with tears of joy to witness such an appalling gang of thieves and villains adorned with the cloak of light, ready to be anointed with holy water and chrism and to receive absolution for their evil deeds, such as stealing cows and setting fire to Europe for seven generations. (206)

In this riotous scene, hordes of Norsemen undergo conversion, but Laxness reveals the insincerity of the ritual. These men are seeking wealth through violence, not the salvation of their souls. Þorgeir, who appears to be disillusioned by both the Norse gods and the Christian one, evades his own baptism by hiding, but numerous men go through with it realizing neither the significance of the act nor its spiritual or political consequences.

The coldness of Laxness’s gaze is a departure from the original saga from which he takes his source material. There are moments in the medieval version of the saga in which the narrator seems appalled by the violent means of the heroes depicted therein. For instance, when Þorgeir and Þormóður vow to avenge one another should either of them be killed, the narrator breaks in to inform the reader
that these men only made such a brutish promise because Christianity was new to Iceland and therefore still weak (The Sworn Brothers’ Saga 85-6). Yet, later in the medieval version the narrator valorizes Þorgeir’s slaying of a powerful chieftain. The narrator attributes the success of the killing to God’s favor in the following interpolation: “the Creator of All had formed, and laid in Thorgeir’s breast, so fierce and undaunted a heart that he was not afraid; and he was as fearless in all tests of courage as is the lion. And since all good qualities are from God, also fearlessness is from God, and put into the hearts of fearless men, and therewith a free will, to do as they list” (92-3). Laxness treats the same acts less favorably and at various points is more interested in observing the cowardice of these wayward heroes. In one representative example, Laxness describes the Vikings in battle at the moment when the tide turns against them: “Scores of valiant fighters lost their lives there, ingloriously. Many more, however, took the course of action that has always served Vikings best in a pinch: not to wait for the worst. Each fled as fast as he could” (233-4). This moment—an interpolation in its own way—stands in stark contrast to the favorable description of Þorgeir’s fearlessness in the medieval text. Here Laxness emphasizes the Vikings’ calculating rather than heroic nature in their willingness to turn from battle to save their own skin.

Laxness’s novel is a welcome corrective to the implicit and sometimes oversimplified glorification of heroes in the Old Norse sagas. Laxness, himself an Icelander, offers an important critique of the impulse to take complex figures as emblems of nationalistic pride. In doing so, Laxness’s novel views the sagas against the backdrop of morality. This view is particularly incisive when pointing out the hypocrisy of Christian figures. Laxness’s novel adds texture to the thinking of students and scholars immersed in the source material. It also presents a less prominent attitude toward the material that those interested in the history of Christianity will find compelling.

Works Cited


In his typical elegant fashion, Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, explores the nature of recent discussions on human consciousness and attempts to offer an alternative model that draws not only from neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy but also from the Christian faith. Although this volume is simple and non-technical, it does consider recent research in brain studies, artificial intelligence, and analytic philosophy. He raises thoughtful questions on the themes of consciousness, autonomy, shared language, the mind-body relationship, the place of silence, and human flourishing, and on the question of whether Christian faith provides resources for a deeper understanding of humanity. Williams situates this work as part of an “untended” trilogy that includes two previous books Being Christian and Being Disciples. This text, however, is less of a work on Christian doctrine and more about the questions raised in contemporary culture, academia, and political discourse that make people wonder about what “real humanity” is like in an increasingly narcissistic society.

In each chapter, the author raises thoughtful questions about the way human nature is defined in contemporary culture. Many scientific descriptions of what it means to be human are reductionistic including those of well-respected scholars such as Stephen Hawking who describes humans as “chemical scum.” Williams, however, is always careful and considerate in the way he challenges the often reductionistic methods of scholars from various disciplines. For example, considering one of the harshest critics of the idea of consciousness cognitive scientist and analytic philosopher, Daniel Dennett, Williams gently states that he is “a philosopher of whom I have a great deal of respect.” Aware of a culture that has become posthuman, Williams is always mindful of what it means to be humane in relation to those with whom he disagrees.

As the book progresses, Williams focuses on key issues that demand a more fulsome account of what being human means in terms of its relational, embodied, and linguistic dimensions, which are discovered in Christian and other religious traditions. He begins his discussion with an examination of human consciousness and various efforts to explain the ghost in the machine. Drawing from physics, neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy, he approaches this controversial subject in a cross-disciplinary fashion because he believes demarcating rigid boundaries of subject matter leads to less fertile discourse. The biggest issues that confront humans in society require multidisciplinary skills if the world wishes to tackle and resolve these concerns effectively.

The metaphor regarding human nature that has gained the most consensus within the scientific community is one that likens the mind to a machine. Many scholars agree that the function of the brain is most like a computer in the way it processes information. At its most extreme, however, this thinking leads to the erasure of any idea of a traditional understanding of consciousness. The problem for Williams is that the machine metaphor is fraught with many associations that are extraneous to itself. Most would agree that the mind is not something that simply exists to solve problems outside itself. Machine models tend to ignore the idea of holism, that the mind or consciousness is more than the sum of its parts. According to Williams, consciousness is an entity that engages in thought about anything, including thoughts about nothing, which is still a thought that expresses intentionality. Williams follows up this idea with a discussion of several “markers” that are antithetical to using machine metaphors to explain the human mind. Perhaps, the most cogent point the author makes is that consciousness is located somewhere, not just in its ability to map out tasks, but also in the ability “to place myself within
a network of interchanging information from the molecular level to the level of speech and the concept” (9). Conscious human beings live in a reality that is more than simply distinguishing different things, but engages in the use of signs and symbols that allows people to engage others through the process of communication. This “zero point of orientation” leads to efforts to connect with other conscious agents who use language and symbolic processes to navigate their way in the world. This kind of relatedness is another marker that makes human consciousness unique.

Williams expands on this unique orientation of human consciousness in a discussion of how, in everyday life, consciousness is described as relational, as a continuous narrative, and as a process of a shared language. To be conscious of myself is to be aware of being part of a web of information exchange with other selves, objects, and groups within a cooperative environment. To be conscious of anything, it is necessary to imagine other points of view. This idea is extended in time through a sense of a continuity of experience or narrative that provides a sense of identity and consistent orientation to the world around. Such a story of consciousness includes memories of past experiences that tell a story. At the same time, others see me as a continuum so that I am not only a narrator, but also narrated: “I am agent, but I am acted upon” (16). These markers of consciousness make it difficult to understand it as simply “dead matter”; there is always “a speaking, an invitation, a summons to engage, which for the theologian, is bound up with the nature of creation itself…” (29).

Interestingly and counterintuitively, Williams’s argument about the nature of human consciousness leads to an extensive discussion on the importance of the human body. A compelling case for the role of the body follows from any reflection on human consciousness and knowing. Physical knowing is a way of maneuvering in the material world; a way of inhabiting one’s self in the environment. Human development occurs as children bump into people and objects; a geographical map is created through various forms of resistance. As individuals physically interact with the environment, a set of habits are activated so that “(y)ou learn to respond or resonate to your environment in a particular way” (52). This sense of resonance with the environment is essential in forming a body image that is a precursor to developing an image of the self. Williams borrows here from the work of German philosopher Edith Stein who argued that in order to gain an understanding of the body as a three-dimensional unit in space, it is important to tune in to what other people are doing in reference to us. According to Stein, how else do individuals learn what the back of my head looks like “head-on,” without the perspective of others (58). Human beings cannot know themselves in isolation, they must be seen by and engaged with by others.

Williams’s argument about the importance of the body does not focus on the material substance or corporeal nature of the body, although that is important as well. Rather, he discusses the “attunement” of human beings to various stimuli that allow them to resonate with the world. The writer draws from the work of neuroscientists on the two hemispheres of the brain and the binocular vision that humans need to function intelligently in reality. The place of the embodied mind is essential in understanding the importance of play, music, and rest is in the formation of intelligence in children. Interestingly, Williams states that embodied learning or “craft learning” is not only important in early childhood, but also in those activities in live “that require sophistication of intelligence, patience, and, dare I say it, spiritual maturity” (61). He turns to an unlikely source, St. Augustine, for his argument on the value of embodied learning. In his Confessions, Augustine describes his struggle to gain spiritual knowledge after following a path of mental abstraction and inwardness which did not seem to change his life. In his frustration, “he finally gave himself up to Christian faith, throwing himself down, he said, on the embodied divinity that was stretched at his feet—the human narrative of Jesus Christ” (62). So, Williams argues, for Augustine, the “way down” means an awareness of human mortality and
physicality. It is into this created order, the social and physical world, where God has spoken and acted in Jesus Christ.

In the last section of the book, Williams focuses on faith and human flourishing. He laments the fact that too often religious identity has been rooted in narratives of repression that lead to anxiety and distorted thinking about the nature of faith. There is an alternative life of faith, however, that leads to a divinely shaped human maturity and flourishing that provides freedom from anxiety, fear, and despair. This model of human life requires a reflection on human dependency on God that is not always typical in traditional Christian discourse, for this dependency is radically unlike the type of struggle with others that often creates de-humanizing effects in the Christian community. God is not a narcissistic, controlling other, but an Other who brings clarity of vision that opens up and enlarges the possibilities of being human. To gain this perspective, Williams believes that the church needs to refine its “grammar” of God, as we converse about God as God. By clarifying and purifying our talk about God, we clarify and purify our understanding of what is most human. This is the “human face” that is uncovered in a life of faith that leads to a sense of sacredness of the time that is given to us to discover what kind of human being we are meant to be. So the question for Williams is, “What is the ‘human face’ that is being uncovered in the practice of faith?” (84). As Christians practice their faith in everyday life, it is important to know what those actions look like to neighbors and the community-at-large. What is the true nature of humanity being revealed by the habits and language that we use as Christians? “It is very important for people of any faith to know what they look like in the eyes of the other” (84).

Williams concludes his treatise on the nature of humans by discussing the importance of silence in human formation. He quotes from the great Church of England divine, Richard Hooker, who, in speaking of the knowledge of God, said, “(Our) safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence” (87). According to Williams, those moments in human experience when we most often encounter silence are perhaps the most significant in flourishing as human beings. Sometimes silence can overtake a person during critical events of life, for example, when the doctor says to a patient “the tests are positive.” But there are other moments at the end of good movie or musical performance that also lead to a profound silence. There are those experiences in life that remind us that we are not always in control of events and no amount of talking can make it better. “Silence is something to do with acknowledging a lack of power” (94). Such moments leave us without words, but Williams makes the case that a growing and flourishing life is one that is prepared for times of silence. For the person who is dependent on God these are “extra-ordinary” moments that provide the possibility of growth. It is at this point in life that “the basic prose of our humanity is, by God, turned into poetry” and it is the space “where the mystery of God happens” (96).

For Williams, the mystery of God is most deeply experienced in the liturgy of worship when the loud clatter and busy clutter of everyday life is replaced by the silence of the presence of God. Not that all words are removed, but speech is deepened “out of a steady, patient attentiveness” that is contrasted with the noise of life’s experiences. Something happens in worship that nobody makes happen. In the same sense, human flourishing is similar to those moments of worship when life is happening without having to control everything, letting go of power and anxiety and allowing our humanity flower particularly in those quiet moments when creation comes alive: “God is God by being God for us, and we are human by being human for God; and all joy and fulfillment opens up once we recognize this” (104-5).

This deeply engaging work by Rowan Williams challenges current interpretations of what it means to be truly human in modern society. The questions he raises are perceptive and timely as he draws from the most recent discourse in scientific and other academic circles. While he is respectful and supportive of recent research, he is skeptical of any view that isolates and reduces humanity to “passive
stuff” that ignores the deep symbols of culture, human imagination, and embodied relationships. He argues cogently for a more holistic understanding that is grounded in the sciences, but also rooted in man’s dependence on God that opens up the possibility of the “endless riches of divine life that has been offered to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus” (ix). This book is scholarly and yet easily readable by theologians and laity alike. Questions at the end of each chapter make it particularly suitable for group discussions and student seminars. This brilliant, thought-provoking work should be considered in any serious discussion on theological anthropology or spiritual formation.

Reviewed by C. Clark Triplett

Stephen R. Haynes, Professor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College, presents a compelling analysis of how Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German theologian, pastor, and martyr, has been interpreted by American theologians, scholars, and writers in America from secular, liberal, conservative, and populist perspectives. The author of this text is, perhaps, one of the singular scholar on the American reception of Bonhoeffer and has written extensively on the subject, including a previously co-authored work, *Bonhoeffer for American Theologians*, as well as numerous scholarly articles and presentations. In spite of its subtitle, this is not primarily a book on the politics and policies of Donald Trump. Rather, it is a detailed account of how Bonhoeffer has been received and interpreted by American scholars as well as popular culture. The legacy of Bonhoeffer has been filtered through many diverse lenses in America particularly as they have considered his seemingly courageous life, theological cosmopolitanism, and pastoral commitment. His life has been at the center of an intense “crossfire of liberals and conservatives each laying claim to the great Christian martyr” (x). According to Haynes, many claimants have selectively read Bonhoeffer with sometimes flawed accounts of his life and thought including the radical “death-of-God” theologians such as Thomas Altizer and equally radical advocates on the right, such as Eric Metaxas who tend to ignore the parts of his work they do not like and invent other parts to support their agendas. Some commentators focus on Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship* and *Life Together* while others find support in his later *Letters and Papers from Prison*. In this book, Haynes seeks to intervene in this controversial debate in an effort to help the reader understand the historical and cultural contexts that are often misunderstood in these antithetical positions. The author also raises significant questions about whether it is possible to live a life of discipleship in the midst of such inflamed political discourse that reflects the division of the American culture war.

Haynes explains the various response to Bonhoeffer’s works in terms of a Rorschach Test in which the different approaches represent projective measures that cluster in “types.” The diverse, sometimes antithetical, interpretations “coalesce into distinguishable, though largely conflicting, portraits” (11), which he sorts into liberal and evangelical categories. The various liberal portrayals include descriptions such as critical patriot, post-holocaust righteous gentile, and universal moral hero. For some American liberals, Bonhoeffer has consistently expressed antigovernment critique, particularly since the political shift to the right in the 1980s under Ronald Reagan. They have persistently argued that the fascist or neo-fascist ideology that Bonhoeffer opposed could be found in the Right’s “brew” of nationalism, injured innocence, and triumphalist confidence. Other liberal commentators portrayed Bonhoeffer as someone who clearly identified himself as a Christian who understood “the threat Hitler posed for Jews and vowed to protect them at the cost of his own life” (14). However, as Haynes argues, this later view may be more a tendency towards hagiography rather than something based in fact. It would seem that Bonhoeffer’s attitude toward the Jews was an evolving process that was not solidified until near the end of his life. Perhaps the most popular reading of Bonhoeffer among liberals is that of a spiritual or moral hero. Writers such as Geoffrey Kelley and F. Burton Nelson tend to emphasize the way he lived his life in contrast to the institutional structures of organized religion. Others included in this typology, such as Keith W. Clements and Nancy Koehn, present Bonhoeffer as an extraordinary individual with a universal appeal to the general public, an exemplar at the purely human level. All of these portraits paint Bonhoeffer as an admirable human being whose story inspires a life of purpose and
While such descriptions are noteworthy, Haynes makes a case that some depict a saint that ignores aspects of his legacy that are inconvenient, and, in some cases, are simply implausible (23).

The remainder of Hayne’s work is devoted to a discussion of the reception of Bonhoeffer by evangelicals. Initially, evangelicals were ambivalent or even skeptical of Bonhoeffer because of the association of Bonhoeffer’s writings with “secular” theologians such as James T. Robinson, William Hamilton, and Paul van Buren. Evangelical theologians, such as Cornelius Van Til, warned that in spite of his martyrdom, Bonhoeffer’s theology was basically unorthodox. Despite this initial opposition, “by the end of the 1990s Bonhoeffer had become almost universally admired by American evangelicals” (25). The consensus among evangelicals was that Bonhoeffer was a man of faith whose work of ministry was focused on a life of discipleship and who, as a result of his convictions, gave his life for the sake of the gospel. This sense of connection among evangelicals came primarily from two of his books, *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*, which were included in best seller lists along with works of C. S. Lewis, R. A. Torrey, and others. Many of the narratives about Bonhoeffer in evangelical circles were descriptions of a Christian hero, cultural warrior, and ecclesiological guide.

There were some differences in the approach to Bonhoeffer by “progressive” evangelicals. They staked a claim on his theology that was considerably different from that of conservative evangelicals. These theologians and commentators were more likely to interpret Bonhoeffer as a critic of the American church and its accommodation to American culture. Theologians and writers such as David P. Gushee, Glen Stassen, Michael Westmoreland, and Jim Wallace deliver penetrating critiques of American evangelicals who have become “addicted to secular ideologies of greed, self-indulgence, polite racism, patriarchal authoritarianism, militarism, and just plain apathy without compassion” and who conflate belief in the Bible with “an authoritarian ideology imported from secular politics” (26). Progressive evangelicals, according to Haynes, understood Bonhoeffer to be a pastor and theologian who was willing to stand against the status quo in the church of Germany that gradually accommodated to the political agenda of Hitler and the Third Reich.

Haynes marks September 11, 2001 as a watershed moment in America when the public debate shifted from domestic issues to questions related to international security. It also seemed to be a “zero point” for the way Bonhoeffer was received by American evangelicals. There seemed to be a “greater urgency to connect Bonhoeffer’s legacy to domestic and international affairs” (41). At the time, a number of politicians and political leaders attempted to use Bonhoeffer’s life and martyrdom as a justification for their bellicose rhetoric about terrorism around the world. George Bush, for example, cited Bonhoeffer in his address to the German Reichstag, congratulating them for their efforts to thwart terrorism. The President spoke of Bonhoeffer as an inspirational way of facing this “new totalitarian threat” (42). Haynes cautions against using this kind of interpretation for justifying military action by citing the work of theological ethicist Walter Wink, who argued that anyone who reads Bonhoeffer in this way “overlooks his clear statement that he does not regard this as justifiable action—that it’s a sin—and that he throws himself on the mercy of God” (43). According to Wink, Bonhoeffer’s actions should never be considered a justification for war.

As it might be expected, there were a number of responses from scholars to the anti-terrorist portrayals of Bonhoeffer. Haynes refers to Bonhoeffer scholars such as Larry Rasmussen, retired professor of theology from Union Theological Seminary, who argued that the key thing to remember about Bonhoeffer was not his involvement in the German resistance, but his concern with the German church’s enculturation and alignment with the German State. Charles Marsh, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, carries this argument a step further by likening the evangelical support of the war in Iraq to German Christians who “confused the will of the nation with the will of
Interestingly, as the war in Iraq continued for years, some Americans began to question the legitimacy of it and began to criticize Bush for raising the specter of Nazism in their opposition to him.

After the 2008 election of Barack Obama, the object and tone of the rhetoric began to shift again from Bush to Obama. Many conservatives were fearful of Obama’s “otherness” and that he was committed to the destruction of America. There were a number of attempts to link the President to Hitler because of the dislike of Obama’s emphasis on change and his support of a “socialist” national healthcare system, nationalization of trouble banks, and his support of homosexuality. Conservative Christians, in particular, used the German church’s struggle under Hitler as a beacon call for resistance to these changes. Critics from mainline churches, however, found this approach ironic since the term “confessing church” in Germany “stood for people risking their lives for the conviction that the gospel of grace extends to everyone” (59).

As the stage of political interpretations began to blossom, two significant events set the tone for the expansion of conservative rhetoric in using Bonhoeffer as a hero for their political agenda. One event was the issuance of the 2009 Manhattan Declaration, a joint statement from Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical Christians on abortion, marriage, and religious liberty. The other import event was the 2010 publication of Eric Metaxas’s book *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*. This highly popular work, which was aimed specifically at evangelical readers, became a favorite source for conservative political pundits. Metaxas was instrumental in aligning Bonhoeffer with many conservative cultural shibboleths in reaction to imperious government overreach. According to Haynes, Metaxas’s work “represented a milestone in the history of Bonhoeffer’s American receptions” (69). His portrait of Bonhoeffer was identified with the concerns of the time so stridently articulated in the American culture wars. Metaxas’s book generated great interest because it reflected the political ideology of the Right. The real concern of Haynes, expressed so meticulously in this book, is Metaxas’s dismissive attitude about the scholarly consensus on Bonhoeffer’s legacy. Haynes argues that the portrayal of Bonhoeffer as a “devout believer” and his view that scholars had been tainted by the secularizing theology of Robinson, Hamilton, and van Buren is misguided and elevates one particular interpretation to a level that is unwarranted. The secular theological interpretation was short-lived and did not represent the position of most Bonhoeffer scholars. From very early on, well-known Bonhoeffer scholars such as Paul Lehmann and Eberhard Bethge argued that these radical theologians were misconstruing Bonhoeffer’s theology.

Haynes’s most intense criticism of Metaxas was his use of Bonhoeffer for his own political agenda in an attempt to liberate him from the clutches of the progressive, liberal political interpretations. While Haynes is cautious in claiming a “cause-and-effect” influence of Metaxas’s book on the political movement that emerges, he speculates that it certainly did effect evangelical attitudes towards Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer became a trustworthy model for evangelicals who were unhappy with the “deep state” control of policy and administrative structures. In many radio and television presentations, Metaxas described Bonhoeffer as a scholar whose story reflected conservative concerns and whose message awakened people to the relationships between the assault on liberty in Nazi Germany and those in present day America.

Although Bonhoeffer had never been alluded to in support of a specific presidential candidate, it is not surprising in the current divisive political climate that someone would connect him with the candidacy of Donald Trump and his “Make America Great Again” brand. Although most progressive commentators were sounding the alarm about the harsh rhetoric that had become a defining feature of 2016 campaign, several conservative pundits were alluding to Bonhoeffer in their moral outrage against the liberal support for abortion, homosexuality, and marriage equality. Metaxas used this moment to argue that Christians “could not only vote for Trump but must do so” in spite of all his moral failures.
For some conservatives, Trump was the last best hope to keep America from falling into a state in which the republic would be lost, particularly with the selection of liberal Supreme Court selections under Hillary Clinton. These selections would lead to a loss of religious liberty and the establishment of judicial tyranny. Therefore, those who wish to maintain the republic “sometimes have to hold their noses and ‘vote for the person who is going to do the least damage or who is going to pull you back from the brink. [...] I am genuinely convinced that means voting for Trump’” (105).

Prior to the election of Trump, there was a growing reaction among Bonhoeffer scholars who felt obligated to address what they felt was a misguided application of Bonhoeffer’s thought. At the time, Haynes wrote a three-thousand-word article in The Huffington Post in response to political campaigns for using Bonhoeffer as an inspiration for specific political agendas. In his article, Haynes emphasized three major points: 1) Bonhoeffer compels us to recognize that comparing Donald Trump to Hitler is not a recipe for clarity; 2) Bonhoeffer reminds us not to be surprised that some Christians are enthusiastic about Trump since the German Christians responded to Hitler with enthusiasm; and 3) Bonhoeffer recognized that complacency is a privilege we can not afford because he recognized the threat to the church when Christians aligned themselves with Nazi ideology by establishing a racist “people’s” church (114). Haynes believes that Bonhoeffer’s concern is a powerful witness in light of the current election that used racial language aimed at the most xenophobic elements in American culture. Haynes’s article received an enthusiastic response from both Democratic and moderate Republican politicians and commentators. Resistance continued to grow as the controversy about the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, exploded. Former Republican congressman and MSNBC commentator Joe Scarborough referred to Bonhoeffer’s “Meditation on Stupidity” on his FaceBook page:

Stupidity is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice. [...] Neither protests nor the use of force accomplish anything here; reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one’s prejudgment simply need not be believed—in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical—and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental. In all this the stupid person, in contrast to the malicious one, is utterly self-satisfied and, being easily irritated, becomes dangerous by going on the attack. (121)

Although some evangelicals continued to use Bonhoeffer to support the Trump agenda, others discovered in the writings of the pastor-theologian an alternative argument for how “principled opponents of Trump might think about resistance” (125).

The last chapter of the book is a personal appeal by the author in the form of a letter to “Christians who love Bonhoeffer, but (still) support Trump.” Haynes indicates that this “personal letter” was inspired by reported discussions with evangelical pastors during the Judge Roy Moore bid for the senate in Alabama. Several of the pastors interviewed told reporters that even if Moore were guilty of molesting underage women, they would still support him because sending a Republican child molester to the senate was preferable to having a Democrat win. In the letter, Haynes introduces himself to his evangelical “brothers and sisters in Christ” and then reminds them of the many things that all Christians have in common in spite of their political differences. He takes time to talk briefly about his own upbringing as an evangelical pastor’s son who had attended an evangelical seminary. Even though he no longer uses the term evangelical to describe his faith—“the break was more cultural than theological”—he indicates his appreciation for his upbringing as an experience that instilled a “clear worldview” and a deep conviction that one’s beliefs “should be reflected in the way one lives” (137).
Based on this upbringing and these convictions, he appeals to evangelicals to think outside the box when considering their continuing support for a candidate who is “playing” evangelicals by “masking his quest for power with a veneer of evangelical Christianity” (138). A lesson he had learned as a pastor’s son who supported politicians such as Richard Nixon was to be suspicious of politicians who make religion and piety as part of their public persona, particularly when it is used to persuade religious people to support them. Throughout the rest of his letter, he attempts to make a case for why supporting Donald Trump is problematic for Christians.

Haynes begins his argument for the reevaluation of the President by stating rather starkly that it is clear that there is nothing remotely “Christian” about Donald Trump. He is reminded that one of the important lessons he learned growing up in a Christian home is that people should be judged on the basis of their moral character, and the preponderance of evidence seems to indicate that “Trump’s character is animated by the least Christian of qualities—self-aggrandizement, enrichment at the expense of others, getting away with whatever one can, seeking to humiliate others, and spreading hate and suspicion” (139). He is not arguing against Trump’s policies, which sincere people can disagree about, but the moral qualifications of someone who cannot be trusted to tell the truth.

Secondly, Haynes makes the case that evangelicals’ fierce embrace of Trump has begun to do real damage to American Christianity. He is concerned that both secular and religious leaders are portraying evangelicals as insincere, hypocritical, and intolerant. Even younger evangelicals are appalled at what they describe as “idolatrous politics” that engender the fear of aliens, the very strangers whom Christians are called to show grace and hospitality. Perhaps most importantly, Haynes believes that this type of politics of fear is damaging the credibility of their faith based on misogyny, racism, and a willingness to do whatever is necessary regardless of who is hurt. The willingness for some Christians to support and cover for the President may mean that what is said in the future on behalf of the Gospel will no longer receive a serious hearing by anyone outside of an insulated remnant. Quoting from The Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson, he warns that Trump evangelicals are “playing a grubby political game for the highest of stakes; the reputation of their faith” (143).

Finally, in this very personal appeal, Haynes makes the case that evangelicals’ embrace of Trump is eerily reminiscent of German Christians’ attachment to Hitler in the early 1930s. He makes this point not to argue that Trump is another Hitler, but as a way of drawing attention to “the ways Christians have compromised themselves in endorsing political movements in which they perceived the hand of God” (143). Drawing from his deep understanding of German history, he is concerned about the similarity of current evangelical political responses to German Christians who followed a strong leader who they were convinced would lead the country in the right moral direction. He provides several examples of how Christians in Germany spoke about God’s role in Hitler’s campaign. Haynes ends by appealing to Christians who find themselves in a dilemma in which neither candidate is morally acceptable. In this case, it is incumbent upon Christians to extricate themselves from the quagmire, taking a risk on one of the candidates while preparing to renounce them if they act immorally, or be willing to write in a name—such as “Bonhoeffer” which would be a moment that the Christian could feel good about.

Although some evangelicals will find Haynes’s book difficult to read, it is worth the effort to understand the various sides of the current debate and how various Christians have responded. Whether one agrees with his conclusions, he provides a detailed portrait of how Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s legacy has been received in America. In a time of intense cultural divide and social upheaval, Haynes engages in a detailed analysis of the current religious, political, and social climate. He makes a courageous attempt to make a case for what it means to be a disciple in contemporary America by considering the various interpretations of an acclaimed pastor-theologian. In the course of the book, Haynes raises the question
of whether Bonhoeffer can help Christians find freedom within the cultural prison that has captured many believers. In the process of critically examining different religious and political interpretations of Bonhoeffer, Haynes hopes that Christians will gain the necessary critical tools to challenge their own lives and the sometimes easy accommodation of the church to the spirit of the age.
Poems

Two Poems

Paulette Guerin

Mother to Son

Their cups drained,
the wedding guests stir.

I have tasted
the well water, sweeter
when you draw.
The seeds you plant
grow in drought.

Now the water dreams
of being more.
So many people thirst,
their hollow cups outstretched.

After Caravaggio’s The Crucifixion of St. Peter

In his cheek a little color pools.
A man hugs the beam to hoist it into place,
his red cloak just payment
for betrayal. Could it be a woman

who dug the hole? We see only blackened feet.
No one’s clothes are clean except the saint’s,

his shred of cloth still white. He levers himself
on the immovable spike. He requested

the direction his death would take, and looks
on a world already upside-down.
It’s One in the Morning and Other Poems

Mark Tappmeyer

It’s One in the Morning

and rain is falling. Lightning is streaking.
The window I’m sitting beside has blurred
into an impressionist’s painting.

The gooseneck lamp flickers,
like a star in the black dome of the sky about to collapse,
sending my thoughts to the basket of candles
you made, their wicks like fuses,
the long cylinders of scented wax
waiting to ignite.

I may need to take
a match to one or two and start their release
of pent-up energy, like this book resting on my lap
with its BTUs of history and high drama,
its candlepower of ideas
pushing into the dark corners of the room.

When I comment to you about the energy
stored in books,
you say offhandedly,
as if everyone knows,
books are that way,
and when collected, they light a city,

a thousand thousand candlewatts
for travelers to see their way,
illuminating the ditches into which
they might stumble,
the sharp turns of Main Street,
the signs identifying vacancies
where the weary can get out of the weather
and kick off their shoes.
Someday You’ll Understand

Someday you’ll understand
when these, now so young, crowd the foundation,
you said, shaking your head
at the yews nestled in my row of holes,
recruits aligned with military precision.
Like bringing home a puppy
without a thought to its size in a year.

A stone sinking through deep water,
I fell again into this when I slid from bed this morning,
weighted with questions for God:
Why this? What about that? which, with sleep
in my eyes, seemed well placed, worth an accusation,
maybe a day-long fight.

Though, as happened, later in day’s glare
I watched them burn away mostly
into empty chatter. Words, words, words,
a waterfall of sound without a bottom.
Scrubs ill-placed.
I’m thinking that the Almighty’s thinking
dug too near the foundation.
Marriage

So many times we sat in this restaurant
watching diners come and go,
like the man with the Petoskey t-shirt,

and I said *He looks like a Jesse Wade*
and you replied *I don’t see it*, as if countenances
were your specialty.

And the same with reading clouds, particularly one afternoon
as we relaxed on the patio under a Michelangelo sky
and I said *Look. The Little Drummer Boy*, pointing

to the shape in the thunderhead drifting toward the yard,
and you said *No way, that’s Emily Dickenson.*
I saw immediately the game was lost.

The cloud would never be the tiny percussionist, and, as you noted,
only the deaf would miss the Belle’s rhythms in the rumble of weather.
Now I play this game of recognitions privately,

which I did this afternoon
when Bullwinkle appeared faintly just above the horizon,
his jaws locked, his mouth clenched, like any wise bull moose.
Appled

Some of the creatures,
like the grub underfoot, the howler monkey overhead,
heard it—
the crunch of apple flesh,
then the deep sigh,
and then the thud of the core thrown against the ground--
and knew trouble was afoot.

The sky blistered. The creeks groaned.
Every breathing thing in the garden,
even on the farthest plains, felt a whirlwind stirring.

The mouse, once calm and heroic, shivered under the chill of fear.
The leopard rose up from its lunch of spring grass snarling.

All things had become new
with the taste of blood now on the tongue,
the flavor of another’s bleeding and of one’s own,
the apple seed of death sprouting in every stomach.

The big cats prowled, the scent of fruit in the air.

The grazers, the weak-kneed, the delicate
who were also bathed in the scent
crowded to the gate,
hoping for a chance to run for the hills.
Medieval Bestiary Poems

Jane Beal

A medieval bestiary is a manuscript book that contains “scientific” descriptions of creatures alongside “spiritual” interpretations of those creatures; these derived from an older text called the Philologus. In the Middle Ages, the traits of certain animals were associated with Christ’s life, the Devil’s threat, or the Christian’s spiritual progress. Five entries in medieval bestiaries were particularly associated with different stages of the life of Christ: the unicorn with the Incarnation; the pelican and the lamb with the Crucifixion; and the phoenix and lion with the Resurrection.

The Unicorn was associated with Christ’s Incarnation because of the myth that a unicorn could be calmed and captured by a virgin’s purity. The Pelican, because of belief that this bird pierced its breast to feed its young with its own blood, and the Lamb, because of the descriptions of the atoning sacrifice of the lamb found in Scripture, were associated with the Crucifixion. The Phoenix, because of the myth of how it rises from its own ashes, and the lion, because of the story that it roared its cubs back to life again, were associated with Christ’s Resurrection. In addition to these meaningful connections, many medieval people associated Light (“God is light, and there is no darkness in him”) and the Star (“I am ... the bright Morning Star”) with Jesus because these were associated with him in scripture. In medieval bestiaries, the Annunciation to Mary, which presaged the conception and Incarnation of Christ, was associated with the light that shines on an oyster because light and dew were believed to help create the pearl inside the oyster. In general, the star was associated with Christ’s birth because the Magi followed it to find the Savior.

The nine poems below were inspired by these images and ideas in the Christian tradition. In the opening poem, “Kyrios,” the speaker sees a collection of animals at a circus and, inspired by their grandeur, wonders if she is hearing from God and asks God for mercy. In the closing poem, “Logos,” the speaker meditates on the sacred name, Jesus, which in the medieval period (as today) was often abbreviated IHS.

Kyrios

Kyrios, I’m curious –
did I hear you right
in the dark?

Cirque du soleil,
and the cabinet of curiosities,
is still spinning in a lost memory in my mind ...

But now, the little boy is dancing
with the little girl, casting light with the lantern
on the wall, dreaming and singing
of a future better than the past:
will you embrace them,
will you embrace us?

Kyrios! Kyrios! I reach out my hand
toward the light from your Star,
as I behold the circus animals in the ring

all of them roaring – lion, lamb, unicorn,
pelican and phoenix, bursting into flames –
as a red cardinal transforms into a parrot

and the valley of peace is pierced
by the beak of my lover’s soul, fearful
and yearning for our embrace, our

embrace, dear Lord! Have mercy,
*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison* –
his mouth is so sweet against my mouth.

Kyrios, I’m curious –
did I hear you right
in the dark?

**Light**

I.

I look into the tree: it is white at the core,
Innocence or emptiness? Death or waiting?

The whiteness reaches down deep,
but the roots of the tree are deeper.

The whiteness reaches up high,
but the branches of the tree are higher.

II.

The birds fly in and out of the thick leaves
like a living crown around the tree: a dove

perches above them all. The bright sun shines
on her shimmering breast and folded wings.
She is singing, in her way: story-telling, truth-telling, 
telling the life of her glorious soul-tree.

III.

The light is shining on the leaves! 
The light is illuminating what is invisible.

As I watch, a golden resin, like a new sap, begins 
to flow up through the roots that were injured

into the white core of that beautiful tree, 
making it even more

*alive.*

**Star**

Dazzling in the dark,  
sparkling like diamond –

does the morning star  
rise in your heart

as a little child sings  
her lullaby?

That star does not fall,  
but shoots across the sky,

then hovers over a stable  
in the House of Bread

where the maid-become-mother  
rocks the baby in her arms.

His eyes are full  
of her starlight,

reflecting time and eternity  
and the love in her face,

with the fearlessness he inherited  
from heaven.
**Unicorn**

The tender scene, so beautiful in the forest, when the maiden sits in the middle of the path that runs through the trees, and the unicorn lays his head in her lap:

Incarnation of God! What magic is in the world? The hunters draw closer, but still, you lie at peace like a newborn baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. The woman with you cannot imagine how the sword will pierce her own heart, too.

**Pelican**

I find you on the world-map: an image of avian motherhood.

You bow your head, you pierce your breast, and your blood feeds three little ones.

Christ! Of course this is a picture of your Crucifixion.

**Lamb**

The Lamb stands on a stone altar. We do not have to bind him.

Blood pours out from his sacred heart through a wide, wet wound where he was pierced into a golden chalice: drink this blood.

*The life is in the blood.*
Phoenix

My Phoenix wouldn’t be false —
this, the Resurrection of God!

Flaming fire, blazing bright,
casting shadows in the night!

But my little phoenix is the memory
of pain. What does this bird do? Looks
ugly, worming up from the ashes, fleshy,
then downy, moultting, edging
out her wings, flapping in the mess
of a nest, growing, growing, growing —
what power! terror! sorrow! misery!
Then suddenly, those two wings open
gloriously, like a double-rainbow
in the desert, beautiful before an invisible hand
crucifies them on the cross-beam, so that
screaming in pain, she burns as she turns
incandescent:

flaming fire, blazing bright,
casting shadows in the night!

O Phoenix! My little resurrected phoenix-soul
is weeping ruby-tears for all the years.
Begin again: renew. In the dark,
holy beloved, be true.

Lion

The stone lion shakes his mane
and comes to life!

He leaps into love, roaring,
so that the cubs awaken.

They lift their sleepy heads, resurrected,
and open their eyes to the Promise.
Logos

The Logos is a whisper
I hear in the silence.

My word echoes the Word:
everything that is written

is written for our instruction.
O sacred name! This, IHS.
Harold Bell Wright’s Two Ozarks Novels:
Introductions, Haiku Summaries, and Shepherd of the Hills Photos

John J. Han

Poet’s Note:
Harold Bell Wright (1872-1944), a pastor and bestselling author, was born in Rome, Oneida County, New York. As a child, he learned about the Bible, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha*, and other inspirational texts from his mother. At age eleven, he lost his mother, and his father—an alcoholic—abandoned his children. After attending Hiram College, Ohio, for two years, Harold Bell Wright became pastor of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pierce City, Missouri. Thereafter, he pastored churches at various locations in Missouri, Kansas, and California. Wright authored nineteen books of fiction and nonfiction altogether—at first part time and then full time. Five of his novels are set in the Ozarks: *That Printer of Udell’s* (1903), *The Shepherd of the Hills* (1907), *The Calling of Dan Matthews* (1909), *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent* (1919), and *God and the Groceryman* (1927). Below are brief introductions to *The Shepherd of the Hills*, which is the best-known Wright novel, and *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent*, which famously impacted Ronald Reagan as a young boy in Illinois. Following the introductions and summaries are thirteen Shepherd of the Hills photos which I took in Branson, Missouri, on September 20, 2018.

A Holy Trail in the Ozarks:
Highlights of *The Shepherd of the Hills*

*The Shepherd of the Hills*, Wright’s most celebrated novel that sold more than a million copies, is set in the Ozark Mountains during the late 1800s. In 1941, it was made into a movie which starred John Wayne, Betty Field, and Harry Carey. The novel portrays the life and ministry of Dad Howitt, a mysterious stranger “from the city” (Chicago) who comes to the Ozark Hills to live quietly in the fictional neighborhood of Mutton Hollow. Eventually, he becomes a minister of mountain people, thereby earning the nickname “The Shepherd of the Hills.” Before the beginning of the story, Dan Howitt’s son (“Mad Howitt”) visited the Ozarks, fell in love with a local girl named Maggie, impregnated her, and then abandoned her, assuming that his parents would disapprove of a union with a country girl. While giving birth, Maggie died, and her son, Pete, is now fifteen. Dan Howitt has come to the Ozarks not only to reinvigorate his soul but also to expiate his son’s moral lapse. A story of sin, redemption, reconciliation, and forgiveness, *The Shepherd of Hills* is also about the beauty and wonders
of the Ozark region which the author represents as an ideal setting suitable for a Rousseauian noble existence.

Marred by sentimentality and melodrama, Wright’s novel relies on stylized characterization in which “good guys” have no moral or physical weaknesses and “bad guys” have no redeeming qualities. While the story praises the natural beauty of the Ozarks, it also considers Ozarkians as fundamentally low-cultured. People of refined genes, such as Young Matt and Sammy, have the potential to become gentlemen and ladies, and Dan Howitt tutors them to become more cultured. Unlike villains, such as Wash Gibbs and his gang, whose parlance is sometimes incomprehensible, these positive characters speak in a light dialect. Despite an unmistakably condescending posture toward Ozarkians, Wright’s novel portrays the region as a place of spiritual restoration, moral rectitude, and chivalry. Below is a sequence of 45 haiku which summarize 45 respective chapters.

1 weary and wet
Dan Howitt arrives
in the Ozarks

8 Ollie has money,
but Sammy’s dad says
money isn’t everything

9 Sammy’s dad’s story—
how he and Sammy returned
to the Ozarks

2 Young Matt & Sammy Lane
full vigor, full beauty
both shy

10 Young Matt shows his strength
Sammy and Ollie watch
from horseback

3 Howitt meets Old Matt
the mists bring a sad voice
from the valley below

11 Ollie goes to bed,
dreams of riches he’ll have
in the city

4 Aunt Mollie points
to the pine tree under which
a girl is buried, forlorn

12 mountaineers flock
to Dan Howitt,
the white-haired shepherd

5 Pete—the girl’s son—
now fifteen, golden-haired
and graceful

13 Sammy’s ambition:
to be a real lady
inside and outside

6 Old Matt tells Howitt
his daughter’s death caused
by a young city man

14 Wash Gibbs the brute
threatens the shepherd
for tutoring Sammy
15
Young Matt’s crush on Sammy
the giant can’t speak,
can’t look at her

16
gigantic, lawless, vulgar—
Wash has nothing good
in him

17
tremendous strength
Young Matt stands tall
against ten ruffians

18
spring blossoms
Sammy blossoms into
a cultivated soul

19
hard times
no harvest, haggard cattle
people leave the hills

20
the shepherd’s prayer:
I love this mountain country,
how can I leave it?

21
the shepherd’s prayer answered:
the mysterious arrival
of God’s gold

22
Ollie’s letter to Sammy
he doesn’t sound like
a backwoods boy

23
Ollie’s homecoming
he chides Sammy for speaking
like a country girl

24
a man in love
Young Matt’s heart aches
for Sammy

25
romantic rivalry
Young Matt and Ollie quarrel
over Sammy

26
Sammy insists that
Ollie meet Young Matt
Ollie hesitates

27
Sammy sees the contrast:
Young Matt’s bravery,
Ollie’s cowardice

28
Sammy knew
Ollie couldn’t match Wash in strength
and yet, and yet…

29
Ollie ain’t bad
but is too little,
Sammy and her dad agree

30
I do not love you,
Sammy declares to Ollie,
a city man

31
Young Matt wonders,
should I become a city man
to win Sammy’s heart?

32
Sammy’s dad’s two-day trip
his face looks strange and white,
which frightens her
shocking news:
falsehoods thinks Sammy’s dad
robbed the bank

Sammy’s daddy
a man of righteousness
despite his past

Sammy’s daddy
killed by Wash, who is
killed by posse

another stranger—
a Chicago doctor wants
to see Dad Howitt

Dad tells the doctor
he has found a new home
in the Ozarks

mystery resolved:
Dad meets Howard, his son
who was presumed dead

Howard dying
posse shot him, thinking

he was a Baldknobber

time for confession:
Dad tells Old Matt he has
something to say

truth revealed:
Howard ruined Old Matt’s daughter,
he is dying now

deathbed vision:
Howard hears Old Matt’s daughter
call him from beyond

coming of autumn
Pete, Howard’s poor son,
passes from this world

destined union:
rosy-cheeked Sammy gives her heart
to Young Matt

some years later—
Sammy tells the whole story
to a young artist
The Power of Grace and Redemption: 
Highlights of *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent*

*The Re-Creation of Brian Kent* is set in the fictional neighborhood of Elbow Rock in southwestern Missouri. The story begins with an introduction to Auntie Sue, a “remarkable” 70-year-old woman originally from the state of Connecticut. After teaching schoolchildren in the Ozark hills for many years, she has retired to a small log cabin by the river. One night, a mysterious thirty-year-old man named Brian Kent arrives at the cabin dilapidated and forlorn. A woman with a charitable heart, she brings him inside the cabin and nurses him as if he were her child. Soon, detectives arrive to ask Auntie Sue if she has seen Brian Kent. She denies it based on her impression that Brian is fundamentally a good person. She also denies knowledge of him based on her belief that divine law is higher than human law. (In this regard, she recalls Sophocles’ Antigone, who defies King Creon’s decree not to bury her condemned brother, Eteocles.) When Auntie Sue discovers that Brian, a former bank clerk, stole customers’ money, including her own, she graciously suggests that he pay back her money by cutting timber near the cabin. Brian agrees and begins the process of a spiritual, mental, and emotional regeneration. As expected in Wright’s fiction, good things happen to good people: Brian and Betty Jo, his stenographer, fall in love with each other and get married. Homer T. Ward, the president of the bank where Brian committed embezzlement, happens to be Auntie Sue’s former student and the uncle and guardian of Betty Jo. Having already paid to the bank the entire money Brian has stolen, Ward forgives his former employee. It turns out that Brian’s crime was precipitated by his vain, wasteful wife, Martha, not by his greed and selfishness. By the end of the novel, Brian has become a new person thanks to his hard work, as well as the grace and love of Auntie Sue and Betty Jo.

As a novel, *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent* can be classified in several ways. More than anything, it is a Christian story of sin and redemption. Acutely aware of his transgressions, the main character strives to pay back the money he has stolen. (In Wright’s fiction, personal responsibility is a highly important virtue, and society should help the truly unfortunate who are willing to work.) On their part, Auntie Sue, Betty Jo, and Homer T. Ward exhibit the Christian virtues of grace and love, thereby contributing to the re-creation of the main character. Second, Wright’s story is a crime novel in which a crime takes place, award money is posted, detectives try to solve the crime, unsavory minor characters (such as Jap Taylor and her deformed daughter, Judy) are involved, and the true nature of the crime is revealed at the end of the story. Third, *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent* fits the mold of a typical romance novel. The moment when Brian and Betty Jo meet for the first time gives a hint that they will fall in love and will marry each other, which—as readers expect—eventually happens in the novel. Finally, Wright’s work is a regional novel set in the Ozarks. It reveals much about the people, customs, lifestyle, language, and landscape of the Ozark Mountains. Whereas Wright appreciates the natural beauty and
restorative power of the region, his representation of Ozarkians is largely negative: they are often uncultured, crude, malcontented, and semi-beastly. Similar to Dad Howitt in *The Shepherd of Hills*, Auntie Sue is an outsider born of good stock, is educated and elegant, and serves as a catalyst for civilization in the Ozarks. Below is a sequence of 25 haiku which summarize 25 respective chapters.

1
Auntie Sue
a remarkable woman
of the Ozark hills

2
a young man in the dark
drinking whiskey, he boards
a drifting boat

3
sunset splendor
a tranquil river flows by
Auntie Sue’s cabin

4
the drifting boat
reaches Auntie Sue’s cabin
at night

5
Auntie Sue looks
after the man from the boat
he sobs like a child

6
“I have been in Hell,”
says the young man.
“My name is Brian Kent”

7
Brian stole bank money
Auntie Sue tells detectives
she hasn’t seen him

8
Brian stole money,
including Auntie Sue’s
she lets it go

9
Auntie Sue’s offer:
he can pay what he owes
by cutting her timber

10
Brian’s response:
he’ll thankfully accept
Auntie Sue’s offer

11
re-creation of Brian
Auntie Sue urges him
to write his book

12
taking a chance
Auntie Sue invites Betty Jo
to type Brian’s work

13
Betty Jo’s arrival
the young woman’s beaming face
charms Brian

14
Brian’s manuscript
Betty Jo says it piques
her interest in him

15
typescript finished
Brian sees Betty Jo off
their eyes lock

16
Auntie Sue’s secret:
she’s been chaste since
her young lover’s death in war
17
happy reunion
Betty Jo has found a press
for Brian’s book

18
Betty Jo now knows:
you love Brian because he
strives not to love you

19
the way to Chicago
Auntie Sue wants to protect
Brian legally

20
Auntie Sue in Chicago
Brian and Betty Jo left alone
feeling awkward

21
wild party nearby
Mrs. Martha Kent learns
her husband is alive

22
bank president tells
Auntie Sue that Brian
is forgiven

23
Martha’s drunk rowing
she drowns despite Brian’s
heroic efforts

24
Judy’s return
the maid says sorry to Betty Jo
for her ill wills

25
nuptial bliss
Brian and Betty Jo honeymoon
on the river
Shepherd of the Hills Photos:

The way to the Shepherd of the Hills Adventure Park and Inspiration Tower in Branson, an Ozark town in southwest Missouri. Along southbound Highway 65 stands a sign for Shepherd of the Hills Expressway. The rural Ozark setting of *The Shepherd of the Hills* has made Branson a popular travel destination.

230-foot Inspiration Tower in the Shepherd of the Hills Adventure Park. The highest point in southwest Missouri, it was built in 1989 to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of Harold Bell Wright’s first visit to the Ozarks.
The observation deck of Inspiration Tower offers panoramic views of the rolling hills of Branson and its surrounding areas.

The main characters of *The Shepherd of the Hills* are featured near Inspiration Tower. The tallest figure is Dad Howitt, a Chicago pastor who comes to the Ozarks and becomes a “shepherd” for the mountaineers. (See next page.)
Morgan Chapel, which seats 75 people. Originally built in Morgan County, Missouri, it was saved from demolition and moved to the current site in 1990. This simple building looks similar to the churches Harold Bell Wright pastored in southern Missouri. An explanatory sign stands near the entrance of the building. (See next page.)
Old Matt’s Cabin, which stands in its original location. In 1983, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In *The Shepherd of the Hills*, Old Matt’s daughter was impregnated and then deserted by Dad Howitt’s son, Mad Howitt. She dies in childbirth, and Old Matt pledges to kill both the young man and his father. Mistaken as a Baldknobber, Mad Howitt is killed by a posse. The story ends with a reconciliation between Old Matt and Dad Howitt.
The front porch of Old Matt’s Cabin.

The statue of Old Matt in the Shepherd of the Hills Adventure Park.
A Missouri historical marker in the Shepherd of the Hills Adventure Park. It explains the cultural significance of Harold Bell Wright for Taney County, where Branson is located.
Notes on Contributors

Matthew R. Bardowell <matthew.bardowell@mobap.edu> is Assistant Professor of English at Missouri Baptist University, where he teaches British literature, world literature, and composition. His research centers on Old Norse and Old English literature as well as the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien, and his recent scholarship engages questions concerning emotion and aesthetics. His work appears in *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature*, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, *Mythlore*, and *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*. Bardowell holds a Ph.D. in English from Saint Louis University.

Jane Beal, Ph.D. <janebeal@gmail.com> is an associate professor of English at the University of La Verne in southern California. She has written the academic monograph, *John Trevisa and the English Polychronicon* (ACMRS/Brepols, 2012), and co-edited the festschrift, *Translating the Past: Essays on Medieval Literature in Honor of Marijane Osborn* (ACMRS, 2012). She also has written *The Signifying Power of Pearl: Medieval Literary and Cultural Contexts for the Transformation of Genre* (Routledge, 2017), edited and translated *Pearl: A Middle English Edition and Modern English Translation* (Broadview, forthcoming), and co-authored and co-edited *Approaches to Teaching the Middle English Pearl* (MLA, 2017). She is now editing *A New Companion to the Gawain-Poet*. She is the editor of two volumes of academic essays on the reception of major religious figures in the Middle Ages: *Illuminating Moses: A History of Reception from Exodus to the Renaissance* (Brill, 2014) and *Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages* (Brill, forthcoming). She writes poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction as well; her poetry collections include *Sanctuary* (Finishing Line Press, 2008) and *Rising* (Wipf and Stock, 2014). To learn more about her and her work, please visit http://sanctuarypoet.net.

Mark Eckel <eckel1957@gmail.com> is President of a 501(c)(3), The Comenius Institute https://comeniusinstitute.com/. His 35 year teaching vocation continues in various institutions, high school through doctoral studies. He has written three curricula used worldwide. His books include titles on faith-learning integration, reflective study, movies, education, science fiction, and law. He has published dozens of journal articles and has written three dozen encyclopedia essays. Eckel is a book review editor and maintains weekly content on his own website https://warpandwoof.org/ where over 1000 of his writings, videos, and podcasts are freely accessed. He has earned degrees in Old Testament (ThM), social science research (PhD), and is finishing an M.A. degree in English.

Paulette Guerin <pbane@harding.edu> is a graduate of the MFA program at the University of Florida. She lives in Arkansas and teaches English at Harding University. Inspired by Thoreau’s *Walden*, she is building a tiny cabin on seven acres (with pond) and blogging about the experience at pauletteguerinbame.wordpress.com. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Best New Poets 2018*, *ep;phany*, *Concho River Review*, *The Tishman Review*, *2 River View*, and others. She also has a chapbook, *Polishing Silver*.

John J. Han <john.han@mobap.edu> is Professor of English & Creative Writing and Chair of the Humanities Division at Missouri Baptist University. He is the author, editor, co-editor, or translator of twenty books, including *Wise Blood: A Re-Consideration* (Rodopi, 2011), *The Final Crossing: Death and Dying in Literature* (Peter Lang, 2015), *Worlds Gone Awry: Essays on Dystopian Fiction* (McFarland, 2018), and *More Thunder Thighs: Haiku Musings on the English Language* (Cyberwit, 2018). Han’s poems have also appeared in periodicals and anthologies worldwide, including *Akitsu*.

Aaron Lumpkin <aaron.lumpkin@mobap.edu> serves as Campus Minister and Director of Faith & Service at Missouri Baptist University. He is currently a Ph.D. student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary specializing in Historical Theology. He holds an M.Div. from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC, and a B.A. in Pastoral Leadership and Biblical Exposition from Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. He has published book reviews with various journals, including Themelios and The Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry, and is co-editor with Nathan Finn in a forthcoming book, “The Sum and Substance of the Gospel”: The Christ-Centered Piety of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Jessica L. Martin <jmartin@cccu.org> lives and works in Washington, D.C., where she is the Residence Director & Internship Coordinator for the American Studies Program at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. She received her M.A. in Higher Education and Student Development from Taylor University and holds a B.S. in Medicinal and Biological Chemistry with a Biblical and Theological Studies minor from Palm Beach Atlantic University. Her professional and research interests include experiential learning, learning science, the marketization of higher education, and student consumerism. Jessica has contributed via editing or writing to journals including Growth, Christian Scholar’s Review, Christian Higher Education, and ACSD’s most recent monograph installation, A Calling to Care: Nurturing Students Toward Wholeness (ACU Press, 2018).

Darren J. N. Middleton <d.middleton2@tcu.edu> serves as the John F. Weatherly Professor of Religion and Director of the Master of Liberal Arts program at Texas Christian University, USA. Born and raised in Nottingham, England, he has published books in the areas of theology and comparative literature as well as religion and the arts, including Approaching Silence: New Perspectives on Shusaku Endo’s Classic Novel (2015); Dangerous Edges of Graham Greene: Journeys with Saints and Sinners (2011); Mother Tongue Theologies: Poets, Novelists, and Non-Western Christianity (2009); Theology after Reading: Christian Imagination and the Power of Fiction (2008); and, Broken Hallelujah: Nikos Kazantzakis and Christian Theology (2007). A book on George Eliot and prayer is forthcoming. He lives in Fort Worth with his wife, Betsy Flowers, an American religious historian, and their son, Jonathan Middleton. For Darren Middleton’s website, see: www.darrenjmiddletton.com.

Julie Ooms <Julie.Ooms@mobap.edu> is Assistant Professor of English at Missouri Baptist University, where she teaches courses in American literature, world literature, and composition. She received her Ph.D. in English from Baylor University in 2014. Her main research area is in twentieth-century American war literature, and she has published articles on the war writing of Tim O’Brien, J. D. Salinger, and Sylvia Plath in Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature, Journal of the Short Story in English, Christian Scholar’s Review, and Plath Profiles. Her current research project focuses on Sylvia Plath’s The Bell Jar and Augustine’s Confessions.
Mark Tappmeyer <mtappmeyer@sbuniv.edu> is a retired professor of English, having taught writing, modern drama, contemporary poetry, and British/world literature at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri, for thirty-six years. He also taught for two years at Dalian Technological University in China’s northeast. He now resides in Indiana where he is teaching his grandchildren to throw a football and play Chinese checkers. His poems have appeared in *Cantos, Discipleship Journal, St. Anthony Messenger, Tipton Poetry Journal, Penwood Review*, and *Journal of the Missouri Philological Association*.

C. Clark Triplett <Clark.Triplett@mobap.edu> is Emeritus Dean of Graduate Studies and Professor of Psychology at Missouri Baptist University. He served as co-editor (with John Han) of *The Final Crossing: Death and Dying in Literature* (Peter Lang, 2015) and as co-editor (with John Han and Ashley Anthony) of *Worlds Gone Awry: Essays on Dystopian Fiction* (McFarland, 2018). Triplett is the author of many articles and book reviews published in *Intégrité* and *Cantos: A Literary and Arts Journal*, and his haiku have appeared in the *Asahi Haikuist Network* (Japan), *Cantos*, and *Fireflies’ Light: A Chaobook of Short Poems*. A native of St. Louis, he earned a B.A. from Southwest Baptist University, an M.Div. from Covenant Theological Seminary, an M.S.Ed. from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, and a Ph.D. from Saint Louis University.
Call for Papers and Book Reviews

**Intégrité:**  
_A Faith and Learning Journal_

*Published Semiannually by the*  
_Faith & Learning Committee and the*  
_Humanities Division of*  
_Missouri Baptist University*  
_St. Louis, Missouri 63141-8698*

*Intégrité* (pronounced _IN tay gri tay_) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal on the integration of Christian faith and higher learning. Founded in the fall of 2002 with the Institutional Renewal Grant from the Rhodes Consultation on the Future of the Church-Related College, it is published both online and in print copy. Interested Christian scholars are encouraged to submit academic articles and book reviews for consideration. Manuscripts should be sent as e-mail attachments (Microsoft Word format) to the editor, John J. Han, at john.han@mobap.edu.

Articles must be 15-25 pages, and book reviews must be 4-8 pages, both double-spaced. Articles should examine historical, theological, philosophical, cultural, and/or pedagogical issues related to faith-learning integration. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- the current state and/or future of the church-related college
- history of Christian liberal arts education
- Christianity and contemporary culture
- a Christian perspective on multiculturalism and diversity
- service learning
- academic freedom in a Christian context
- implementation of Christian truths in academic disciplines
- Christian education in the non-Western world
- global Christianity.

Articles must engage in faith-learning issues or controversies in a scholarly, critical manner. We generally do not consider manuscripts that are merely factual, devotional, or sermonic. Due dates are March 1 for inclusion in the spring issue and September 1 for the fall issue.

Articles are expected to be research-based but must focus on the author’s original thought. We typically do not consider articles that use more than twenty-five secondary sources; merely present other scholars’ opinions without developing extended, thoughtful analysis; and/or use excessive endnotes. Direct quotations, especially lengthy ones, should be used sparingly.

Considering that most _Intégrité_ readers are Christian scholars and educators not necessarily having expertise on multiple disciplines, articles and book reviews must be written in concise, precise, and easy-to-understand style. Writers are recommended to follow what William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White suggest in _The Elements of Style_: use definite, specific, concrete language; omit needless words;
avoid a succession of loose sentences; write in a way that comes naturally; and avoid fancy words. We prefer MLA citation style for acknowledging research sources. Book reviews need only page numbers in parentheses after direct quotations.