

The background is a rich, golden-hued illustration. In the center, a large, glowing clock face is visible in the sky, with hands and numbers. To the right, a bell tower stands on a rocky outcrop. In the foreground, two figures in white robes are seen from behind, looking towards the clock face. The overall atmosphere is ethereal and dramatic, with a strong sense of time and history.

# THEOPHRON

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## ALL THINGS IN TIME

*Fall 2022*



# THEOPHRON

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INTRODUCTION TO THEOPHRON.....	1
PROLEGOMENON .....	2
<i>Cameron Hurta</i>	

*ARTICLES & POEMS*

DIVINE PROVIDENCE, CALVINISM, & HYPOTHETICAL UNIVERSALISM: A REFORMULATION OF AMYRALDISM.....	6
<i>R. T. Mullins</i>	

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT SEBASTIAN.....	37
<i>Velimir Makaveev</i>	

REMEMBERING TOGETHER: MEMORY & COMMUNALLY-IN- SCRIBED SELFHOOD IN AUGUSTINE & THE ROMAN STOICS.....	38
<i>Geoffrey Burdell</i>	

(another summer's Eve).....	57
<i>Isabelle Hahn</i>	

KANT VERSUS SCHLEIERMACHER ON IMMORTALITY: A CONSTRUCTIVE REAPPRAISAL .....	58
<i>Frank Della Torre II</i>	

SABBATH.....	78
<i>Sarah Katsiyiannis</i>	

FOUR RIVAL INTERPRETATIONS OF AUGUSTINE'S PHILOSOPHY OF TIME.....	79
<i>Patrick Corry</i>	

BONSAI.....	96
<i>Brett Surbey &amp; Nicholas Wright</i>	

*Reflections, Reviews, & Calls*

THE CULLING OF POSSIBILITY.....	98
<i>Kyle Lindstrom</i>	

AN ANSWER IN THE ETERNAL.....	101
<i>Jeralyn Lopez</i>	

NO TIME BUT THE PRESENT.....	104
<i>Marshall McCray</i>	

BOOK REVIEWS.....	108
-------------------	-----

CALL FOR ACADEMIC PAPERS.....	127
-------------------------------	-----

CALL FOR POETRY AND REFLECTIONS.....	128
--------------------------------------	-----

# INTRODUCTION TO THEOPHRON

**B**ETWEEN the first and second centuries AD, an anonymous writer later misidentified as Apollodorus composed *Bibliotheca*, a compendium of encyclopedic entries on Greek mythology. In it lies a retelling of Penelope and her suitor conundrum, in which local youths vie for her hand in marriage, surmising that Penelope's husband, Odysseus, perished while returning from the Trojan War. *Bibliotheca* catalogs a complete list of these miscreants, including more than 120 names traditionally unrecorded in Homer's *Odyssey*. "Theophron" is one such name. Perhaps to a classicist's chagrin, however, this journal derives its title not from a Pseudo-Apollodorian suitor but rather from the literal meaning of "θεόφρων" in Greek: "godly minded."

Our title selection represents the publication's three primary goals. The first is to develop upcoming scholars through rigorous, double-blind peer review and revisions processes. Every submitted manuscript thus remains subject to standards of excellence commensurable with nonsectarian journals in the same fields. Nevertheless, Theophron's unequivocally Christian interests subsequently encourage inquiry with a worshipful posture as an additional aspiration. We aim specifically to kindle not dry intellectualism but a robust extension of humankind's faculties toward God, to know and glorify Him more deeply through study and reflection. The final—though most ambitious and foundational—objective is to bridge the intellectual communication gap between Christian academia and the Church at large. Too rarely do individuals in one realm avail themselves of the resources proffered by those in the other.

To these ends, issues of this publication will include academic articles from rising scholars, thematic reflections from lay believers outside of the academy, poetry from Christian writers, and book reviews of recent publications in Christian thought. Placing diverse materials side by side primarily highlights ongoing conversations on the selected topic in both academic and non-academic arenas. Ultimately, however, we hope that readers glean that both the questions grappled with and the answers posited by these two groups lie in close relation—that the pursuit of godly mindedness extends to all Christians, regardless of occupation.

Ἔσμεν θεόφροντες,

—THEOPHRON EDITORS

# PROLEGOMENON

Ask what time is, it is nothing else but something of Eternal Duration become finite, measurable, and transitory.

—WILLIAM LAW

*An Earnest and Serious Answer to Dr. Trapp's Discourse of the Folly, Sin, and Danger of Being Righteous Over-Much* (1893)

**T**ime is the quiet page which existence traverses, the invisible substrate upon which occurs action, rest, progress, and regression. It frames our discussions about practical ethical decisions and political philosophy, complicates theories of personal identity, and raises challenges for how we conceive of God's relationship to creation—the Christian must ask whether the everlasting God relates to time as we know it and what it means for the very same God to walk the earth as Christ. It is this Christ who promises to return soon, although “soon” sometimes feels further away than it should. And in another facet, time provides latitude for tinkering and change, for sanctification and the vicissitudes of life. Yet, ironically, the very nature of time itself remains debated. Some classify time as a fourth dimension, while detractors prefer a mere sequence of events, still others a Kantian mental filter of reality. This issue of *Theophron* thus examines the roles of time, age, and change for the Christian life, and is rife with calls to the past, thoughts of the future, and innovations of the present.

The included essays and poems explore the range of time's implications for both humankind and God. Kicking off the issue with his featured essay, “Divine Providence, Calvinism, & Hypothetical Universalism: A Reformulation of Amyraldism,” Dr. R. T. Mullins explores the nature of time and divine eternity to craft a defensible version of four-point Calvinism, reframing a seventeenth-century position to explicate how God can offer salvation to all without all being saved. Transitioning into our peer-reviewed essays, Velimir Makaveev's poem, “The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian,” offers an incisive look into time's tendency to trivialize even the most moving of events. Geoffrey Burdell then further investigates memory's impact on social cohesion and notions of the self in “Memory & Communally-Inscribed Selfhood in

Augustine & the Roman Stoics,” before Isabelle Hahn delivers a poignant portrait of the Fall and the agony of remembrance in “(another summer’s Eve).” The final two essays—Frank Della Torre II’s “Kant Versus Schleiermacher: A Constructive Reappraisal” and Patrick Corry’s “Four Rival Interpretations of Augustine’s Philosophy of Time”—contextualize thoughts of the past with modern thinkers to draw novel conclusions. Della Torre II contends that Katherine Sonderegger’s illumination of this-wordliness and other-wordliness allows for aspects of both Kant’s and Schleiermacher’s notions of eternity, positing that we should remain attentive to both immortality and the present; Patrick Corry applies recent continental thought to Augustine’s lament of time to highlight the disclosure of the divine and the Christological significance of Christ’s existing in time. It is between these two essays that Sarah Katsiyannis calls readers back to spiritual rest in “Sabbath,” while Brett Surbey’s and Nicholas Wright’s “Bonsai” bookends the section by portraying time and hints of the Gospel through the nature of a bonsai tree.

Following the academic articles come two segments: a ternary reflections section which centers perspectives from lay Christians outside the academy and a book review section evaluating recent academic texts. Kyle Lindstrom, a custom furniture builder, ponders the significance of desires and opportunities lost to the passing of time, while Jeralyn Lopez contrasts finite refugee suffering and unpredictable changes of fortune with the unchanging nature of God. Aerospace engineering graduate student Marshall McCray then concludes the reflections section by considering exhortations to live for and in the present—and whether the ever-changing present is the only moment of time that exists. Finally, the book reviews evaluate an updated edition of an apologetic text from Groothuis, Slade’s case against scientific modernity, works on diversity in church history and in biblical theology from Sunquist and Jarvis, respectively, and Mouw’s nuanced approach to Christian interactions with national politics.

Regardless of one’s position on the nature of time, we hope that this issue speaks to several truths. First, as Christians, we inherit the Faith from those who have gone before, and our labors take place both under the shadow of their greatness and among the wreckage of their mistakes. Such pasts impact our present, which in turn affects the future. Second, change is a tricky beast. On the one hand, the sting of both contingen-



4 cy and apparent misfortune arises without a moment's notice; on the other, the "now" and the "not yet" of the kingdom, of Christ's glory, of our states of existence, unite only through change. Third, this nebulous time (or our experience of it) hurdles toward our great hope in eternity, yet this eternity does not detract from the value of the present. With this in mind, we invite readers to reflect with us on time—its nature, passing, effects, and meanings—to hopefully unearth deep insights about humanity, the world, and God Himself.

CAMERON HURTA  
THEOPHRON EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
NOVEMBER 22, 2022

*ARTICLES & POEMS*

# DIVINE PROVIDENCE, CALVINISM, & HYPOTHETICAL UNIVERSALISM: A REFORMULATION OF AMYRALDISM

R. T. MULLINS<sup>1</sup>

WITHIN Calvinist theology, there is a view known as hypothetical universalism or Amyraldism. Amyraldism gets its name from the seventeenth-century Calvinist theologian Moses Amyraut. The view has been affirmed by various thinkers in the past, and comes with different nuances, yet the core claim is that God provides atonement for all, though not all are saved. Recently, there is some renewed interest in this theological school of thought.<sup>2</sup> Yet there are various problems that face anyone who wishes to be an Amyraldian. For this essay, I will consider this to be an in-house debate between Calvinists and will identify several problems that a would-be Amyraldian might face. Then, I shall try to develop a reformulation of Amyraldism that can answer these objections. This reformulation will still be in the spirit of Amyraut's theology, though it will not be able to adhere to the letter of his theology due both to problems that the view faces and to various ambiguities in Amyraut's writings.

To this end, I shall consider some basic Calvinist claims about the nature of God and divine providence. According to William Hasker, "The doctrine of divine providence asserts that time is governed by eternity."<sup>3</sup> As such, I will pay special attention to divine eternity and the nature of time to develop a reformulation of Amyraldism. After laying out the basics of the divine nature and divine action, I will consider some objections to Amyraldism. I will offer a reformu-

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2 Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2013), 429–434.

3 William Hasker, "Eternity and Providence" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology*, eds. Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81.

lation of Amyraldism that can avoid typical objections raised by other Calvinists. My essay is not an attempt to deal with objections to Calvinism in general—if Calvinism is incoherent, then Amyraldism will also be incoherent. In this essay, I shall grant the general coherency of different Calvinist claims and then argue that Amyraldism is a coherent position to hold if one is already committed to some version of Calvinism.<sup>4</sup>

### THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

During the Reformation, Protestant theologians inherited the classical doctrine of God from medieval thinkers. This began the era known as Protestant Scholasticism, which spans from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The overwhelming majority of Protestant scholastic theologians continued to affirm the classical divine attributes of timelessness, simplicity, immutability, and impassibility, though one can find philosophers, scientists, and theologians diverging from this classical view during this time period. For example, Samuel Clarke, Isaac Newton, and Pierre Gassendi rejected attributes like timelessness. It does not, however, seem that they rejected the other classical attributes.<sup>5</sup>

In this section, I shall focus on several divine attributes that are important for understanding Calvinism in general and Amyraldism in particular. I will narrow my focus to the attributes of necessary existence, aseity, self-sufficiency, omniscience, omnipotence, perfect goodness, eternity, immutability, and freedom. I take these to be essential attributes for divinity. It is metaphysically impossible for God to lose an essential attribute, for essential attributes are, by definition, not the sorts of things that a being can gain or lose. This is distinct from accidental attributes like creator and redeemer; these are attributes that God has only if He freely exercises His power to create a universe and redeem fallen creatures.

I start with the attributes of necessary existence, divine aseity,

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4 For an exploration of theological determinism, see Peter Furlong, *The Challenges of Divine Determinism: A Philosophical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

5 Emily Thomas, *Absolute Time: Rifts in Early Modern British Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Cf. Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 138–140.

8 and self-sufficiency. While these are distinct attributes, the relevant distinctions are not always recognized. Necessary existence is when a being must exist and cannot fail to exist. It might be the case that things other than God—numbers, the laws of logic, propositions—exist necessarily. These might exist independently of God, or they might be the necessary thoughts of God.<sup>6</sup> Thus, necessary existence does not imply independent existence. Aseity is an attribute that describes God’s independent existence, while self-sufficiency describes God’s independent perfection. These three attributes can be stated as follows:

*Necessary Existence:* A being exists necessarily if and only if it cannot fail to exist.

*Aseity:* A being exists *a se* if and only if its existence is in no way dependent upon, nor derived from, anything *ad extra*.

*Divine Self-Sufficiency:* A being is divinely self-sufficient if and only if that being’s perfect essential nature is not dependent upon, nor derived from, anything *ad extra*.

### *Omnipotence*

With these three essential divine attributes in place, I will turn my attention to omnipotence. As God is *a se* and self-sufficient, His power is not dependent upon nor derived from anything outside of Himself. God alone has maximal power. Omnipotence is the most power-granting set of abilities that is logically possible.<sup>7</sup> Theologians often describe this attribute by saying that God can perform all logically and metaphysically possible actions, yet there is more nuance needed. As T. J. Mawson explains, the maximal power-granting set does not simply contain all abilities. This is because not all abilities are powers. Some abilities are liabilities.<sup>8</sup> For example, the ability to perform irrational actions is a liability.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this ability will not be included in the maximal power-granting set of abilities. For most

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6 Cf. Einar Duenger Bohn, *God and Abstract Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

7 T.J. Mawson, *The Divine Attributes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 41.

8 Mawson, *Divine Attributes*, 42.

9 T.J. Mawson, “Omnipotence and Necessary Moral Perfection are Compatible: A Reply to Morrison,” *Religious Studies* 38 (2002): 217.

Christian theologians, it should seem quite obvious that a perfectly wise and rational God could not perform irrational actions. As such, she should have no problem denying that God lacks the ability/liability to perform irrational actions.

### *Omniscience*

God is omniscient in that God knows the truth values of all propositions.<sup>10</sup> That God knows all things is a fairly standard claim, but how God knows all things is a matter of dispute. The classical view is that all of God's knowledge is in some sense self-knowledge.<sup>11</sup> The claim is that, by having a perfect knowledge of His own nature and will, God is able to know all things. Moreover, in some sense, God's knowledge is the cause of all things.<sup>12</sup> This is so in order to maintain a sense of self-sufficiency. Those who reject classical theism and affirm that God knows the future will deny that God's knowledge is all self-knowledge. They will maintain that some of God's knowledge, such as His knowledge of other things, is dependent upon creation. They can maintain God's self-sufficiency by saying that omniscience is the cognitive power to know all things. God's possession of this power is self-sufficient. God's exercise of this power is dependent upon His will and the structure of the world that He freely creates. More will be said about divine knowledge below as it relates to God's decree.

### *Perfect Goodness*

Mawson defines perfect goodness as involving three objective moral dimensions: deontology, consequentialism, and virtue.<sup>13</sup> According to Mawson, a perfectly good person always does what He has most objective reason to do. As omniscient, God will always know what He

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10 Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 177.

11 Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1991), XV.13.22. Charnock, Stephen, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, ed. James M'Cosh, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864), 464ff.

12 Charnock, *Complete Works*, 386. The claim that God's knowledge causes all things is fairly common within the classical tradition. Cf. Katherin A. Rogers, "Foreknowledge, Freedom, and Vicious Circles: Anselm vs Open Theism" in *Philosophical Essays Against Open Theism*, ed. Benjamin H. Arbour (London: Routledge, 2019).

13 Mawson, *Divine Attributes*, 47.

10 has most objective reason to do.<sup>14</sup> As omnipotent, God will be free to perform the action that He has most objective reason to do. Further, a perfectly good God is one whose intentions are always good and who never fails to satisfy His obligations. A perfectly good God's actions will engender the best possible consequences. In performing these good actions, God will necessarily instantiate virtuous character traits such as generosity and wisdom.<sup>15</sup>

### *Temporality*

All Christian theists affirm that God is an eternal being. To say that God is eternal is to say that God exists without beginning and without end. This logically follows from the necessary existence of God. A necessary being does not and cannot begin to exist, nor cease to exist. However, traditional theists have wanted to say more than that God is merely eternal—traditional theists have maintained that God is timeless. God is timeless if and only if God necessarily exists without beginning, without end, without succession, without temporal location, and without temporal extension. Historically, Christian theists have affirmed a presentist ontology of time, which says that only the present moment of time exists. Past moments no longer exist, and future moments do not yet exist. When traditional theists claimed that God is timeless, they would often describe God as existing as a whole in an eternal now or a timeless present. This timeless present is said to lack a before and after.<sup>16</sup>

This can be contrasted with more contemporary theists who claim that God is temporal. Divine temporalists affirm that God is an eternal being—God exists without beginning and without end—yet divine temporalists affirm that God has succession in His life, as well as temporal location. There is, however, debate among divine temporalists about how to best understand this claim. Some temporalists affirm that God necessarily has succession in His life.<sup>17</sup> Other temporalists say that God only has succession in His life after His act of creation.<sup>18</sup> Most temporalists affirm presentism, though not all do,

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14 Mawson, *Divine Attributes*, 50.

15 Mawson, *Divine Attributes*, 47.

16 R.T. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), chpts. 3–5.

17 Cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Inquiring About God*, ed. Terence Cuneo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

18 Cf. William Lane Craig, *God, Time, and Eternity: The Coherence of Theism II*:

and divine temporalists who affirm presentism will typically say that God exists in the same present moment as we do. This is because on presentism, whatever exists, exists at the present. The present moment exhausts all of reality. When God creates things, God is making things exist at the present.

### *Immutability*

Most Christian theologians wish to affirm that God is immutable, but they are split over how to understand this doctrine. On the classical understanding of immutability, God cannot undergo any intrinsic or extrinsic changes,<sup>19</sup> for any intrinsic or extrinsic change would render God mutable and temporal.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, classical theism denies all change of God. On more contemporary understandings of immutability, God is said to be immutable with regard to His essential attributes alone,<sup>21</sup> a position often called weak immutability. This means that God cannot change His essential nature, but He can change with regard to how He expresses His essential nature. For example, God is essentially omnipotent and free and thus cannot change in any way that would render Him not omnipotent or not free. Yet, God can change by exercising His power and freedom, for example, to create a universe or enter into covenantal relationships with His creatures, acts which do not alter His essential nature.

This talk of divine freedom leads to the topic of the next section—divine action. For now, I shall simply state that God is free in that God is the source of His own action, and God has the ability to do other than what He does in fact do.<sup>22</sup> Before discussing divine action further, I wish to point out how God’s eternity is connected to divine freedom. On both understandings of eternity and immutability, it

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*Eternity* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

19 Peter Lombard, *The Sentences Book 1: The Mystery of the Trinity*, trans. Giulio Silano (Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007), Distinction XXXVII.7. James E Dolezal, *All That Is In God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 97.

20 Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19–20, 81–86. Natalja Deng, *God and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 36.

21 John C. Peckham, *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 63.

22 Alexander R. Pruss, *Divine Creative Freedom* vol. 7, in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).



12 is agreed that there is a state of affairs where God exists without creation.<sup>23</sup> The Calvinist Arthur W. Pink draws the connection as follows:

God was alone when He made His decrees, and His determinations were influenced by no external cause. He was free to decree or not to decree, and to decree one thing and not another. This liberty we must ascribe to Him who is supreme, independent, and sovereign in all His doings.<sup>24</sup>

With this discussion of the divine nature before us, I can now turn to discuss divine action.

### DIVINE ACTION

As Louis Berkhof points out, it is natural that one should discuss the decrees of God after discussing the essence or nature of God. Now that one knows what God is, one will rightly ask about what God does.<sup>25</sup>

Calvinist theologians typically draw a distinction between God's immanent and transitive acts.<sup>26</sup> God's immanent operations are actions within God that have God as their aim. John Webster gives the example of the Father's begetting of the Son as a case of immanent operations. Immanent operations are acts that God necessarily performs. These are distinct from transitive actions, which have an external object as their end or aim; Webster gives the example of creation as a case of transitive action. According to Webster, transitive actions are not necessarily performed by God but are instead free, gracious gifts from God.<sup>27</sup>

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23 Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh, Demetrius B. Zema, Grace Monahan and Daniel J. Honan (New York: Double Day), Bk. XII. Cf. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* vol. 9, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. S.D.F. Salmond (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), I.7. W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 470. Alexander Broadie, "Scotistic Metaphysics and Creation Ex Nihilo" in *Creation and the God of Abraham*, eds. David B. Burrell, Janet M. Soskice and William R. Stoeger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 53. David B. Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame : University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 7. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 14–15.

24 Arthur W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1975), 15.

25 Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), 100.

26 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 102–103.

27 John Webster, "‘Love is Also a Lover’: *Creatio Ex Nihilo* and Creaturely Goodness."

Berkhof says that the decree of God refers to God's transitive actions. In particular, God's decree is His eternal plan for the created order. The decree to create is not the created universe itself. There is a distinction between the decree and the execution of that decree.<sup>28</sup> Berkhof says that the decree is efficacious and immutable because it is grounded in God's wisdom and omnipotence. Whatever God decrees will certainly come to pass. There can be no sense in which God's decree, or plan, could get screwed up thus forcing God to issue a new decree or make changes to His decree at some later time. Moreover, God's decree is unconditional in the sense that His plan for creation is not conditioned upon anything external to Him—nothing external to God influences Him to make the particular decree that He issues.<sup>29</sup>

In order to flesh out this story in more detail, I wish to make some distinctions. To start, recall that Berkhof says that the decree is not the creation itself, nor God's act of creating a universe. The decree is a plan for creation. This raises the question of what a creation is. In order to answer this question, I must make a distinction between worlds and universes, and a distinction between world-actualization and creation. As I understand it, a possible world is a maximally consistent proposition that is best captured by modal logic. Such propositions express the entire way things could be. A maximally consistent proposition will contain an ontological inventory of all things that exist within a world and the relations that obtain between those objects. This maximal proposition will also include the entire history of a world's timeline if that particular world contains a timeline. The actual world is a maximally consistent proposition that expresses the entire way things are. Worlds are distinct from universes. A universe is a smaller domain within a world. A universe is a collection of contingently existent beings who are spatiotemporally related to one another. This is why one finds theists talking about a possible world where God exists without any universe of any sort, or a possible world in which God exists with a universe or a multiverse.

With this distinction between worlds and universes in hand, I can turn to the difference between world-actualization and creation. Creation occurs when God freely causes some contingent universe to exist. According to Klaas J. Kraay, world-actualization is different from creation,

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*Modern Theology* 29 (2013): 160. Cf. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 393–394.

28 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 103–104.

29 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 104–106.

for world-actualization need not involve any causal activity on God's part because the mere existence of God entails world-actualization.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the mere existence of God entails that there is an entire way that things are (i.e., God exists with a particular nature).

To clarify, that there is a world of some sort is necessary because God necessarily exists, and world-actualization simply follows from the way things are. However, this does not entail that a universe necessarily exists, because the existence of a universe depends upon the voluntary exercise of God's power. A creation occurs when God voluntarily exercises His power to cause a universe to exist.

Next, I need to discuss a timeline. A timeline is a particular successive ordering of a series of temporal moments. As noted already, a possible world may or may not contain a timeline. The universe in which we live does contain a timeline. A moment of time is what accounts for how things can be in incompatible ways, a when something happens. At one moment, things are a particular way, and then things are different at the next moment.<sup>31</sup> One might try to capture this notion by saying that a moment is the way things are but could be subsequently otherwise. Moments of time have built within them the potential to be related to other moments in earlier-than and later-than relations. However, it seems like more needs to be said to get clear on what a moment is.

Some philosophers say that we should take moments of time to be analogous to modality instead of analogous to space. In light of this, temporal moments are sometimes taken to be sets of nearly maximal propositions, or proposition-like entities, so they are even smaller domains within worlds than universes.<sup>32</sup> Moments are merely a slice of a world, or segments of a world. Worlds are maximal propositions best captured by modal logic, and moments are nearly maximal propositions best captured by tensed logic.<sup>33</sup>

With these distinctions in hand, I can more clearly state the distinctions between different divine actions. The decree that God issues specifies that a particular universe with a particular timeline will come to exist. In this sense, the decree can be referred to as God's act of predes-

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30 Klaas J Kraay, "Introduction," in *God and the Multiverse: Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Klaas J Kraay (London: Routledge, 2015), 4–5.

31 Marcello Oreste Fiocco, "What is Time?" *Manuscripto* (2017): 56.

32 T. Ryan Byerly, *The Mechanics of Divine Foreknowledge and Providence: A Time-Ordering Account* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 77.

33 Ulrich Meyer, *The Nature of Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013), 59–60.

tion since God determines the destiny of all things prior to acting to bring the universe into existence.<sup>34</sup> God's act of creation brings the universe into existence, and God's act of sustaining keeps the universe in existence. God's providence refers to the execution of that decree to ensure that the details of the decree are fulfilled either by directly bringing about certain events or by ensuring that creatures bring about certain events.<sup>35</sup>

#### AMYRALDIAN REFLECTIONS ON CREATION

Moses Amyraut states that, before one can address the doctrine of predestination, one must answer why God created anything at all and why God created humans in particular.<sup>36</sup> In contemporary philosophical theology, these are referred to as the General Problem of Creation and the Particular Problem of Creation, respectively.<sup>37</sup>

In regard to the General Problem of Creation, Amyraut gives a fairly classical answer. He says that God's principal reason for creating is His own goodness.<sup>38</sup> Yet, there is a potential ambiguity in Amyraut's thinking. Amyraut is clear that God's reason for creating is not so that God might acquire glory—God already has all glory, and creating a universe can add no further glory to Him—but it is unclear how the seemingly different principal reasons Amyraut postulates fit together. On one occasion, Amyraut says that God's principal reason in creating a universe is so that God can exercise His attributes, such as goodness.<sup>39</sup> On another occasion, Amyraut says that God's principal reason in creating a universe is so that God's goodness might be revealed in nature.<sup>40</sup> Ambiguities like these in Amyraut's writings are one reason that he was criticized by his contemporary Reformed theologians.

It is far from obvious that Amyraut has answered the General Prob-

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34 Moise Amyraut, *Amyraut on Predestination*, trans. Matthew Harding (Oswestry: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 2017), 60.

35 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 59.

36 Amyraut, *Predestination*, chpts. 1–2.

37 Cf. Norman Kretzmann, "A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?" and "A Particular Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create This World?" in *Being and Goodness: The Concepts of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Scott MacDonald (London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

38 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 67.

39 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 66.

40 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 68.

16 lem of Creation. As Paul Helm argues, God is essentially good, and thus God's goodness cannot serve as a reason to create, as God's goodness would be exactly the same regardless of whether He were to create.<sup>41</sup> To understand this problem, recall the distinction between God's immanent and transitive acts. God's immanent acts are necessary and aimed toward Himself, whereas His transitive acts are contingent and aimed toward others. God necessarily wills His own good, thus making it an immanent act. What is needed is a reason to perform a contingent, transitive act of creating a universe. Something that God necessarily does cannot be a reason for a contingent act.

In regard to the Particular Problem of Creation, Amyraut is more interested in why God created human persons. At best, this would only give us a partial answer to the Particular Problem of Creation, which is concerned with why God created this universe rather than another. Amyraut says that God created human persons so that they can bear His image. Amyraut has two things in mind in regard to image bearing: goodness and happiness. Amyraut affirms that God is by nature perfectly good and happy. Further, he takes moral goodness to be a prerequisite for happiness. Thus, for humans to be happy, they must first be morally good. For humans to be good, God has granted humans the cognitive faculties of understanding, reason, and wisdom, and God has placed them in a universe in which they can cultivate these faculties to obtain goodness.<sup>42</sup>

To satisfy His goal of creating good and happy creatures, God will need a wise plan for the future that He can providentially execute over the course of history. I shall consider these issues in the following sections.

#### DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE, THEOLOGICAL DETERMINISM, & HUMAN FREE WILL

Amyraldism is meant to be a kind of Calvinism, and Calvinism has a certain story to tell about how God knows the future. The Amyraldian is able to nuance this story according to her other theological commitments but is nonetheless committed to the basic Calvinist story. In this section, I shall articulate the basic Calvinist story of divine foreknowledge.

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41 Helm, *Eternal God*, 176.

42 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 69–72.

Foreknowledge is an interesting issue for Protestant theologians. As noted before, classical theologians maintain that God knows all things by having a perfect knowledge of Himself. Somehow, God's perfect grasp of His own nature gives Him an intuitive grasp of all possible creatures that He could create.

Yet, knowing God's own essence only gives God knowledge of what is possible, or what could take place.<sup>43</sup> It does not give God knowledge of what will take place in a contingent universe. To establish God's foreknowledge, Calvinists appeal to theological determinism. Calvinists claim that God cannot have a certain knowledge of the future unless God determines what the truth-values are for the propositions about the future,<sup>44</sup> thus God's foreknowledge is grounded in what He foreordains. Allow me to unpack this idea further.

According to Derk Pereboom, "Theological determinism is the position that God is the sufficient active cause of everything in creation, whether directly or by way of secondary causes such as human agents."<sup>45</sup> Theological determinists say that God is the primary cause of everything, whereas created things are secondary causes. To say that God directly brings about something is to say that God causes a particular state of affairs to obtain without any secondary causes. God indirectly brings something about by causing creatures to causally bring about a particular state of affairs.<sup>46</sup> Theological determinists typically say that human persons have freedom that is compatible with divine determinism. Hence, they are called compatibilists about freedom and determinism.

Sometimes it is difficult to spell out exactly what God directly caus-

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43 Harm Goris, "Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination, and Human Freedom" in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 111. Luis De Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1988), 130–144.

44 Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 394. Cf. Derk Pereboom, "Libertarianism and Theological Determinism" in *Free Will and Theism: Connections, Contingencies, and Concerns*, eds. Kevin Timpe and Daniel Speak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 114.

45 Pereboom, *Free Will and Theism*, 112.

46 John Webster, "On the Theology of Providence" in *The Providence of God*, eds. Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 164, 167. Paul Kjos Helseth, "God Causes All Things" in *Four Views on Divine Providence*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 31.

es because different theological systems that affirm theological determinism disagree over the extent to which secondary causes bring about things.<sup>47</sup> By way of example, Calvinists claim that God determines everything that happens either by directly causing it or by allowing secondary causes to bring about certain effects. Calvinists oftentimes will say that God does not directly bring about the sinful actions of human agents but instead allows or permits human agents to sin.<sup>48</sup> There are some complications with establishing that God permits human sin, but I will grant it to the Calvinist for the sake of this paper.<sup>49</sup>

The theological determinist often distinguishes between God's natural knowledge and God's free knowledge.<sup>50</sup> She says that God's natural knowledge gives God knowledge of all possible universes and exhaustive timelines that He could create. This knowledge is prior to God's free knowledge, which is knowledge of which timeline God has determined to bring about. On this view, until God freely decides to create a particular universe with a particular timeline, there simply is no fact of the matter as to which possible timeline will become actual.<sup>51</sup> Subsequent to God's decree to create a particular timeline, God knows what will occur because He knows which timeline He has freely determined to bring about. The decree is the foundation of God's free knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

All of this talk about "prior" and "subsequent" sounds deeply temporal. However, the "prior" in the story could be a "logically prior" in the case of divine timelessness, or it could be a "temporally prior" in the case of divine temporality. Paul Helm explains that the classical tradition developed the notion of "logical moments" in the timeless

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47 For an overview, see Jesse Couenhoven, *Predestination: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clarke, 2018).

48 Paul Helm, "Divine Timeless Eternity" in *God and Time: Four Views*, ed. Gregory E. Ganssle (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001), 176–177. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 387–388.

49 For a recent defense of this position, see Guillaume Bignon, "Lord Willing and God Forbid: Divine Permission, Asymmetry, and Counterfactuals" in *Calvinism and Middle Knowledge: A Conversation*, eds. John D. Laing, Kirk R. MacGregor and Greg Welty (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2019).

50 Paul Helm, "Does Calvinism Have Room For Middle Knowledge? No" in *Calvinism and Middle Knowledge: A Conversation*, eds. John D. Laing, Kirk R. MacGregor and Greg Welty (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 96.

51 John Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 313.

52 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 102.

life of God in order to solve various theological puzzles. These logical moments function like temporal moments in that they are a when something happens, and they stand in some kind of order of priority and posteriority to one another. As I will explain in the next section, theological determinists who affirm timelessness are split over exactly how many logical moments there are in the timeless life of God.<sup>53</sup> They agree, however, that these logical moments are not temporal, so there is no temporal succession in the life of the timeless God.<sup>54</sup>

Calvinist theologians maintain that God's determination is somehow compatible with human freedom. Compatibilism is the thesis that human freedom (whatever it may be) is compatible with determinism. For the purposes of this essay, I will grant that God's determination of the future is compatible with human freedom. In regard to human freedom and divine grace, Calvinists typically, though not always, affirm the following:

- A) Human persons possess the freedom of rational self-determination that is consistent with one's character, judgments, and desires.
- B) Human freedom involves the ability to do otherwise at some point in time.
- C) God provides efficient grace to the elect to such a degree that the elect willingly cooperate with God's plan of salvation.

Berkhof says that God's decree is compatible with (A) and (B). God's decree renders future events certain, but it does not deprive humans of their agency. Human persons really could have done otherwise, but it is certain that they will not in fact do otherwise.<sup>55</sup> These are fairly common claims among Calvinists and are representative of compatibilists more broadly.<sup>56</sup> Calvinists often claim that God's will

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53 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 118–121.

54 Paul Helm, "How Are We to Think of God's Freedom," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7 (2015): 57.

55 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 107.

56 Couenhoven, *Predestination*, 103–106. Leigh Vicens and Simon Kittle, *God and Human Freedom* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2019), 56–57. Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism*, ch. 3. Ciro De Florio, and Aldo Frigerio, *Divine Omniscience and Human Free Will: A Logical and Metaphysical Analysis* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 95. Richard A. Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).



20 renders things certain but does not render them necessary; if God wills that I perform action A at a particular moment of time, then it is certain, but not necessary, that I will perform action A at that particular moment.<sup>57</sup>

In regard to (C), Berkhof is clear that God's election of the redeemed is irresistible. He says that human persons can oppose the execution of God's decree to some extent but that the elect will not ultimately prevail in their opposition to God. God influences the elect to make them willing to cooperate with God. However, Berkhof explicitly states that God's influence does not overpower the agency and freedom of the elect.<sup>58</sup> This is a deeply Reformed view.<sup>59</sup> Chapter 3 of *The Westminster Confession* states that though God ordains all that shall come to pass, God does not do violence to the will of humans, nor does God remove the liberty and contingency of secondary causes. One way to understand this claim is that God offers sufficient grace, not violent or manipulative grace.

#### THE ORDER OF THE DECREES

Among Protestant theologians, there is a debate over the order of God's decree. This is a bit difficult to grasp because the content of the decree pertains to temporal events that have a chronological order. Yet, for classical theologians, the divine decree itself must be timeless and immutable since it is an act of a timeless and immutable God. How is one to understand the order of God's decrees if they are not temporal? As indicated before, Protestant theologians maintain that God's decree has a logical order.<sup>60</sup>

Protestant theologians draw on a distinction made by John Duns Scotus called logical moments, or instants of nature.<sup>61</sup> Logical moments are meant to be analogous to temporal moments. As stated before, a moment of time describes the way things are but could be subsequently otherwise. According to Helm, "Logical moments do duty for what would be temporal moments for an action performed in time."<sup>62</sup> The idea is that logical moments can be embedded within a single temporal

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57 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 383–384.

58 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 115.

59 Couenhoven, *Predestination*, 105–107. Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice*.

60 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 104.

61 Jean-Pascal Anfray, "Molina and John Duns Scotus," in *A Companion to Louis de Molina*, eds. Marthais Kaufmann and Alexander Aichele (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 333ff.

62 Helm, "How Are We to Think of God's Freedom," 57.

moment or a single timeless moment.<sup>63</sup> When one considers God's single, timeless moment of eternity, it is impossible to conceive of God as temporally doing one thing and then another. Such a sequence would imply succession and thus also change and temporality in God. Instead, one can talk of God logically doing one thing at one logical moment and then doing something else at the next logical moment. This is how Calvinists traditionally have understood God's natural and free knowledge. At the first logical moment, God knows all possibilities via His natural knowledge. At the second logical moment, God knows what will occur because He has freely decreed that a particular timeline will occur.

Personally, I find this notion of logical moments to be *ad hoc*, but perhaps I can make the idea more intuitive. When one is organizing a plan of action, one will have to think about the logical order of operations needed to successfully execute that plan. Say I want to go to the grocery store. When developing my plan of action, I will need to consider the logical order of steps that I need to take. First, I will need to ensure that I have my wallet, as well as my house keys, with me. Then I will need to ensure that I have my shopping list with me. Then I will need to ensure that I know when the store is open. Then I will need to remember that I am back in America, and we call them "zucchini" and not "courgettes," and so on. This plan of action can be written out in this logical order before I execute this plan of action. In a similar way, the classical theist wishes to say that God's decrees have a logical order that is determined in eternity.

What is this logical order? It is difficult to say because Protestant theologians are split over this issue. There are allegedly four views to consider: Supralapsarianism, Infralapsarianism, Amyraldism, and Arminianism. My main interest is with Amyraldism, but I need to discuss these other views in order to properly locate the Amyraldian position. It is difficult to get a clear sense of the views because theologians differ over how they understand each view.<sup>64</sup> According to Oliver Crisp, the logical order goes like this:<sup>65</sup>

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63 Anfray, "Molina and John Duns Scotus," 348.

64 Compare Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 118–120, and Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 532–533.

65 Oliver D. Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 184–185.

*Supralapsarianism*: Election, Creation, Fall, Redemption.

*Infralapsarianism*: Creation, Fall, Election, Redemption.

*Amyraldism*: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Election.

*Arminianism*: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Election.

From what I can tell, each of these positions will need to appeal to more than two logical moments in the life of God in order to develop their doctrine of the decree. In other words, more is happening in between God's natural knowledge and God's free knowledge than what we were led to believe.<sup>66</sup> Even Scotus has more logical moments occurring between God's natural and free knowledge.<sup>67</sup> What seems to be going on is something like this: In the first logical moment of the eternal God's life, God knows all of the logically possible universes that He could create via His natural knowledge. From there, each view differs over how the order of logical moments proceeds.

The supralapsarian says that in the second logical moment of God's eternal life, God decrees who will be saved and who will be damned. Crisp says that, "in supralapsarianism, God elects independently of a decree to create a world where human beings will fall."<sup>68</sup> It is only in the third logical moment that God decrees to create a universe of some sort, but even in this logical moment it seems that God has not decreed to create a particular universe with a particular timeline. In the fourth logical moment, God decrees that a timeline with a fall shall take place. In the fifth logical moment, God decrees that a timeline with a redemption through Christ shall take place. It seems that in the sixth logical moment, God decrees that a particular universe with a particular timeline shall obtain, thus resulting in God's free knowledge. This might seem like an unnecessarily complicated and large number of logical moments, but other Calvinist views are similarly complicated.

Things are different on the other schemes of the decrees. The infralapsarian, Amyraldian, and Arminian seem to say that in the second logical moment, God decides to create a universe of some sort. In this

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66 John D. Laing, "On Parsing the Knowledge and Will of God, or Calvinism and Middle Knowledge in Conversation" in *Calvinism and Middle Knowledge: A Conversation*, eds. John D. Laing, Kirk R. MacGregor and Greg Welty (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 195–196.

67 Anfray, "Molina and John Duns Scotus," 336–346.

68 Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism*, 184.

second logical moment, no particular universe nor timeline has been selected. All three views then say that in the third logical moment God decrees that a fall shall take place. These views then diverge from there.

On the infralapsarian view, in the third logical moment, God decrees that there should be a timeline with a fall. In the fourth logical moment, God decrees that a certain number of the fallen humanity shall be elected and that a certain number shall be damned. In the fifth logical moment, God decrees that a redemption for the elect shall take place through Christ. In the sixth logical moment, God decrees that a particular universe with a particular timeline shall occur, thus resulting in God's free knowledge.

The Amyraldian and Arminian agree with the infralapsarian on the first three logical moments: natural knowledge, creation of some sort, and a fall. Yet the Amyraldian and Arminian say that in the fourth logical moment, God decrees a means for redemption through Christ. In the fifth logical moment, God decrees who shall be elect (i.e., saved) and who shall be reprobate. However, Amyraldians and Arminians differ over a few further details at this point. Arminians say that the basis of election is the foreseen faith of creatures and then proceed to a sixth logical moment wherein God decrees a particular universe with a particular timeline, thus resulting in God's free knowledge. Amyraldians deny this. The Amyraldian says that the basis of election is God's good pleasure and adds two more distinct logical moments for election.<sup>69</sup> For the Amyraldian, the fifth logical moment is God's decree to save all of humanity by the work of Christ. This decree is said to be ineffectual because God sees that not all of humanity will have faith. In the sixth logical moment, God decrees that some of the mass of fallen humanity will be given the gift of faith and be saved. Then, in a seventh logical moment, God decrees to create a particular universe with a particular timeline, thus resulting in God's free knowledge. This might seem like far too much is happening for this to all be considered a single timeless moment, but I shall get to that concern later.

#### AN OBJECTION TO THE IDEA OF A LOGICAL ORDER OF DECREES

As I have said before, my main goal is to articulate some version of Amyraldism and show that it is a plausible and defensible position for a Calvinist to hold. The problem is that there is a serious objection to the

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69 Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism*, 185.

entire notion of a logical order of decrees. If this objection is sound, it will not be a problem for Amyraldism only. Rather, it will spell trouble for every position that I have articulated above. Yet this would render Amyraldism false from the start—that is not a great position in which the Amyraldian might find herself.

What is the objection? The Calvinist John Feinberg explains that the notion of a logical order of decrees is misguided. He says that reflection upon the nature of possible universes and omniscience implies that the question of a logical order of decrees should not even be asked. Universes with their timelines have a completely interconnected set of events, and the debate over the logical order of decrees ignores this fact. Feinberg writes,

The fundamental assumptions are that in deciding what the decree would contain, God picked and chose isolated persons, places, things, actions, and events, and then coupled them together with other persons, places, actions, etc.<sup>70</sup>

This just doesn't make sense of divine omniscience. An omniscient God would see the interconnections of creature's actions within a complete timeline. It just doesn't make sense to view God as selecting parts of a timeline logically before or after other parts of a timeline. According to Feinberg,

Individual actions are not disjointed from one another so that God can pick and choose specific items as he constructs the decree for our world. Instead, as God deliberated, he was confronted with an infinite set of possible worlds. He first (logically) decided whether to create at all, and then, having chosen to do so, he chose which of the many worlds he would actualize. But in choosing to actualize any given possible world he would already see Adam and everyone else as sinners or not, and either as saved or not. In worlds with sin which is paid for by Christ's atonement, God would see at once all the sinners, saved and unsaved, along with Christ's sacrifice. There simply is no logical sequence of choices to construct when what God chooses is a whole world, not individual events, actions, etc. Hence, it is wrong to ask whether God decreed first (logically) to create human beings, to save the elect, or whatever.<sup>71</sup>

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70 Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 535.

71 Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 535–536.

There are other worries related to the debate over the logical order of decrees. Alan Rhoda argues that the notion of a logical order is not apt for describing choices of agents. The notion of logical priority requires that the different items involved be mutually consistent at a given moment. For example, the premises of a logically valid argument can be said to be mutually consistent at a given moment. In this example, one can coherently speak of the premises being logically prior to the conclusion. Yet, things are different when it comes to actions from agents. According to Rhoda, “This is because choices are inherently temporal events essentially involving both a ‘before’ state of contemplating the options without as yet having settled upon any of them, and an ‘after’ state of having decided upon one of the options over the others.”<sup>72</sup> The transition from undecided to decided, or from natural knowledge to free knowledge, includes mutually incompatible states of affairs. As such, these states cannot be mutually consistent at a given moment, be that moment temporal or timeless. In this case, mere logical priority is violated.

Given objections like these, one might wonder if Calvinists are dead in the water with their views on the logical order of the decrees. Yet this might be a hasty conclusion. To start, Feinberg rejects the notion of a logical order of decrees but thinks that he can develop a Calvinist doctrine of providence without it. This is not unique to Feinberg. Calvinists such as Helm and Berkhof also speak of the logical order of decrees as nothing more than a distinction within the human mind that does not really apply to God. According to them, the reality of the situation is that God performs only one simple, timeless act.<sup>73</sup>

Can an Amyraldian reject the logical order of divine decrees too? It seems that Amyraut himself did. According to John Quick, Amyraut’s biographer, Amyraut said that the order of decrees is only a distinction within human reason. In God, the decree is one eternal moment without succession of thought, order, priority, or posteriority. In other words, the decree is one eternal act in God without distinction.<sup>74</sup> The lack of order and priority would seem

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72 Alan R. Rhoda, “Foreknowledge and Fatalism: Why Divine Timelessness Doesn’t Help” in *Debates in the Metaphysics of Time*, ed. L. Nathan Oaklander (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 265.

73 Helm, “Does Calvinism Have Room For Middle Knowledge? No,” 96–99. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 102.

74 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 167.

26 to clearly be a rejection of the entire notion of a logical order of decrees. Thus, it would seem that Amyraldism can, and should, be reformulated without all of this talk of a logical order of decrees. In later sections, I shall offer a reformulated version of Amyraldism that avoids Feinberg's objection.

Of course, this does not properly address Rhoda's objection. Berkhof and Helm each affirm divine timelessness, so they are subject to Rhoda's charge of incoherence if they wish to speak of God freely choosing to issue some particular decree over any other. This is because the mutually inconsistent states of being undecided and decided requires change and succession. Feinberg, however, rejects divine timelessness, so he will not be subject to Rhoda's objection. In order to avoid Rhoda's objection, my reformulated version of Amyraldism will affirm divine temporality.

#### WILLIAM SHEDD'S FOUR OBJECTIONS

Before answering Feinberg's objection, I want to articulate four more objections from the Calvinist theologian William Shedd. I want readers to see the need to clarify and modify the Amyraldian position. Hence, I shall articulate these objections and then develop a modified version of Amyraldism that can avoid all of them.

Shedd's main complaint with Amyraldism is that it starts with Arminianism and ends with Calvinism. He thinks that a synthesis of these two views cannot be achieved. He focuses his critique on Amyraldism by stating that it involves two decrees. First, God indiscriminately decrees to provide a redeemer to all men, without electing any individuals to faith. Second, God foresees that no man will believe, so He elects some to salvation.<sup>75</sup> From here, Shedd offers the following four objections. In each case, I will state Shedd's objection, then try to develop the objection in more detail to present the strongest possible version of the objections.

1) The success of God's plan of salvation depends on man. Shedd says that this is unacceptable because this renders God's decree uncertain. God's decree can't be uncertain because it is infallible and made independently of creatures.<sup>76</sup> Shedd seems to be hitting at the Arminian aspect of the Amyraldian position here. Like many Calvinists and contemporary open theists, Shedd thinks that it is logically impossible for

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75 Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 459.

76 Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 459.

God to infallibly know future events unless God determines them. It is not clear, but I think that Shedd is saying that the Amyraldian decree starts with God giving creatures libertarian freedom, which is not compatible with divine determination. In Shedd's mind, the Amyraldian decree would thus be uncertain and not infallible. No self-respecting Calvinist can affirm a decree like that. Since Amyraldianism claims to be Calvinist, the Amyraldian is in trouble.

2) The Amyraldian position implies that God's first decree failed, and thus God had to replace it with a successful decree. As Shedd sees it, the Amyraldian claims that God decreed universal salvation but then failed to see this decree through to the end. God wanted universal salvation based on human faith, but He couldn't get it. So, God had to turn to a second decree that involved election.<sup>77</sup> Yet Shedd thinks this is obviously false because surely a perfectly wise and omnipotent God would not have a failed decree.

3) The Amyraldian position does not actually offer salvation to all indiscriminately like it claims to. According to Shedd, the Amyraldian position entails that many people never have the opportunity to accept Christ.<sup>78</sup>

4) The Amyraldian position implies that people are saved or elected after they reject Christ. As Shedd points out, this is unacceptable because no one can be saved and reject Christ.<sup>79</sup>

#### MODIFIED AMYRALDISM

In this section, I shall offer a reformulation of Amyraldism. The reformulated Amyraldian position will need to accomplish several things. First, it will need to explain why hypothetical universalism, and not actual universalism, is true. The Amyraldian will need to specify why it is either metaphysically impossible or morally impermissible for God to save everyone.<sup>80</sup> In the following reformulation of Amyraldism, I shall specify why God cannot save everyone. Second, the reformulation of Amyraldism will need to avoid the objections that I have identified in previous sections of this paper.

<sup>77</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 459.

<sup>78</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 459.

<sup>79</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 459.

<sup>80</sup> John Kronen and Eric Reitan, *God's Final Victory: A Comparative Philosophical Case for Universalism* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2011), 68–71.



Personally, I find the Feinberg objection devastating. I don't see any way around it through the use of logical moments. However, I believe that the Amyraldian position can be restated in terms of possible worlds instead of in terms of logical moments. This reformulation of Amyraldism should not be considered a case of special pleading, because many contemporary theologians have restated their positions in terms of possible worlds semantics. For example, Feinberg and Helm reformulate Calvinism accordingly. I see no reason why the Amyraldian cannot do the same. Further, I deny divine timelessness to avoid Rhoda's objection to logical moments. Calvinists like Feinberg affirm divine temporality, so an Amyraldian can do the same. Moreover, I believe that this reformulation of Amyraldism can avoid Shedd's four objections.

Recall the General Problem of Creation. The Amyraldian can say that God decides to create a universe for some reason. Perhaps God decides to create so that His glory might be made manifest to creatures. Of course, Amyraut himself strongly denied that this could be God's reason for creating. Instead, Amyraut says that God created in order to exercise His divine attributes.<sup>81</sup> Yet, in another passage, Amyraut suggests that God decides to create so that creatures can come to enjoy the divine blessedness.<sup>82</sup> Again, there is ambiguity and confusion in some of Amyraut's writings.

In order to offer a version of Amyraldism that is compatible with multiple theological positions, I stipulate that God decides to create a universe so that creatures can enjoy everlasting friendship with God. This decision to create a universe so that creatures can enjoy everlasting friendship with God is not based on any foreseen creaturely free action or merit. Instead, this decision is grounded fully in God's good pleasure. Calvinists often appeal to God's "good pleasure" to explain divine action, but the content of "good pleasure" tends to be rather mysterious. Often, it is said to be in God's secret will. A reformulated version of Amyraldism need not be so vague and mysterious here. An Amyraldian can fill in some of the content of God's good pleasure by claiming that God has a natural desire to have friendship with any and all creatures that He might possibly create. She can argue that this desire is a necessary entailment of God's perfect love.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the

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81 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 66.

82 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 68.

83 Mawson, "Omnipotence and Necessary Moral Perfect are Compatible," 46.

Amyraldian can say that God's decision to create is grounded in God's perfectly loving nature and not on something external to God. Call this the Universalist Desire.

*Universalist Desire:* God desires to have a genuine, everlasting friendship with any creature that He might possibly make.

The Universalist Desire can help answer the General Problem of Creation because it identifies a general motivation for God to create a universe. It can also help address the Particular Problem of Creation because it will narrow down the range of universes that God might create. What kind of universe would God need to create in order to offer everlasting friendship to creatures? There are constraints on how creatures can enjoy everlasting friendship with God. Genuine friendship requires significant freedom on the part of God and creatures. Further, creatures will have to be established in virtue in order to have a deep friendship with God. Nonetheless, God has the desire to have a friendship with any and all creatures that He might make. Only certain particular universes can provide the environment where something like this can take place.

The Amyraldian can say that the Universalist Desire serves as a policy or constraint on the kinds of possible universes that God considers for creation. There is no need to talk in terms of logical moments of decrees. Desires can naturally be said to be fundamental to the divine psychology and thus prior to any decision that God might make. For example, the Christian God naturally desires that truth, beauty, and goodness be upheld for all eternity. The Amyraldian can say that God's desires guide His selection of a possible universe to create.

The Amyraldian can also emphasize a second desire in God that guides His selection of a possible universe to create. Call it the Incarnation Anyway Desire.<sup>84</sup>

*Incarnation Anyway Desire:* God desires an incarnation because it is the best, or most fitting way, to achieve the Universalist Desire.

The Amyraldian can say that it is natural, or fitting, that God should

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84 Cf. Edwin Chr. van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174–181.

30 desire the closest possible friendship or union with His creatures. An incarnation demonstrates a deep solidarity with His creatures no matter what kind of universe God might create. Moreover, an incarnation would demonstrate an offer of friendship that is universal in scope to all of God's creatures.<sup>85</sup> Hence, the Amyraldian can say that the Incarnation Anyway Desire can guide God's selection of a possible universe to create.

With these two desires in place, one can give an account of God's hypothetical universalism. Unlike decrees, desires can go unfulfilled without any obvious loss to divine sovereignty.<sup>86</sup> For a Calvinist, a decree determines that certain outcomes will obtain; decrees are not the sorts of things that can go unfulfilled. A desire, however, is merely wanting the world to be a certain way in the future. A divine desire can go unfulfilled. To be sure, some Calvinist theologians will not like the notion of divine desires going unfulfilled, but the Calvinist cannot consistently offer a complaint here. This is because Calvinists often talk about God's desire that humans not sin and yet also claim that God permits humans to sin.<sup>87</sup> Calvinists typically distinguish between God's antecedent will and consequent will, or God's moral will and His permissive will.<sup>88</sup> These distinctions are meant to capture the claim that God desires that all be saved and not sin, but for some good reason God allows sin and reprobation. If this is not a problem for divine sovereignty on Calvinism in general, then it ought not be a problem on Amyraldism in particular.

With that cleaned up, allow me to state the reformulated Amyraldian position. God surveys all of the possible universes and timelines that He might create. God's desire is to create a universe where all creatures freely enter into a deep friendship with Him. However, for my reformulated Amyraldian view, I stipulate that there are no such possible universes and timelines due to something called transworld depravity. According to Alvin Plantinga, a person has transworld depravity if there is no possible universe in which she exists and does not sin. As Plantinga points out, it is possible that every created person suffers from transworld depravity. In this case, it would be metaphysically impossible for God to create a universe with free

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85 Mawson, "Omnipotence and Necessary Moral Perfection are Compatible," 46.

86 Vicens and Simon, *God and Human Freedom*, 52.

87 Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 694–698.

88 Aquinas makes the same distinction between antecedent and consequent will. See Aquinas *De Veritate* 23.2.

creatures who do not sin.<sup>89</sup> The Amyrldian can appeal to this in order to explain why God's Universalist Desire is unfulfilled. It is metaphysically impossible for God's Universalist Desire to be fulfilled, so it is no strike against God's sovereignty since sovereignty and omnipotence do not involve God having the ability to perform metaphysically impossible actions. Since God's Universalist Desire cannot help God select which particular universe to create, God will need to turn to other considerations.

The Amyrldian can say that God desires to create a universe where creatures with freedom genuinely accept God's offer of friendship. Yet God knows that the only kinds of universes and timelines where this occurs are ones in which God also offers sufficient grace. Sufficient grace is offered to everyone, but it is only efficient for the elect. As noted before by Berkhof, efficient grace is irresistible, but it does not overpower the human person. The degree of sufficient grace given to a human person must be such that it does not coerce or manipulate the individual into accepting God's offer of friendship. Otherwise, the sufficient grace does not count as efficient grace. Instead, it becomes manipulative grace, and most Calvinists don't want to affirm that. As Helm points out, "Some of God's actions are resistible and are resisted."<sup>90</sup>

Upon taking sufficient grace into consideration, the subset of possible universes and timelines shrinks considerably. God now has a smaller range to select from. Call this subset of universes and timelines sufficient grace universes. On Amyrldism, the claim seems to be that there are no sufficient grace universes in which all human persons freely accept the offer of divine friendship. Why is that? Perhaps the Amyrldian can say that some individuals in these universes would need more grace in order to accept God's offer of friendship. Yet, the kind of grace needed would pass the threshold of efficient grace and breach into the territory of manipulative grace. In other words, the Amyrldian maintains that these individuals would need to be overpowered in order to accept God's offer of friendship. That kind of overpowering is not something that the Amyrldian wishes to accept in her account of divine predestination. She can say that it is morally impermissible for God to engage in manipulative

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89 Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 184–189.

90 Helm, "The Augustinian-Calvinist View," 171.

grace, thus further explaining why actual universalism is not possible for God to establish.

These sufficient grace universes have several features. First, they all contain an incarnation because the Amyraldian God has the Incarnation Anyway Desire. Second, these sufficient grace universes have fallen creatures because of transworld depravity. Third, these sufficient grace universes contain a limited number of grace-infused creatures who accept God's offer of friendship, and a limited number of reprobate creatures who do not accept God's offer of friendship. Again, there are reprobate creatures because they would need to be overpowered in order to accept God's offer of friendship, and it is morally impermissible for God to engage in that kind of manipulative grace.

At this point, one might worry that this reformulation of Amyraldism collapses into Arminianism or at least looks too much like Arminianism for any self-respecting Calvinist to accept. The accusation of Arminianism is one that Amyraut himself faced in 1637.<sup>91</sup> Yet, there is a clear way to distinguish Arminianism from this reformulated version of Amyraldism. On Arminianism, God elects the redeemed according to their foreseen faith, and this foreseen faith is not caused by God.<sup>92</sup> Things are different on Amyraldism. On the reformulated Amyraldian view, the redeemed in these possible universes are not elected because of their own merit or good faith. They are not even elected until God decrees that a particular universe should exist. The redeemed are individuals in possible universes with sufficient grace. It is God's sufficient grace that causally enables the redeemed to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and accept God's offer of friendship. Their cooperation depends upon God's sufficient grace.

With this in mind, the Amyraldian can say that God has a set of possible sufficient grace universes from which to create. God's desires are what narrowed down the range of possible universes. God's decree refers to God's selection of one of those possible universes. God's decree, in good Calvinist fashion, determines with certainty that everything that happens in that universe will in fact come to pass. Thus, God's decree is infallible and will succeed.

#### RESPONDING TO OBJECTIONS

The reformulated version of Amyraldism is designed to rehabilitate the

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91 Amyraut, *Predestination*, 20.

92 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 387.

view after the Feinberg objection. In this section, I want to show how this reformulated version of Amyraldism can also respond to Shedd's four objections.

Consider the first objection. Shedd's first objection says that the success of God's plan depends on man in some sort of way that renders God's decree uncertain. I think that Shedd is taking aim at Arminians here. On Arminianism, or Molinism, there is something called middle knowledge. Middle knowledge is said to be a kind of divine knowledge that is in between God's natural and free knowledge. On middle knowledge, God knows the truth-values of propositions about what creatures with libertarian freedom would do in any possible circumstance. Most Calvinists deny that middle knowledge is possible, though some Calvinists try to endorse something like middle knowledge for creatures with compatibilistic freedom.<sup>93</sup> This particular objection from Shedd seems to be presupposing that if creatures have libertarian freedom, then God cannot know what they will do with certainty. Thus, any decree that includes creatures with libertarian freedom will be uncertain. Shedd seems to think that Amyraldism, like Arminianism, is assuming that creatures have libertarian freedom—which, in Shedd's mind, would explain why the Amyraldian decree of universal salvation failed and why the Amyraldian has to say that God issued a subsequent decree to save some. I believe that Shedd's argument completely misses the mark against Amyraldism.

At the outset, I stated that I would grant the Calvinist the claim that God's determination of a timeline is compatible with human free will. In granting this to the Calvinist, I am also granting it to Amyraldism since Amyraldism is a version of Calvinism. Thus, I don't see how the Calvinist can complain that my reformulated Amyraldism is rendering God's decree uncertain, since it is assuming theological determinism. Further, on my reformulated Amyraldism, God does not decree universal salvation. Instead, God has the Universalist Desire. God's decree is that a particular universe/timeline should obtain. My Amyraldian decree is just like a Calvinist decree in that it determines the truth-values for the propositions about the future. So it is not the case that God's

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93 Bruce A. Ware, "Middle-Knowledge Calvinism" in *Calvinism and Middle Knowledge: A Conversation*, eds. John D. Laing, Kirk R. MacGregor and Greg Welty (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2019).

34 decree somehow depends on humans in a way that renders God's decree uncertain.

Consider the second objection. Shedd claims that Amyraldism implies that God's first decree failed, thus forcing God to replace it with a second, successful decree. My reformulated Amyraldian view does not have God issuing a failed universalist decree. Instead, it has God's Universalist Desire remain unfulfilled. It will be difficult for a Calvinist to object to God's Universalist Desire going unfulfilled since theological determinists regularly say that God's desires go unfulfilled.<sup>94</sup> In particular, Calvinists often say that God desires that people not sin, yet God permits people to sin.<sup>95</sup>

Consider the third objection. Shedd says that Amyraldism does not actually offer indiscriminate salvation like it claims. He points out that many people never have the opportunity to accept Christ on Amyraldism. I must confess that I find myself a bit confused by this objection. It seems to me that the Amyraldian could say that everyone gets an opportunity to accept Christ in this earthly life or the next. I am uncertain what Shedd is getting at with this point. Yet, Shedd's primary point is that the Amyraldian view is not really an indiscriminate offer of salvation to all. Again, I am not certain what Shedd is getting at with this point. The Amyraldian view implies that God offers sufficient grace to everyone and that this grace is only efficient for some. That is exactly what the Calvinist says, so I fail to see the problem. The Amyraldian, just like the Calvinist in general, says that God's sufficient grace is not so overpowering as to rid a human person of her agency. Remember, the Calvinist says that sufficient grace is not violent or manipulative grace. The Amyraldian agrees.

Consider the fourth objection. Shedd argues that the Amyraldian view implies that people are saved or elected after they reject Christ. As Shedd rightly points out, no one can be saved and reject Christ. How can the Amyraldian respond? It seems to me that there are several points to make in response. The first point refers to the incoherence of the notion of a logical order of decrees. If one envisions God as decree-

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94 Thomas Aquinas maintains that God's antecedent will is to save all, but that God's consequent will is that only some be saved (*Summa Theologia* I.23.3). Jesse Couenhoven describes this view as saying that God's antecedent will is a general divine desire that can be thwarted, unlike God's consequent will/decrees which cannot be thwarted (Couenhoven, *Predestination*, 70).

95 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 387–388.

ing part of a timeline logically before other portions of a timeline, one will get some rather bizarre results like the ones that Shedd seems to be gesturing toward. Let me see if I can flesh out Shedd's argument in a bit more detail. It seems as if Shedd is envisioning the Amyraldian God's decrees as follows:

*AG Fail:* God decrees that a particular timeline—not just any timeline, but a timeline where everyone accepts God's offer of friendship—should come to pass. But then God realizes that this timeline contains sinners who reject Christ! At that point, God wants to decree that some of these sinners will be saved. But God cannot do that because those sinners have rejected Christ. God has already determined the timeline in the initial decree. He can't now change the timeline. It is too late. Any "change" would actually be replacing the timeline with a different series of moments.

The "too late" can easily be given a timeless gloss in terms of logical moments instead of temporal moments if one wants to engage in such unnecessarily complicated and counterintuitive notions. However, my reformulated Amyraldism assumes divine temporality. The fact is that once God has decreed that a particular timeline shall come to pass, the truth-values for all of the temporal propositions in that timeline are determined. God cannot then, after this decree, change the truth-values. Why? Moments of time essentially have their content. You cannot change the content of a moment of time. You can replace one moment of time with another, but you cannot change the content of a moment. It is metaphysically impossible for God to change the timeline of His decree. God's only option would be to replace the timeline. Someone like Shedd can easily say that replacing the timeline would demonstrate that God's initial decree is a failure. This is not a good situation for the Amyraldian.

Thankfully, my reformulated Amyraldian view can escape these worries. On the reformulated view, God does not issue a decree and then change or replace the timeline; instead, God has already declined to create a universe/timeline in which the elect reject God's offer of friendship. Thus, there is no worry that God is saving people who are simultaneously, or ultimately, rejecting Christ.

#### CONCLUSION

My goal in this paper has been a modest one: to offer a plausible and



36 defensible version of Amyraldism. In offering a defensible version of the view, I claim that it is one that contemporary Calvinists can consider for further exploration. To be sure, there are other objections to the view, but I have tried to show that the view can withstand several serious objections.

# THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT SEBASTIAN

The white body of the saint is ideal in its agony, in its virtue.  
Soon it will be squeezed out of its youth, out of everything really.  
This is the first death, the fastening to the tree with arrows;  
This is the death that will remain in the icons that look spectacular on the triptychs  
Or sitting in a golden frame in some councillor's hall  
from the times of the Hanseatic league.  
Then comes the second death, the thing in the Roman dungeon,  
Deep in the pagan subconscious of the city.  
Four figures pummel the boy on the floor so he can get to perfection;  
They crush his body like fresh bread so that the light can get out.  
When dusk falls, the children of the local craftsmen will see in the Tiber  
The body glowing like an oil lamp or a bishop's ring.  
They will hide him away in one of their dilapidated houses,  
Will put herbs on his open body, cut off a lock of hair, a phalanx of a finger.  
They will stick a hand in his holy open wound;  
Their fingers will smell like lemons and sugar,  
Will touch the diseased limbs of their children, fathers and mothers  
Against these artifacts of agony.  
After a time, the true martyrdom will be forgotten,  
Like a book left carelessly on the table.  
Someone will go out for a coffee;  
The saint will look with a tranquil face,  
His own pain and the pain of those that come to soften it.  
He will heal from the little window of his icon.  
Passionlessly, little by little, his face will lose its outlines,  
More and more it will turn in a kind of light  
That you will mention when your mother is sick or you lose your keys.

—VELIMIR MAKAVEEV, BULGARIA

# REMEMBERING TOGETHER: MEMORY & COMMUNALLY-INSCRIBED SELFHOOD IN AUGUSTINE & THE ROMAN STOICS

GEOFFREY BURDELL<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The specific role that memory plays in the constitution of the self is a subject that has received much attention in philosophical and psychological scholarship on the notion of the self. Many modern accounts locate the initial emergence of the correlation between memory and selfhood in the writings of Augustine, drawing upon his phenomenological explication of memory as an interior, dynamic capacity that is able to generate a sense of inward reflexivity to suggest Augustine's "invention" of the modern notion of the self as a private, opaque, and subjective entity. It is true that Augustine's thought, in connecting memory with the constitution and awareness of the self, underscores a notion of human identity that is inexorably temporal and thus dynamic in nature. The premise of the present study, however, is that many current appropriations of Augustine on this score draw conclusions about the self which misinterpret Augustine's own opinion. They do so, largely, by neglecting or intentionally eliding the literary, rhetorical, theological, and more specifically, communal and ecclesiological contexts in which Augustine's exploration of memory occurs in Book X of *Confessions*. Moreover, such approaches fail to account for those philosophical progenitors of Augustine who exercise an influence over his thought in this area. This study seeks to rectify this two-fold neglect, first by excavating Book X of *Confessions* to elicit those valences of Augustine's exploration of memory which have often been occluded in modern readings. I then examine the ways in which Augustine's notion of selfhood bears considerable conceptual overlap with the Roman Stoic understanding of the self *vis-à-vis* memory, over and against a typically Plotinian reading of Augustine. The result of such analysis is a notion of "communally-inscribed selfhood" in Augustine whereby the normative use of memory as an engine of social cohesion problematizes a strictly solipsistic reading of the Augustinian self and reveals Augustine's indebtedness to his Stoic predecessors on this score. My intention in uncovering these Stoic underpinnings, and more pointedly, the social valence inherent in Augustine's account of the self, is to elicit a philosophically robust, Christian paradigm of selfhood that, far from reinforcing an individualistic anthropology, is essentially dependent upon communal inflection.

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MEMORY'S role in the constitution of the self has been well tended in contemporary philosophical and psychological studies on the self. A majority of modern doxographical accounts locate the emergence of this correlation between memory and selfhood in the writings of Augustine, drawing upon his identification of memory and mind *qua* self,<sup>2</sup> his phenomenological account of the immense cognitive capacities of memory (the so-called "*vis memoriae*"),<sup>3</sup> and the aporiai of memory's relation to both forgetfulness<sup>4</sup> and the fluidity of subjective identity.<sup>5</sup> What has been characterized by many recent scholars as Augustine's "invention" of the modern notion of self<sup>6</sup>—a private, opaque, unique, discrete, and subjective first-person entity—is thought to be largely a function of Augustine's phenomenological rendering of memory as an interior, dynamic capacity that is able to generate a sense of inward reflexivity. The resulting inner space is known as the "self."

The premise of the present study, however, is that current appropriations of Augustine's related notions of memory and the self have largely neglected elements in two fashions. First, in the vein of thinkers

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2 See Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1997), X.14.21, X.17.26. All subsequent English references to Augustine's *Confessions* will be drawn from the Boulding translation.

3 *Confessions*, X.8.12–9.16.

4 *Confessions*, X.16.24.

5 *Confessions*, I.7.12: "It irks me, Lord, to link that phase of existence [infancy] with my present life ... I do not remember passing through it ... As far as the dark blank in my memory is concerned, [in] that period of infancy ... where was I, Lord, and when? What does it matter to me now, since it has vanished without trace from my memory?" For the problematic of memory as ceaselessly changing one's subjective identity, see Gerard O'Daly, "Two Kinds of Subjectivity in Augustine's *Confessions*: Memory and Identity and the Integrated Self" in *Ancient Philosophy of the Self*, ed. Pauliina Remes and Juha Sihvola (Dordrecht/London: Springer, 2008), 196–197.

6 See Pauliina Remes, "Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood: From Plotinus to Augustine," in *Ancient Philosophy of the Self*, ed. Pauliina Remes and Juha Sihvola (Dordrecht/London: Springer, 2008), 155: "Augustine and especially his discussions on memory present the first real steps towards the notion of an inner self." See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 131–132 on the Augustinian "turn to the self" as "introducing the inwardness of radical reflexivity ... to Western thought;" and Phillip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) from which derive the terms "inward space" and "inward and upward" with reference to the Augustinian turn.

40 such as Heidegger,<sup>7</sup> modern scholarship tends to elide the literary, rhetorical, theological, and communal contexts of Augustine's exploration of memory in *Confessions* X. This move, I argue, effectively truncates Augustine's otherwise robust notion of memory. Second, much of the recent phenomenological treatment of Augustine's thought on the matter tends to isolate the thinker in something of an intellectual vacuum. This undermines the positive and negative influences that Augustine's philosophical progenitors exercise over his articulation of memory and selfhood.<sup>8</sup> With these deficiencies in mind, I suggest that there is need for excavation—both of the text of Book X itself and of the relationship between Augustine and the late Stoics on the issues of memory and selfhood—to provide a more comprehensive account of the Augustinian self in relation to memory. The resultant picture, in emphasizing the socially embedded, temporally extended, and ontologically dependent conditions of human selfhood, is not reducible to a quasi-Plotinian account of the self as a purely interior and incorporeal entity. Instead, it possesses significant commonalities with the late Stoic understanding of the self.<sup>9</sup> I suggest that this connection which Augustine's notion of the self has with the prevailing Stoic understanding indicates that at least the rudiments of Augustine's thought are possibly the influence of the Roman Stoics—though, of course, Augustine's shared emphasis on the communal and cosmologically in-

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7 See Martin Heidegger's "Phenomenological Interpretation of *Confessions*; Book X" in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 127–182.

8 I have Kevin Grove's *Augustine on Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) to thank for calling my attention to the deficiencies of most twentieth-century phenomenological readings of *Confessions* X. While some scholarship, including a recent volume edited by Remes and Sihvola (2008) seeks to establish the far-reaching extent of Neoplatonic and specifically Plotinian influences on Augustine's thought, the present study, alongside the work of Gretchen Reydamns-Schils (see, for instance, 2018, pg. 67), explicates the positive and negative relationship between Augustine and influences from the late-Stoic school.

9 Gretchen Reydamns-Schils, "Stoic Agency and its Reception," in *Judgment and Action: Fragments toward a History*, ed. Vivasvan Soni and Thomas Pfau (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 69 signals the potential work yet to be done in reaping the fruits of the potential rapprochement between Augustine and the Stoics in light of Descartes' use of both traditions, noting, with some irony, that it is only "once we start looking beyond the surface of Augustine's critique of the Stoics, starting with Augustine's own work, [that] the story largely remains to be written."

tegrated aspects of selfhood instead bolster his specifically Christian theological paradigm.

This investigation will attempt to describe in what way memory constitutes the self in Book X of Augustine's *Confessions*. I will underscore those areas of conceptual overlap and complementariness between this understanding and that of the late Stoic school, while acknowledging that some fundamental differences between the two approaches remain. I will then conclude by emphasizing one such commonality, namely, the specifically communal dimension of memory implied in both accounts, treating the relationship between intersubjectivity and memory as symbiotically indexed toward self-discovery and self-mastery. Through a brief examination memory's implication in the explicitly social *telé* of both Augustinian and Stoic schemas (as opposed, for instance, to the more unitary *telos* enshrined by Neoplatonism), and given a likewise common emphasis on memory as a means of obtaining those respective ends, I hope to characterize memory as an engine of social cohesion in both schools of thought, paralleling Stoic and Augustinian uses of memory as that which advances a philosophically robust notion of "communally-inscribed selfhood." My intention is to problematize a strictly solipsistic reading of the Augustinian self, as, much like the Stoic articulation of the self, it depends upon others for its constitution.

#### MEMORY & THE SELF IN *CONFESSIONS* X

Augustine's reflections on *memoria*, inaugurated in Book X of *Confessions* and developed in the psychological analogy of the late books of *De Trinitate*, form the backdrop of what has been called his "radical inward turn." In examining "the caverns," "immense courts," and "fields and vast mansions" of memory,<sup>10</sup> Augustine comes into conscious reflexive awareness. This awareness amounts to an "encounter" with the "self," or that which is the subject and possessor of such miraculously preserved mental impressions of past events, experiences, and *sensa*. Yet the sheer variety of ways in which Augustine conceptualizes, even just within Book X,<sup>11</sup> the relationship between memory and self-awareness

10 *Confessions* X.8.14, 12.

11 See, for instance, X.8.14, in which Augustine parses memory's place in the constitution of the self in topographical terms, as the "place" of encounter which facilitates self-knowledge: "In memory I come to meet myself, I recall myself." See also X.8.15, in which memory there is treated as a function of mind (*mens*), thereby subordinating

42 is ambiguous and sketches the paradoxical nature of the self's attempt to grasp itself by means of memory.<sup>12</sup>

Given this ambiguity, how are we best to conceive of the relationship between memory and mind or self on Augustine's model? Conflating memory and the self *simpliciter* is problematic in light of the fluidity between remembering and forgetting that occurs in historical and discrete consciousness.<sup>13</sup> This is compounded by certain life experiences which one cannot consciously remember (e.g., early childhood) as being, *prima facie*, partially constitutive of what is objectively considered "the self."<sup>14</sup> Against this intuition, O'Daly characterizes Augustine's view thusly: "My sense of what I can remember defines the parameters of what I can intelligibly call 'mine;' ... what I cannot remember does not contribute to my identity, even if it has been part of my experience."<sup>15</sup> Yet on the face of it, this reading already seems to interpolate a hermetic conception of selfhood into Augustine that is somehow autonomously construed, being a direct function of the discrete, private recollections of an individual's history.<sup>16</sup> It collapses important distinc-

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memory to mind as an attribute which inheres in a substance. In X.14.21, memory is likened to the "stomach" of the mind, regurgitating mental images at will. And finally, at X.14.21, X.16.25; see also X.17.26, Augustine collapses altogether the distinction between memory and mind or self: "Mind and memory are one in the same ... the person who remembers is myself. I am my mind."

12 This aporia is noted by Augustine at X.8.15 and X.16.25: "Here I am, unable to comprehend the nature of my memory, when I cannot even speak of myself without it."

13 See O'Daly, "Two Kinds of Subjectivity in Augustine's *Confessions*," 196.

14 Augustine himself wrestles with this perplexing case in *Confessions* I.7.12, in which he puzzles over what it means to assert that conscious memory outstrips historical experience as the criterion of what is properly predicated of one's "self."

15 O'Daly, "Two Kinds of Subjectivity in Augustine's *Confessions*," 197. See O'Daly's reference to I.7.12: "I would be reluctant to consider that life to be of a piece with the one I now live in this world."

16 O'Daly, in a dialectical move, eventually arrives at the same conclusion that is here being argued for, in light of the reflexive opacity of the self; see 199: "The 'I' that memory reveals is not an autonomous agent." For a metaphysical description of this "privatized" notion of self, in contradistinction to the "shared" self of Plotinian philosophy of mind, see Remes' reading of Cary, 160: "Augustine does not accept the Aristotelian notion of mind being what it knows, thus creating space between consciousness and truth." Opposing such an autonomous and private notion of selfhood in Augustine is not to deny any element whatsoever of individuality or opacity to others in a fulsome articulation of the self, though it does militate against an understanding of the self that is conceived entirely in isolation from one's socio-cultural, temporal, and creaturely cir-

tions between having and being, and between *memory* as an existential and creative capacity contributing to a sense of selfhood and those *memories* which—as the cognitive content of prior sense perceptions, ideas, and experiences—outfit the self with its material for reflection and discovery.<sup>17</sup>

The solipsistic reduction of selfhood to simply what one consciously remembers also fails to take account of a number of other considerations from Book X. For one thing, such a determination ignores the rhetorical and literary context in which these statements of Augustine occur. He dialectically attempts to evince not only the power and necessity of memory as propaedeutic in the process of self-discovery and discovery of God but also the eventual incapacity of (unaided) memory to properly mediate self-awareness or awareness of God to the mind: “What am I, O God, what is my nature ... See, I am climbing through my mind to you who abide high above me; I will pass beyond even this faculty of ... memory in my longing to touch you.”<sup>18</sup> It is precisely memory’s lack of self-sufficiency, the limitations it encounters in its attempt to ascend to God and thereby to know itself as subject (that is, the “graced” element of Augustine’s conception) that most starkly distinguishes Augustine’s notion from the Plotinian conception of mind. Contrary to Remes’ supposition that this divergence from Plotinian psychology<sup>19</sup> leads to “the individualization and privatization of the inner realm ... [and] the generation of the inner self,”<sup>20</sup> Augustine’s move instead has the effect of asserting the self’s ontological and epis-

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cumstances. See Remes, “Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood,” 156: “The mere fact that we can conceal things from the look of others seems to indicate that there is, somewhere within the self, a dimension that is our very own.”

17 See Remes, “Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood,” 162: “Other scholars have emphasized Augustine’s memory as more than a storage, a deliberate and willed activity of imposing order upon a chaotic collection of memories.” Memory’s ability to generate (cognitive) memories, as the raw data upon which the prevenient “self” exercises reflection and appropriation, aligns somewhat with Reydams-Schils (2018) characterization of the Stoic conception of self as being largely “mediatory,” insofar as “the self constitutes the mental space in which, as Epictetus recommends, one can check one’s reactions and test one’s impressions” (61).

18 *Confessions* X.17.26.

19 In this distinction from Plotinian psychology, Augustine excises God and knowledge from the human mind, treating them as extrinsic to it.

20 Remes, “Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood,” 169, 159.



44 temological *dependence* upon God.<sup>21</sup> Far from a private entity, then, the picture of the self that arises from Augustine's phenomenological account depends on the remediation of memory by grace for the mind to grasp its reflexive knowledge. The deficiencies discovered in fallen humanity's faculty of memory,<sup>22</sup> then, underscore both the absolute ontological dependence<sup>23</sup> on and the complete transparency to God: "The abyss of the human conscience/consciousness (*conscientia*) lies naked to your eyes, O Lord, so would anything in me be secret? ... To you, then, Lord, I lie exposed, exactly as I am."<sup>24</sup> There is nothing strictly "independent" or "private" about the self as such.

Secondly, an exclusively private conception of selfhood occludes other important and related thematic elements of Book X, such as mediation, Christology, and sociability, all of which are correctives to the aforementioned failure of memory. In the second half of Book X, Augustine concludes his description of the sins into which the mind falls with an allusion to Christ the Mediator, who, in his person, reconciles God and humanity by means of the "healing of all infirmities through him."<sup>25</sup> We receive in Christ what our natural capacities lack, through participation in the one who, being God, humbly assumed and transformed what was human. Christ, therefore, made divinity humanly appropriable through his mediation. We must be careful here not to impose a superficial distinction between Augustine's philosophical and theological reflections, nor to conceive of Christ's salvific mediation as pertaining to merely the "moral" aspect of human life as if that were siloed from the psychological.<sup>26</sup> Rather, the first and second halves of

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21 See O'Daly, "Two Kinds of Subjectivity in Augustine's Confessions," 199: "God is a) the teacher of the mind working through the force of memory, and b) the 'place' where the mind subsists, and finds coherence and stability. God is the *sine qua non* of memory's operation."

22 See Remes, "Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood," 173: "Augustine is humble about this vastness (of memory/selfhood), as the opacity of our nature to ourselves is the consequence of original sin. Human beings are finite in the sense of not being able to penetrate to the true depths of their own being, created and accessible only to God. The self-knowledge possible for them only imitates God's perfect and atemporal self-knowledge in time."

23 See *Confessions* X.2.2: "You offer yourself ... that I may be pleasing no more either to you or to myself except in what I have from you."

24 *Confessions* X.2.2.

25 *Confessions* X.43.69.

26 To be sure, the element of moral progress is certainly a crucial impetus of Au-

Book X are of a piece: Augustine's philosophical problematizing of the opacity of the self to itself<sup>27</sup> and its inability to independently ascend to knowledge of God—primarily epistemic concerns—are, I suggest, ameliorated by his closing theologoumenon. It is here that Augustine proposes the mediation which is a leitmotif of his Christology throughout his corpus.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, over and against an abstract, Plotinian conception of self-knowledge, the saving grace of Christ—which is extrinsic to oneself and which Augustine posits as a necessary condition for memory's obtaining knowledge of the self and God—is proximately derived from the historical incarnation of the Logos. It is noteworthy that Augustine's soteriology, which appears in Book X under the auspices of mediation, is thoroughly entwined with the historical and social implications of the Incarnation. Indeed, the very means by which one's remediation or salvation can occur (represented by knowledge of self and God in this context) are themselves generated within the context of a discrete datum of history, one which is commensurate with humanity's own historically, temporally, and spatially conditioned existence, since "only in virtue of his humanity is [Christ] the Mediator."<sup>29</sup> According to this soteriological emphasis on Christ's mediation, knowledge of self, or even true possession of the self, is predicated upon the graced mediation of Jesus Christ. This fact heavily underscores the extrinsic and historically contingent aspects of Christian salvation *qua* mediation which most saliently distinguish and contrast Christian soteriology from its timeless, bodiless Platonic counterpart.

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gustine's quest for self-knowledge in relation to God, what O'Daly calls "the role of time-bound historical narrativity in the pursuit of our moral progress" (197), which is a decidedly non-Platonic version of Augustine's thinking. The element of psychological remediation inherent in Augustinian soteriology, therefore, is not being put forward at the expense of salvation's moral connotations, but it is rather part and parcel of what it means for a human being to be fully redeemed in Christ. Such redemption bears on one's ability to know and accede to the ideal self.

27 See *Confessions* X.16.25: "What can be nearer to me than I am to myself? Yet here I am, unable to comprehend the nature of my memory, when I cannot even speak of myself without it."

28 See *Confessions* X.42.67-43.69: "What we needed was a mediator to stand between God and men who should be in one respect like God, in another kin to human beings ... the man Christ Jesus." See elsewhere, for instance, *Confessions* XI.14.17; XI.29.39; See also Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Bettenson (London: Penguin Classics, 1984), X.15, 16.

29 *Confessions* X.43.68.

In addition to the ontologically dependent and temporal aspects inherent in human existence, which can be seen as limitations of the self's reflexive understanding, we ought to appreciate also the specifically *communal* entailment of embodied human existence which comes to light in Book X's conclusion as a means of self-illumination. Despite Augustine's probing the interior dimensions of his consciousness as a mechanism for knowledge of God, it is notable that Book X ends with an emphasis on *alterity* as that which is fundamental to a proper conception of self-knowledge and flourishing:

Filled with terror by my sins and my load of misery I had been turning over in my mind a plan to flee into solitude, but you forbade me, and strengthened me by your words. *To this end Christ died for all*, you reminded me, *that they who are alive may live not for themselves, but for him who died for them* (2 Cor 5:15). Your only Son, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, has redeemed me with his blood ... I am mindful of my ransom. I eat it, I drink it, I dispense it to others, and as a poor man I long to be filled with it among those who are fed and feasted.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine is forbidden to flee into solitude upon an examination of his sinfulness and weakness and is instead strengthened by his recalling (literally, his *being reminded by God*) of a Scripture passage which recounts the self-sacrificial, other-centered ethical paradigm that is a function and imitation of Christ's own sacrifice. Furthermore, Augustine's intimation of the Eucharist in the closing lines of Book X is striking insofar as it implicates Augustine in social responsibility and inculcates a sense of social belonging, since he is a member of the Church which is at once formed by and itself expressive of Christ's body. In this way, the sacramental memorial of Christ's sacrifice effects a displacement of the self, in which its status as an independent, isolated entity is eschewed in favor of one constituted by a belonging to the eucharistic community, the body of Christ. As Grove puts it, "Memory as *interior intimo meo* gives way to memory that is the shared exercise of the communal existence which he calls the 'whole Christ' ... the self is discovered in the whole, the individual paradoxically in Christ."<sup>31</sup>

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30 *Confessions* X.43.70.

31 Grove, *Augustine on Memory*, 7.

It is in the light of this burgeoning communal emphasis that we glean the adumbrations, even in Augustine's early work, of what will later become an explicit refrain of Augustine's preaching, in which he "raises and addresses the danger that the interiority of individuals' memories could lead people to become 'stuck in themselves' ... [thus] ceasing to attain their end in God."<sup>32</sup> It is a picture of memory's mediating purpose that is a far cry from a solipsistic, strictly interior constitution of the self, since, in its existential dimension, memory is inculcated and shared by communal eucharistic participation.<sup>33</sup> Memory is thus transplanted, following the contours of Book X, from being an anthropological issue to being a Christological one; the concept of mediation bridges the temporal, psychological, and salvific aspects of Christian memory.<sup>34</sup>

From all of this, we can surmise that memory's constitution of the self requires a more ample, existential notion of memory for Augustine than its being merely the concatenation of cognitive impressions. Moreover, Augustine's understanding of the self is arguably not reducible to that inner space of private cognition and recognition, nor is it simply coextensive with conscious memories possessed by a subject. Rather, Augustine's description of the self incorporates and is affected by normative elements of sociality and receptivity to grace. Such elements are the exigencies of human existence being conditioned by both fallenness and its embodied and spatiotemporal circumstances. It is these elements of Augustine's account—namely, the fecund capacity of memory to create existential awareness and contextualize present and future by means of past experience, and the social and temporal embeddedness of human existence as bearing upon the constitution and end of the self—which accord with the late Stoic conception of memory and its place in facilitating self-understanding.

#### AUGUSTINE & THE ROMAN STOICS ON MEMORY & THE SELF

As suggested above, I proffer that, if there is a prevailing philosophical influence underlying Augustine's notion of the self in relation to memory, this influence is more Stoic than it is Plotinian. As the ensuing will

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32 Grove, *Augustine on Memory*, 7.

33 Such a shared participation brought about by what Grove calls "the work of memory" is one "that demands a shared identity, not as an end product, but from the outset" (8).

34 See Grove, *Augustine on Memory*, 12.

48 attempt to demonstrate, there are certain significant aspects of Roman Stoic psychology that resonate with Augustine's writings on the self in *Confessions* X. The "self" for Stoics is "the ruling principle in a human soul, the so-called hegemonikon, or the mind, which represents a rational and unified consciousness,"<sup>35</sup> and human beings are "unified wholes of soul and body, in which each is completely blended with the other."<sup>36</sup> While the corporeal nature of this *hegemonikon* does somewhat differ from the anthropology operative in Augustine's own Platonic dualism, there is nevertheless a certain kinship between this notion and, for instance, Augustine's identification of mind and memory as being expressive of selfhood, or his description of continence as gathering "the scattered elements of the self, collecting them, and bringing them back into the unity from which we have slid away into dispersion."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, as Reydams-Schils has argued, the self in Stoicism "sees human beings as essentially embedded in the reality surrounding them," so as to constitute, in the phrase of Gill, an "objective-participant" relationship with that reality.<sup>38</sup> Stoic anthropology and psychology, even if quite different in emphasis from Augustine's psychology in several respects, nonetheless share with Augustine a commitment to the fundamental embeddedness of human existence:

[T]he Roman Stoic self is ... anchored both in the body and in a rational order that structures all of reality as ultimately proceeding from an immanent divine principle. The social counterpart to this ontological aspect indicates that the self is intrinsically connected to others in a network of relationship ... the ontological and social aspects of embeddedness are meant to reinforce each other.<sup>39</sup>

Because the Stoic self exists in harmony with, and not in opposition to, the world of which it is a constitutive part, it is never treated "as its own end."<sup>40</sup> This is notably similar to our characterization of Augustine's normative notion of the self as finding its ultimate fruition in communal participation in Christ.

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35 Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 15.

36 Reydams-Schils, "Stoic Agency and its Reception," 59.

37 *Confessions* X.29.40.

38 Reydams-Schils, "Stoic Agency and its Reception," 59.

39 Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 17.

40 See Reydams-Schils, "Stoic Agency and its Reception," 61.

There is a kinship between these Stoic views of the self and those textual elements in Augustine which problematize and attenuate an overly-individualistic reading of the Augustinian self as constructed by memory. Indeed, “neither Augustine nor the Stoics endorse a kind of radical reflexivity that would lead to a disengaged stance; both versions of self are open to the divine and to manifestations of its providential agency.”<sup>41</sup> Examining the late Stoic ruminations on memory, especially as they appear in Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, will further illuminate the far-reaching extent of this kinship. The proper exercise of the memory in Stoicism has everything to do with the optimization of the sage’s self-comportment, it being the prescribed way whereby one “maintains the right hierarchy of values” and “avoids deceptive self-complacency.”<sup>42</sup> In his *De Ira*, Seneca recommends a daily withdrawal and introspection in an examination of conscience: “I examine my entire day, and review my deeds and words. I hide nothing from myself, I omit nothing. For why should I recoil from any of my mistakes?”<sup>43</sup> In a similar vein, Marcus Aurelius,<sup>44</sup> by opening his *Meditations* with an exercise of memory that paradigmatically signals its existential capacity, as a constructive and contextualizing force of self-formation, underscores the connection between the exercise of memory and self-transparency in Stoicism.<sup>45</sup>

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41 Reydams-Schils, “Stoic Agency and its Reception,” 69.

42 Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 18.

43 Seneca, *De Ira* 3.36.3, via Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 19.

44 In contrast to Seneca’s positive valuation of the past *qua* past, Marcus Aurelius tends to focus on the way in which recollection of the past enables one’s salutary seizure of the present moment, which is the only valuable aspect of temporality (with past and future alike being treated as “indifferents”). See *Med.* 6.32 via Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 30. Nevertheless, in practical terms, the sage makes use of the past and his own temporal nature in the pursuit of his *telos*, even if the role that the past occupies differs between Stoic accounts.

45 See Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 32: “Existential memory is at work in the first book of Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*, in which he goes one by one through a list of the people who helped make him what he is. His list amply demonstrates how memory can hold onto things and people when they are no longer physically present.” This conception of existential memory seems to be in tension with Remes’ evaluation, following Foucault, that Marcus Aurelius’ use of memory is of a fundamentally different kind from Augustine’s, insofar as it enables a self-shaping appropriation of prior Stoic wisdom for the purposes of one’s own life (see Remes, “Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood,” n.44). Remes states, “When Marcus Aurelius begins

For the Stoic sage, one ideally exercises sovereign control over the expanse of one's entire personal history by means of memory, becoming the "master" of one's own past in a way that increases reason, moral behavior, and the experience of the *eupatheia*.<sup>46</sup> Seneca avers that only the sage can "take advantage of" the past in an edifying way, in contrast to those others who are too engrossed in their lives and passions to learn from it: "It is a mark of a stable and calm mind to be able to go through all parts of its life; the minds of people who are preoccupied, as if they are bearing a yoke, cannot turn and look back."<sup>47</sup> Further, this sovereignty over one's history is not limited to the individual vantage point but also engenders a retrospective appraisal of collective history as a whole, enabling the sage to lay hold of the values learned in the past as a way of stabilizing oneself against the indeterminacy of the future: "A wise person thus has all of time at her fingertips, or 'time in its perfection.'<sup>48</sup> Depicting one's conscious recollection of the past as that which equips one to face future adversity with tranquility is fittingly on par with Augustine's own description of memory as that which is responsible, psychologically speaking, for the execution of future actions and rational anticipation: "I draw on this abundant store to form imaginary pictures which resemble the things I have experienced ... and weave these together with images from the past, and so evoke future actions, occurrences, or hopes; and on all these as well I can meditate as though they were present to me."<sup>49</sup> Thus, in the case of memory's role in predicting the future, we observe an instance in which Augustine's cognitive appraisal of memory dovetails with the Stoic existential understanding.

The self's relation to and conditioning by its categorically tempo-

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his meditations by relating persons from whom he has learned important things, he is not primarily engaged in constituting a personal past for himself. In the Roman Stoic picture, the past is not a personal dimension of one's self, but a story of one's revered and ideal ancestry, an ideal up to which one should try to live" (170).

46 For memory as a vehicle of joy (*gaudium*) as one of the *eupatheia*, see Seneca, *Ep.* 99.23ff., via Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 32.

47 Seneca, *Brev. Vit.* 10.5.

48 Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 32; Seneca, *Ep.* 124.17.

49 *Confessions* X.8.14. See Remes, "Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood," 171: "Augustine's treatment of memory as not solely the retention of the past but also as the place where the self forms and encounters its plans and protentions for the future shows how significant he thinks that temporality is for human selfhood."

rality heavily influences both Stoic and Augustinian ways of thinking about the self. Remes, for instance, points to the philosophical relevance of the rhetorical style of *Confessions*: Augustine's decision to recount, in a second-person address to God, "confessions that start from the earliest childhood, [has the effect of] enhancing the understanding of selves as things with a past, evolving and being constituted in time, and as beings that have to relate themselves to their past."<sup>50</sup> Temporality, as such, is not accidental to the Augustinian understanding of the self; rather, the relation that one bears to one's temporal nature is personal and individualizing, and in this way, one's individuality is not reducible to interiority but is seen to be (at least in part) a function of the extrinsic, historical conditions that contextualize one's life. This embedded picture of selfhood stands in stark contrast to the Plotinian *telos* of the self, characterized as it is by the "escape in solitude to the Solitary" (*phyge monou pros monon*).<sup>51</sup> As Nussbaum observes, commenting on a passage from *Confessions* X.16.25, "a really successful dissociation of the self from memory would be [for Augustine] a total loss of the self ... this sense of oneself as a temporal being with a history is crucial to the individual's progress in the quest for goodness and knowledge of self and of God."<sup>52</sup>

I suggest, against the reading of Remes,<sup>53</sup> that Augustine's attention to temporality as an essential aspect of the self is strikingly similar to the place that existential memory holds in the late Stoic construction of the self; Augustine's emphasis on the personalizing ability that relating to one's history holds is in continuity with the Stoic conception of the self

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50 Remes, "Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood," 171.

51 Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 9 (9) 11, 50.

52 Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*, 68, via O'Daly, "Two Kinds of Subjectivity in Augustine's *Confessions*," 197.

53 See "Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood," 170, n.44. Remes here sets up a disjunction between the ways in which Augustine and Roman Stoics conceive of the significance of the past (and memory's function in its retrieval and appropriation in the present) in relation to the constitution of one's personal sense of self. Using Marcus Aurelius as example, she notes: "When he begins his *Meditations* by relating persons from whom he has learned important things, he is not primarily engaged in constituting a personal past for himself ... [since] the past is not a personal dimension of one's self ... but an ideal up to which one should try to live." This is then placed in contrast to Augustine's treatment of memory as denoting "how significant he thinks temporality is for human selfhood" (171). It is Remes' decision to depict this relationship towards temporality and selfhood as one of contrast which I here contest.



52 as “embedded.”<sup>54</sup> In the late Stoics we find, as in Marcus Aurelius for instance, an attention to and appropriation of the past to serve the present, in the form of its ability to provide either consolation or the grounds for idealization.<sup>55</sup> Yet even for Marcus Aurelius—the Stoic thinker putatively characterized as having the strongest antipathy toward the past—this reflection upon the past enabled by memory can edify the self in the present moment, granting knowledge by dint of prior experience, thereby equipping the self for moral progress, consonant with Augustine’s picture. Memory is thus a boon for self-formation, regardless of the “indifferent” status given to the past as having perished. *A fortiori*, this is the case, both for the early Stoics such as Zeno, as well as for Seneca, for whom “the present as a duration of time is a specious notion because, in the continuum of time, the present is a mere limit between past and future”<sup>56</sup> (a curious resonance with Augustine’s reflections on the present in *Confessions* XI). Seneca, with his greater attention to temporality as a condition of human life, is the first Stoic to explicitly formulate this strong relationship between time, memory, and selfhood. He posits that “the answer to the paradox of flux and identity lies in the connection between time and memory” since, despite changes to body and soul, “memory and its relation to the past provide psychological continuity and guarantee identity.”<sup>57</sup> We have observed such a stabilizing function of memory in Augustine as well.

Furthermore, just as for Augustine, memory’s proper use in the Stoic school is inherently ordered toward sociability and moral progress—though for the Stoics, it is used in regard to the pedagogical place which previous sages occupy as moral exempla for striving Stoa. The

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54 For the Stoic self as essentially embedded, see Reydams-Schils, “Stoic Agency and its Reception,” 59.

55 See Remes, “Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood,” 170, for her characterization of Marcus Aurelius’ disjunctive attitude toward temporality and selfhood.

56 Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 29.

57 Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 31. It is notable that there appears to be something dialectical about Seneca’s thinking on temporality and selfhood. At some points, temporal distention is thought to result in a series of distinct selves (see *Ep.* 58.22–23, 24.19–21); yet elsewhere, he remarks that “Different periods belong to the infant, the child, the youth, the old man; yet I am the same who was the infant and the boy and the youth. Thus, in spite of the fact that each age has a different constitution, the appropriation to its constitution is the same ... it is me [nature] commends to myself” (*Ep.* 121.16) For passages on memory in Seneca, see *Ep.* 5.9, 33.7, 40.1, 49.1–4, 72.1, 75.7–8, 78.18, 81.25, 83.2, 94.21ff., 94.29.

role of teachers in one's pursuit of moral perfection is a critical aspect of Stoicism: "One needs teachers to provide assistance ... the former pupil should have interiorized the teacher's voice, so that the teacher's image is always present in his mind and memory."<sup>58</sup> And while Stoic doctrine determines that the pursuit of moral excellence is ultimately the responsibility of the individual self, such that a sage might eventually become "self-reliant" in a certain respect, it is telling that this norm of self-perfection is indexed toward one's ultimate harmony and assimilation with the cosmos or nature, akin to Augustine's emphasis on the self's dislocation and subsequent integration into the greater eucharistic and ecclesial community.

More intriguingly, the Stoic methodology for philosophical examination and self-critique is dialogical in nature; one "converses with" oneself as with another. The sage reminds herself of the wisdom she has acquired, bringing it into conversation with the vicissitudes and conflicts of daily embodied life to produce values and actions in accordance with reason, and this dialogue within oneself suggests that "we are never less alone than when we are by ourselves."<sup>59</sup> Such normative use of memory is thus oriented to the acquisition of virtue *qua* right reason. In this respect, memory plays a critical role in the unique formation of the Stoic self: "If a sage strives towards maximal consistency in rational judgements, the storehouse of memory and previous judgements, together with other traits that determine one's role in life, constitute what s(he) is."<sup>60</sup> All of this is the result and exigency of the sociability inherent in one's milieu, since "living with the constant presence of community, both human and divine ... carries with it the potential for considerable conflicts."<sup>61</sup>

This latter point, in which the Stoics see reason and cosmology as being intrinsically social by nature,<sup>62</sup> means that the Stoic doctrine of

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58 Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 18. For the role of teachers and memory in the Stoic pursuit of moral progress, see Seneca, *Ep.* 2,11.8-10, 25.5-6, 39.1-2, 55.8-11, 62.2-3, 72.1, 78.18-19, 104.21-22.

59 Cicero, *Off.* 3.1 via Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 20.

60 Gretchen Reydams-Schils, "How to 'Become Like God' and Remain Oneself," in *Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity*, ed. M. Niehoff and J. Levinson (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 100.

61 Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 20.

62 See Cicero, *On Ends* 3.62ff.: "Human sociality is grounded in the divine rational

54 self is likewise “intrinsically relational,” with the ethical entailment that “human beings are meant to imitate the divine care for the world.”<sup>63</sup> The sage’s appreciation of his social, temporal, and corporeal embeddedness—much like Augustine’s taking account of the time- and space-bound parameters and creaturely dependence of the self—has far reaching implications, both for selfhood,<sup>64</sup> and for the normative use of memory in attaining moral perfection. A passage from Reydam-Schils, in which she reflects on Seneca’s positing a reverse-conical structure of time that maps to the concentric circles of social relations in Stoic cosmology, illuminates the significant overlap between Stoic and Augustinian accounts as I have presented:

What could the implications be of mapping a conical structure of time onto social relationships? Self, society, and time would then be inextricably interwoven. And as the span of time widens, so, ideally, would our social horizon. According to this perspective of time, memory would serve the human being who is intent on moral progress. Rather than the epistemological function that memory has for Aristotle, memory would have a primarily existential function. In its existential dimension, memory would also imply more than the record of friends, past pleasures, and a founding father’s sayings ... it would contain the lived experiences from which we could learn, the doctrines, precepts, and general sayings that we should always have ready at hand as aids, and the reminiscences of all the people (moral exempla) who matter to us and from whom we have learned.<sup>65</sup>

In such a picture, an individual’s sense of self is, at least in part, a product of social construction, enabled by the wondrous mechanism of memory which mediates past to present and, in so doing, generates the permanence of distinctive identity. Whether or not the result of

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principle.” For more on the social character of the divine rational principle, see Reydam-Schils, “Stoic Agency and its Reception,” 62–63.

63 Reydam-Schils, “Stoic Agency and its Reception,” 62.

64 See Reydam-Schils, “Stoic Agency and its Reception,” 66: “The main challenge here is to conceive of a type of sociability that is not centered on the opposition between self-centered behavior and a type of altruism that respects the other *qua* other, but rather relies on the notion of an extended self in which the distinction between self and others becomes blurred.”

65 Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection*, 31–32.

this normative self is conceptualized as a redeemed and psychologically remediated member of the Body of Christ, or as a sage whose entrance into the *cosmopolis* affords a blissful serenity, both conceptions have in common a positive entwining of communality, memory, and the intended end (*telos*) of the self. In both the Augustinian and Stoic models, memory both affords the possibility of true intersubjectivity (by creating the space for the subject and preserving its temporal relations to other selves) and is itself enhanced by its subject's relation to other selves.<sup>66</sup> In other words, there is in each system a true symbiosis that takes place between the use of memory and the community of other selves, both of which are oriented toward the full flourishing of an individual's identity.

### CONCLUSION

Despite Augustine's many critiques of Stoicism in other matters, it is telling that he, in speaking of the eschatological state of the City of God, gives his approbation to the social elements of Stoic thought:

The philosophers hold the view that the life of the wise man should be social; and in this we support them much more heartily. For how could ... that Heavenly City have made its first start, how could it have advanced along its course, how could it attain its appointed goal, if the life of the saints were not social?<sup>67</sup>

The fact that both the Augustinian and Stoic depictions of the *telos* of human life (notwithstanding the important differences between these) are characterized by this integral social element<sup>68</sup> is crucial in the proper interpretation of their psychological and anthropological descriptions

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66 Though space will not allow here, this is an important point of departure for one's having recourse to memory as a potential remedy to the philosophical problem of other minds.

67 Augustine, *City of God*, XIX.5.

68 See Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64, in which he avers that, "The Stoic notion of membership of a group that is defined in terms of an ethical ideal, a community of rational and morally good beings, has more in common with Augustine's concept of the City of God than is often recognized. Like Augustine's *City of God*, the Stoic cosmopolis was conceived of as one coexisting within actual societies. Augustine's adoption of the Stoic natural law theory is the appropriation of a consequence of Stoic thinking since Zeno, about the relation between community and virtue, even if Augustine may not have been aware that it is such a consequence."

56 of the self. This shared position in which memory conduces to social belonging and underpins social responsibility establishes an important link between Augustine and his Stoic predecessors. Thus, Augustine's appropriation of the Stoic school may be greater than previously envisaged. Finally, such a Stoic resonance underscores an interpretation of the Augustinian self which, contrary to much modern thinking, is not a privatized and solipsistic entity but instead a dynamic and socially constructed outgrowth of human temporal conditioning. Uncovering this thoroughly communal valence of the Augustinian self does much to reinforce a philosophically robust picture of Christian anthropology which is fundamentally social—not individualistic—in nature.

So this is how it is to be.  
I will never feel the negative  
space inside of me bloom  
into a crowd of elbows  
and knees, a host of shifting movements  
and hands, childlike, pressed  
to the curve of my interior.

(The figure I thought I knew  
is only the stalks swaying  
in a midnight field.)

So this is how it goes.

A trickle of water, somewhere  
in the moonless distance. Some river  
a long way from home, meandering  
with the field mice and snakes.

One of them,  
the other night, caught my eye  
with its glittering own. The black jewel whispered  
of the forest's dark moss,  
the gentle curve of branches  
overhead. The sickly sweet sting  
of fruit  
on an unsuspecting tongue.  
*Do you remember?*

I wander through the unripened corn,  
catching angel-hair husks as I go,  
and return to my sleeping mate. His eyes  
are closed  
under the dead gape of the stars.  
I lie down,  
my wound by his wound,  
and forget.

—ISABELLE HAHN, INDIANA

# KANT VERSUS SCHLEIERMACHER ON IMMORTALITY: A CONSTRUCTIVE REAPPRAISAL

FRANK DELLA TORRE II<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, I revisit an impassioned theological controversy that raged at the turn of the eighteenth century over the issue of immortality. Two figures—Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher—defended staunchly different positions on the question of personal immortality. In addition to being of historical interest, this controversy, I argue, is also a resource for living theological reflection. Therefore, having clarified Kant’s and Schleiermacher’s respective arguments for and against the afterlife, I bring their insights into conversation with Katherine Sonderegger’s recent theological reflections on the relationship between this-worldliness and other-worldliness. I intend to show, in dialogue with Sonderegger and on the basis of what we have learned from Kant and Schleiermacher, that Christians should be other-worldly and this-worldly at the same time (though, of course, in different respects). My chief aim in this paper is thus to make clear what Christian theology stands to gain from a careful study of this dispute over immortality—and what it risks losing when it fails to take it seriously.

**A**T the end of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher articulated two starkly opposed accounts of religion, each of which necessitates its own correspondingly different viewpoint concerning immortality. Kant, on the one hand, argued that belief in personal immortality is both rationally necessary on practical grounds and an essential feature of religion itself. Schleiermacher, on the other hand, maintained that the truly religious person, far from preoccupying herself with her own immortality, will instead forthrightly disavow any concern for the afterlife and abandon herself wholly to a spiritual devotion circumscribed within terrestrial existence. In the centuries that have followed, Christian theology has continued to wrestle with the issues central to this quarrel between Kant and Schleiermacher (whether or not it has done so with an awareness of their lasting influence). It would therefore appear to be the case, to borrow the language of Bruce McCormack, that the eighteenth century is still with us.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Frank Della Torre II is a PhD student in theological studies at Baylor University.

2 McCormack’s original statement, which he wrote amidst a discussion of the endur-

Thus I have two goals in this paper: one historical, the other constructive. First, I aim to document the nature and stakes of this theological debate as they were understood by Kant and Schleiermacher themselves. While Kant's argument for the soul's immortality has generated a large body of scholarly literature, interpreters have been rather quiet about Schleiermacher's no less thought-provoking theological argument against immortality.<sup>3</sup> Quieter still has been scholarship's attempt to juxtapose their respective positions on this issue, despite the widespread recognition that Schleiermacher intends to supplant Kantian religion.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I intend to help fill that gap. Second, I try to make this quarrel between Kant and Schleiermacher fruitful for contemporary theological reflection. As already indicated, I think the issues raised by this debate are still with us. We have not stopped asking whether our Christian religion would have us relate to time primarily as a barrier that must be overcome on our way to the hereafter (as I will argue it was for Kant) or whether time is instead that which makes possible an immanent religious devotion within the bounds of this life (as I will show it was for the young Schleiermacher). Crucially, I believe that we stand to gain important resources from these two figures inasmuch as they alert us to two irreducible dimensions of Christian theology—other-worldliness and this-worldliness—which we cannot do without but are not easily reconciled. A constructive engagement with this theological topic will require that we learn how to integrate these two poles of thought.

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ing significance of Schleiermacher's and Barth's theologies, was that "the nineteenth century is still with us." See Bruce McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 87.

3 Daniel Pedersen, for instance, has noted "the conspicuous lack of literature" written on Schleiermacher's doctrine of eternal life. See Daniel Pedersen, "Eternal Life in Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 3 (July 2011): 340–357. See also Nathan D. Hieb, "The Precarious State of Resurrection in Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 4 (October 2007): 398–414. Unlike me, both Pedersen and Hieb focus on Schleiermacher's Christian dogmatics rather than his early text *On Religion*.

4 In his scholarly "Introduction" to *On Religion*, Richard Crouter characterizes Schleiermacher as a religious naturalist who "provides a new foundation for theology in the post-Kantian period. If we bear in mind Schleiermacher's radicality on just those issues that Kant defends (God and immortality), his argument stands in stark contrast." See Richard Crouter's "Introduction" in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. Richard Crouter, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xxiii.



In section one of the paper, I explore Kant's argument for the postulate of immortality as contained in his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) before turning to *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793) and "The End of All Things" (1794). In these, Kant explores the manner in which religion properly instructs the believer to view her earthly life as an anticipation of eternity to come. In section two, I turn to relevant passages from Schleiermacher's *On Religion* (1799), which repudiates Kant's focus on personal immortality and construes religion as that which orients the believer toward a religious experience firmly grounded in this life. Having juxtaposed these two understandings of religion's orientation to time, I then think alongside Katherine Sonderegger in section three about how best to integrate both religious orientations. My ultimate aim will be to show how and why Christians ought to be this-worldly and other-worldly simultaneously, not one without the other.

KANT: POSTULATING IMMORTALITY (FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE)

"No religion can be conceived without faith in a future life."<sup>5</sup>

Though some of Kant's interpreters have found his practical postulate of immortality rather bewildering,<sup>6</sup> there can be no doubt that Kant himself regarded it as central to his critical project. This is confirmed by a recent surge of publications seeking to clarify and augment Kant's argument for the soul's immortality.<sup>7</sup> I will examine two of Kant's no-

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5 Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 131/6:126.

6 See, for instance, Manfred Kuehn's meticulously researched biography: "It was clear," Kuehn writes, "to anyone who knew Kant personally that he had no faith in a personal God. Having postulated God and immortality, he himself did not believe in either. His considered opinion was that such beliefs were just a matter of 'individual needs.' Kant himself felt no such need." Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2–3.

7 See, for instance, Jochen Bojanowski, "Life without Death: Why Kantian Agents Are Committed to the Belief in Their Own Immortality," in *The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Höwing (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016): 181–197; Andree Hahmann, "Kant's Critical Argument(s) for Immortality Reassessed" *Kant Yearbook* 10, no. 1 (October 2018): 19–41; Jessica Tizzard, "Why Does Kant Think We Must Believe in the Immortal Soul?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 50, no. 1 (October 2019): 141–129; Michael Morgan, "Rereading Kant on immortality and the highest good" *Europe-*

table theses regarding this postulate. The first of them, which Kant articulates most clearly in his second *Critique*, is that finite, rational agents must believe in their own immortality for practical (as opposed to theoretical) reasons. The second thesis, which is explicitly taken up both in Kant's *Religion* and in a late essay devoted to questions about divine judgment at the end of history, is that religion is inconceivable without a conception of an afterlife. Each assertion offers clarity into Kant's religious interpretation of time.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant invokes the crucial concept of the "highest good" (*das Vollendete Gute*), by which he means the ultimate fulfillment of the moral designs conceivable by an unconditionally good will. In essence, the highest good is a synthetic connection between happiness and holiness—a state wherein we are not only maximally happy but also wholly worthy of happiness. For Kant, the highest good is "the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law."<sup>8</sup> By this, he simply means that the highest good is an essential ideal of moral reasoning—that toward which the moral project necessarily aims. A rational will pursuant of the highest good will strive to attain "the complete conformity of dispositions with the moral law."<sup>9</sup> In short, the moral law legislates that our will aim to be holy—holiness being "the supreme condition" of the highest good.

Yet Kant is deeply aware that holiness, so understood, is simply not attainable for us in this life. Holiness is "a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment (*Zeitpunkte*) of his existence."<sup>10</sup> Kant thus paradoxically maintains, on the one hand, that *qua* rational beings, we are morally obligated to aim at the highest good as a necessary object of our will. Yet, on the other hand, he simultaneously holds that *qua* sensible beings, we are incapable of attaining the highest good in this life. In other words, we are obligated to strive after an object—i.e., holiness of will and its consummation in the highest good—which we are nonetheless incapable of attaining in this sensible world.

How does Kant solve this conundrum? His solution hinges on the postulate of immortality. While we are unable to attain complete con-

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*an Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 2 (August 2021): 1–15.

8 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 98–99/5:122.

9 For if we are not holy, then we are in no way worthy to be happy; and if we are neither holy nor happy, we are a long way from attaining the highest good.

10 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 99/5:122.

62 formity with the moral law in this life, we are nonetheless duty-bound to produce it by means of “an endless progress (*ins Unendliche gehend*) toward that complete conformity.”<sup>11</sup> As Kant explains, “For a rational but finite being only endless progress from lower to higher states of moral perfection is possible.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, we are obligated to strive for a holiness which we can only approximate in time but which we may hope to attain in an endless progress. And since this endless progress is “possible only on the presupposition of the existence and personality of the same rational being continuing endlessly (which is called the immortality of the soul),”<sup>13</sup> we must believe in our own immortality. Out of our unbending devotion to the highest good, each of us may hope for a further uninterrupted continuance of our moral progress, however long our existence may last (“even beyond this life”). Although we cannot expect—either now or in the foreseeable future—to be holy, we can nonetheless “hope to be so only in the endlessness of [our] duration.”<sup>14</sup> In sum, immortality makes possible our attainment of holiness (in an endless progress), which in turn makes possible our fulfillment of the highest good (i.e., happiness proportionate to holiness). Immortality is thus a necessary presupposition of our striving for moral perfection.<sup>15</sup> In this way, Kant defends the claim that belief in immortality is rationally necessary on practical grounds. Without this postulate, we cannot hope to meet our obligation to attain the highest good.

Turning now to Kant’s second notable thesis, the Kantian conception of immortality anticipates an eternity to come—be it one of boundless blessing or cursing. To better appreciate how this works in Kant’s thought, let us take up the perspective of a finite, rational agent who is dutifully striving after complete conformity with the moral law. Such a person, if he is not to deceive himself, will have to test his moral worth by examining the quality of his character across time. Only if he can

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11 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 99/5:123, italics mine.

12 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 99/5:123.

13 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 99/5:122.

14 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 100/5:124.

15 None of this means, of course, that one must believe in one’s immortality in order to know the moral law. What it means is that, in our practical reasoning about the highest good, the idea of immortality emerges as a logically necessary postulate in order for us to conceive how it could be possible for us to meet the demands of the moral law. In other words, without this postulate we cannot see how it is possible to fulfill what we are obligated to fulfill, i.e., holiness.

verify within himself a steady improvement in the conduct of his life can he reasonably hope to stay the course toward moral perfection. By contrast, if he observes within himself a persistent inability to resolve toward the good and instead relapses into evil, going from bad to worse, then such a person can reasonably entertain no hope of improvement.

In *Religion*, Kant understands both of the above moral trajectories as anticipations or precursors of eternity.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, Kant is in principle not given to speculation about what such a future life entails; all such ruminations transgress the limits of human understanding when taken as providing theoretical insight. And yet, in practice Kant is nevertheless willing to muse about our eternal state insofar as it has practical import: “We know nothing about the future, nor ought we to look for more than what stands in rational connection with the incentives of morality and their end.”<sup>17</sup> As a case in point, Kant suggests that our representations of a blessed or cursed eternity are powerful enough to reassure one part of humanity in its pursuit of the good and to rouse the other part to break with evil. The expectation that the whole of one’s life and not just a segment of it—much less a segment of one’s most flattering moments—will “be one day placed before the judge’s eyes”<sup>18</sup> functions to stir up one’s conscience to pursue whatever good has yet to be done or to make right whatever past evils have yet to be repaired.<sup>19</sup> As Kant says in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, “it is from the necessity of punishment that the inference to a future life is drawn.”<sup>20</sup>

We see an even more striking willingness on Kant’s part to ponder the pressing ethical import of humanity’s future state in his late essay, “The End of All Things.” Kant opens the essay by invoking the common expression that describes a dying person “as *going out of time into eternity*.”<sup>21</sup> By “eternity,” Kant means the cessation of all temporal duration as such: “An end of all time along with the person’s uninterrupted duration.” Given our discursive intellect, we are incapable of making

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16 Kant, *Religion*, 86/6:69.

17 Kant, *Religion*, 159/6:161–162.

18 Kant, *Religion*, 93/6:77.

19 Kant, *Religion*, 93/6:77.

20 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 232/6:490.

21 Immanuel Kant, “The End of All Things,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 221/8:327, italics mine.

64 this “end” theoretically comprehensible to us.<sup>22</sup> And yet, seen from the moral course of things, we can and frequently do speak of such an “end” in terms of a “judgment day,” which is thought to be “the settling of all accounts for human beings, based on their conduct in their whole lifetime.”<sup>23</sup> This last judgment is simultaneously the culmination of time and the cessation of time, after which nothing happens anymore: “The judgment of grace or damnation by the world’s judge is therefore the real end of all things in time, and at the same time the beginning of the (blessed or cursed) eternity, in which the lot that has fallen to each remains just as it was in the moment of its pronouncement (of the sentence).”<sup>24</sup> Crucially, Kant asserts that “it is wise to act *as if* another life—and the moral state in which we end this one, along with its consequences in entering on that other life—is unalterable.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, it is preferable for practical reasons to believe that one’s present conduct will determine one’s eternal destination and that such a destination is fixed upon the moment of the deity’s sentence.

To summarize, we can see that for Kant, “morality thus inevitably leads to religion.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, we are now in a better position to appreciate what religion, as he understands it, entails: not simply belief in one’s own immortality but also the anticipation of a final judgment wherein one’s future state will be decided by an all-knowing and just judge. In the span of time allotted to each of us, reason leaves us no assurance of our destiny other than what our conscience tells us about the course of our lives up to the present moment. It is incumbent upon each of us, therefore, to “work out one’s salvation with *fear and trembling*,”<sup>27</sup> even as we hope for “a prospect of a future of *beatitude*”<sup>28</sup> on the basis of our firm resolution toward moral perfection. Without turning such eschatological anticipations into a dogma or something transparent to speculative reason, Kant nevertheless stresses the practical import of viewing our lives as anticipations of a future unalterable state. For Kant,

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22 On Kant’s distinction between a discursive and intuitive intellect (the latter of which he claims belongs to God), see Immanuel Kant, “Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, 390/28:1053.

23 Kant, “The End of All Things,” 222/8:328.

24 Kant, “The End of All Things,” 222/8:328.

25 Kant, “The End of All Things,” 222/8:328.

26 Kant, *Religion*, 35/6:6.

27 Kant, *Religion*, 85/6:68, italics mine.

28 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 100/5:124.

we can and should hope against hope that in the end we will be worthy of the highest good we seek: our maximal happiness proportionate to our holiness—or, as the more pious might prefer to call it, *Heaven*.

SCHLEIERMACHER: DENYING IMMORTALITY (FOR RELIGION'S SAKE)

*“A weak, tempted heart must take refuge in the thought of a future world. But it is folly to make a distinction between this world and the next. Religious persons at least know only one.”*<sup>29</sup>

We have seen how Kant secures a rather traditional Christian conception of our passage through, and eventually out of, time—even if his means of securing such a conception are more or less unconventional. Now, we must turn to one of Kant's foremost religious critics, the young Friedrich Schleiermacher, who in his work, *On Religion*, outlined a starkly different conception of religion. As some of his interpreters have pointed out, Schleiermacher's entire theological corpus (and this early work in particular) can be read as offering a distinctive alternative to traditional theism and a new foundation for theology in a post-Kantian period.<sup>30</sup>

As with Kant, Schleiermacher exhibits two crucial moves in his approach to religion. First, Schleiermacher calls into question the way in which Kant weds religion to belief in personal immortality. Second, Schleiermacher develops a positive conception of religion that explicitly disavows all concern for immortality or a postmortem state. In fact, Schleiermacher maintains that in order to hold true religion, one must completely surrender one's preoccupation with individual immortality and experience what he calls “one[ness] with the infinite in the midst of the finite.”<sup>31</sup> Taken together, both moves entail a completely different way of understanding religion's orientation to time.

As the work's subtitle indicates, *On Religion* is addressed to religion's

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29 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 20.

30 See Julia A. Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 159–198; Richard Crouter, “Introduction,” in Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (Cambridge, 1996), xxiii.

31 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 54.

66 “cultured despisers”—a group of people whom we know to be Schleiermacher’s own inner circle of friends. In his opening speech, Schleiermacher indicates that this group of religious skeptics feel they have no need of religion: “You have succeeded in making your earthly lives so rich and many-sided that you no longer need the eternal, and having created a universe for yourselves, you are spared from thinking of that which created you.”<sup>32</sup> But beyond this general indifference to religious matters, they are also actively hostile toward religion, most notably because they suspect that it originates in “fear of an eternal being and reliance on another world.”<sup>33</sup> Throughout the work, Schleiermacher repeatedly voices his sympathies with their suspicion of “religion,” that is, if religion consists of nothing more than belief in these two dogmas. Of course, Schleiermacher objects to this characterization. Therefore, his first move in his book must be to disabuse his readers of what he regards as a fundamental misunderstanding of religion.

Toward this end, he asks the cultured despisers whether, in associating religion with these two hinges, they have truly comprehended the essential content of religion or instead have mistakenly ascribed to it qualities that are merely accidental. Because Schleiermacher is convinced they have done the latter, he scolds them for their hastiness and declares that religion, when properly understood, has nothing essentially to do with either fear of a deity or the longing for eternal life. A person can be religious without holding to either of these hinges. Moreover, merely believing in God and immortality does not make a person truly religious: “You must also admit,” he explains, “that one religion without God can be better than another with God.”<sup>34</sup> In fact, we learn from Schleiermacher’s autobiographical remarks that religion was a source of strength when he came to disbelieve in both of these hinges: “[Religion] remained with me when God and immortality disappeared before my doubting eyes.”<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, at the end of his speech devoted to examining the “essence of religion,” Schleiermacher underscores to his reader that “nothing at all has been said about immortality and as good as nothing about divinity.”<sup>36</sup> He comments that this omission is entirely fitting because

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32 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 3–4.

33 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 11.

34 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 52.

35 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 8.

36 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 51.

“from the beginning I have already declared myself against these being considered the hinge and chief articles of religion.”

This move to isolate religion from other accidental, or even contaminating, influences is a constant theme throughout *On Religion*. Schleiermacher’s focus on religion to the exclusion of other faculties of the soul—metaphysics and morality, in particular—leads him to condemn all apologetic stratagems that would shore up the relevance of religion by demonstrating that it is necessary for some extrinsic purpose. “Only do not worry,” he assures his reader, “that I still might, in the end, resort after all to those common measures of demonstrating to you how necessary religion is for maintaining right and order in the world and for coming to the aid of the shortsightedness of human perspective and the narrow limits of human power with the reminder of an all-seeing and infinite power.”<sup>37</sup> For Schleiermacher, giving religion a purpose or usefulness beyond itself simply denigrates it. He pejoratively calls such approaches to religion “a poorly stitched together fragment of metaphysics and morals”<sup>38</sup> and urges that anyone who intends to recommend religion in this way “cannot help magnifying the contempt under which it already suffers.”<sup>39</sup> Schleiermacher instead asserts that religion originates from a unique and irreducible faculty of the soul, one that is altogether different from thinking (metaphysics) and doing (morality). In other words, *contra* Kant, religion must be sharply distinguished from metaphysical postulates and moral reasonings. It cannot be summoned to ensure belief in a deity or immortality—the two religious postulates that Kant defends as necessary for practical purposes. In no uncertain terms, Schleiermacher stresses that religion must not be made to serve metaphysics or morals. Religion is, rather, “the necessary and indispensable third next to those two.”<sup>40</sup>

Yet if religion is neither thinking nor doing, what is it? Here we come to Schleiermacher’s second notable claim: religion is, for him, essentially feeling, particularly that which opens us up to what is beyond us—beyond the narrow bounds of our individual egos and the limited confines of our lifespans.<sup>41</sup> In fact, religion consists in a receptivity

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37 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 15.

38 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 12.

39 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 12.

40 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 23.

41 To be sure, the way in which he articulates this feeling evolves over the course of his lengthy theological career. However, the nuances of this progression need not con-



68 toward nothing less than the universe. “In religion, the universe is intuited; it is posited as originally acting on us.”<sup>42</sup> Such a feeling or intuition of the universe opens us up to the One, or Infinite, of which we—and everything else—are microcosms.<sup>43</sup> “Recall how in religion, everything strives to expand the sharply delineated outlines of our personality and gradually to lose them in the infinite in order that we, by intuiting the universe, will become one with it as much as possible.” The “highest goal of religion ... [is] to discover a universe beyond and above humanity.”<sup>44</sup> For “humanity is only a middle term between the individual and the One, a resting place on the way to the infinite.”<sup>45</sup>

By implication, Schleiermacher concludes that nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of religion than to concern oneself with one’s individuality or bare humanity. People who do that “are anxious about how they will take [their humanity] with them beyond this world, and their highest endeavor is for further sight and better limbs.”<sup>46</sup> In so doing, they show that they love their egos more than the universe. Yet the universe invites them to be liberated from themselves, to let their egos go in an intuition of the infinite. Religion is thus borne of something like self-forgetful “love for the universe.”<sup>47</sup> Immortality doesn’t even come to mind for those who experience this religious feeling. They are entirely enraptured by the One in which they find themselves. They wish only to live in the “immediate consciousness of the Deity as He is found in ourselves and in the world.”<sup>48</sup> Truly religious persons are not confined to themselves; instead, they long to be more than themselves. Even death

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cern us here. Suffice it to say that in the 1799 edition of *On Religion*, Schleiermacher prefers to call this feeling an “intuition of the universe.” In the 1821 version, he more often calls it “immediate consciousness of the deity.” See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (Oman 1994), 101. Even more well-known is Schleiermacher’s late description in his *Glaubenslehre* of a “feeling of absolute dependence.” See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 3rd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 17.

42 Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (Crouter 1996), 53.

43 A detailed examination of Schleiermacher’s concept of the infinite is beyond the scope of this paper. For one such helpful account, see Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 84–90.

44 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 44.

45 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 44.

46 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 54.

47 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 54.

48 Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (Oman 1994), 101.

is no threat to them. It is the fulfillment of their hope to “transcend humanity” in yet a greater mystical unification with the universe.

To conclude, in Schleiermacher’s *On Religion*, immortality is first and foremost rejected as opposed to the spirit of religion. And yet, in a surprising turn, the concept of immortality is then reoriented in a this-worldly direction. As Schleiermacher explains in the book’s 1821 edition,

[T]he goal and the character of the religious life is not the immortality desired and believed in by many ... It is not the immortality that is outside of time, behind it, or rather after it, and which is still in time. It is the immortality which we can now have in this temporal life; it is the problem in the solution of which we are for ever to be engaged. In this midst of finitude to be one with the Infinite and in every moment to be eternal is the immortality of religion.<sup>49</sup>

Schleiermacher here refuses to allow hope for merit or fear of punishment in another life to be a motivation for religion. Kant had linked religion closely to the expectation of divine reward and retribution. For him, the main (perhaps only) point of religion was to ensure that such an expectation would be met. Schleiermacher, by contrast, thinks of religion in a “Johannine” register by placing the Eternal in the midst of time:<sup>50</sup> “in the state of pious emotion, the soul is rather absorbed in the present moment than directed towards the future.”<sup>51</sup>

For religion’s sake, then, Schleiermacher feels he must deny immortality and disclaim the hereafter in as much as they are vestiges of self-interest and thereby detract from the spirit of religion by precluding an intuition of the universe. Heaven is neither the object of one’s longing nor the highest good capable of being attained. For him, religion instead consists of an intensifying unification with the infinite as experienced in time. Our “eternality,” our “immortality,” our “Heaven,” is located within this temporal life—not outside it. Therefore, in his account of religion, Schleiermacher calls into question Kant’s conflation of religion with belief in personal immortality.

49 Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (Oman 1994), 101.

50 Crouter, “Introduction” to Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66.

51 Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 117.

70 Moreover, he articulates a conception of religion that explicitly disavows all concern for personal immortality or a postmortem state. In fact, in order to win true religion, one has to completely surrender one's preoccupation with individual immortality. Only then can one become truly religious—by throwing oneself wholly into this life. Religion's center of gravity is not there, but *here*; not later, but *now*; not in Heaven, but on *earth*.

#### BETWEEN OTHER-WORLDLINESS & THIS-WORLDLINESS

Now that we have examined Kant's and Schleiermacher's positions regarding immortality and explored how they lead to different religious interpretations of time, we are in a better position to ask what all of this might mean for contemporary Christian theology. There can be no doubt that we today stand in the shadow of these two figures, though it would seem that Schleiermacher's shadow looms larger than Kant's. The story of modern theology can be described, to a significant extent, as the gradual disintegration of the "other world" in favor of an ever-increasing preoccupation with this world. Such was the view of Ludwig Feuerbach, who doubtless took himself to be standing at the culmination of this historical development when he declared that "the task of the modern era was the realization and humanization of God—the transformation and dissolution of theology into anthropology."<sup>52</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer made a similar observation when he wrote that "in the last hundred years or so ... it's becoming evident that everything gets along without 'God' and does so just as well as before. As in the scientific domain, so in human affairs generally, 'God' is being pushed further and further out of our life, losing ground."<sup>53</sup> More recently, Charles Taylor has characterized this tendency as part and parcel of living in a secular age: "We have moved," he says, "from a world in which the place of fullness was understood as unproblematically outside or 'beyond' human life, to a conflicted age in which this construal is challenged by others which place it (in a wide range of ways) 'within' human life."<sup>54</sup> It would seem,

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52 Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred H. Vogel (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986), 5.

53 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, edited by John W. De Gruchy, translated by Isabel Best, Lisa E Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, and Nancy Lukens, DBWE 8 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 426.

54 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 15.

then, that the afterlife is on the defensive; Heaven is giving way to history.<sup>55</sup> Today, we are more Schleiermacherian than Kantian.

This situation, and the historical development that gave rise to it, invites theological reflection. What are Christian theologians to make of this trend? Should we welcome worldliness as an opportunity for doing theology under the conditions of secular modernity? Or should we polemicize the immanent frame by daring to speak boldly about the Last Things? Such questions provide the opportunity to think about the proper relationship between what Katherine Sonderegger calls “this-worldliness” and “other-worldliness.” By thinking with Sonderegger, we will be better equipped to integrate these two poles of Christian thinking.

Like Feuerbach, Bonhoeffer, and Taylor, Sonderegger thinks that the modern impulse has been “decidedly this-worldly.”<sup>56</sup> For us moderns, she explains, “Our cosmos is a rounded whole, closed off and complete, and the full measure of Christian devotion and repentance is realized in the world as it lies before us, firm under our earthly feet.”<sup>57</sup> As a result, we no longer feel the need to look beyond this earth for the resolution of our difficulties: our eyes do not await the arrival of “Another City or a New Heaven and a New Earth, descending from Above, to console and resolve the problem of suffering.”<sup>58</sup> Our feet are rooted firmly on Earth; our concerns are exhausted by the world we encounter in time and space. As a result, Sonderegger thinks, the doctrines of resurrection and eternal life “have receded well out of the mind’s eye of modern Christian people.”<sup>59</sup> We are so burdened by the affairs of this life that the Last Things are seldom, if ever, a matter of concern. Even in the face of inexplicable suffering, we feel that “any recognition or response to the presence of evil in this age must be set out altogether in the furniture and idiom of this world.”<sup>60</sup> The Last Things have become irrelevant for addressing the theodicy question.

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55 See Michael Rosen, *The Shadow of God: Kant, Hegel, and the Passage from Heaven to History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2022).

56 Sonderegger, “Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection” in *Eternal God, Eternal Life: Theological Investigations into the Concept of Immortality*, ed. Philip G. Ziegler (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 116.

57 Sonderegger, “Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection,” 116.

58 Sonderegger, “Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection,” 116.

59 Sonderegger, “Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection,” 117.

60 Sonderegger, “Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection,” 117.

Now, Sonderegger admits, this narration will likely strike some readers as rather simplistic. Aren't we, in fact, living in an era of eschatological revolution? Hasn't theology since Schweitzer, Barth, Overbeck, et al. been forced to reckon with the apocalyptic origins of the Gospel *kerygma*? To be sure, eschatology has become a vital feature of modern theology since the early twentieth century, and this trend has continued within much of contemporary Christian dogmatics. However, Sonderegger believes that it is possible to draw a different lesson from this evidence than is usually done. On her view, the rediscovery of eschatology so in vogue today is inadvertently buttressed by a negative, apophatic framework: the *grenzbegriff*, or "limit concept," holds supreme. "For all our modernist talk of the Eschaton, we cannot and do not speak about it in a positive fashion; we do not 'fill it out,' give it substantial form and heft, or allow it to work on and for us as 'object of thought.'"<sup>61</sup> The Eschaton stands, even for apocalyptic theologians, as the irreducible Other facing our world, breaking into it from the outside and introducing something new. For us, the eschatological God is the incomprehensible, unutterable, and inconceivable Subject. Due to this theological model, even eschatologically minded theologians tend to have an impoverished notion of the Last Things: God is in Heaven, and we are consigned to Earth.

Sonderegger insists that something has gone amiss here. To our great detriment, theologians find themselves "spiritually unable to speak about the Last Things as objects, real objects, of the Christian hope. We have nothing concrete, visual, plastic, and substantial to long for; our traffic as Christians is in this world and we are to do our work within it."<sup>62</sup> A sure sign of this impoverishment is that theologians who do try to think constructively about the Last Things often boil it down to philosophical puzzles, such as sameness of body and the experience of time in an eternal realm. While not wholly unimportant, such concerns offer little by way of actual substance. In the face of this problem, Sonderegger advocates for constructive theological imagining about the glories awaiting us in Heaven: "Heavenly life must be good news, the very best, if it is to take its place alongside the drama of this world; it must hold out the distant harmony of the Lord's victory song if we are to love it, and to learn its rhyme."<sup>63</sup>

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61 Sonderegger, "Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection," 118.

62 Sonderegger, "Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection," 118–119.

63 Sonderegger, "Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection," 119.

Along these lines, Sonderegger encourages us to view our world as essentially unfinished. For us, the world itself must bear witness to both its metaphysical and moral incompleteness. Though the bulk of her argument dwells upon the former, Sonderegger explicitly points to Kant as a figure who reminds us of the world's distinctly moral deficiency: "We might call the world incomplete morally because the good that virtuous people do is left in our realm unrewarded, an incompleteness Immanuel Kant corrected by his vision of Eternal life."<sup>64</sup> As we have seen, Kant did indeed think it necessary to postulate immortality for the sake of attaining the highest good, something that we are incapable of attaining within the bounds of this life. For Kant, as for Sonderegger, the cosmos we inhabit—despite its phenomenal appearance—is not a closed moral system. There will be a divine judgment in which all of the good done in this world will be rewarded and all of the evil set right. Sonderegger finds problematic Schleiermacher's supposition that the world is simply "there, a pulsing, dynamic, self-generating complex, an environment (*Naturzusammenhang*), as Schleiermacher puts this, in which we human beings take our part, to suffer and to thrive."<sup>65</sup> If this is all we get around to saying—if we forget that the world is radically and fundamentally incomplete—then it is only a small step from Schleiermacher to modern atheism. The latter simply disposes of the religious idiom of Schleiermacher's thought and doubles down on the world's ultimate self-sufficiency. In short, Sonderegger proposes something of a return to Kantian other-worldliness. Amidst our preoccupation with this life, she wishes to remind us of the hope of resurrection: "Not worldlings but citizens of heaven; nor residents content with this earth but pilgrims groaning for the Homeland! That is the rupture of earthly completion by the LORD's voice."<sup>66</sup>

I suspect Sonderegger is correct that the tendency of modernity has been to erase all vestiges of other-worldliness. She is also right that this trajectory has tempted theologians toward a sort of myopic this-worldliness that has led, over time, to a diffidence about the doctrine of the Last Things. In response, she proposes a forthright proclamation of the hope of resurrection and robust theological reflection on its promises. In this respect, Kant can be a resource for theological reflection today.

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64 Sonderegger, "Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection," 120.

65 Sonderegger, "Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection," 121.

66 Sonderegger, "Toward a Doctrine of Resurrection," 122.

Nevertheless, we must still defend this-worldliness and heed the caution against a certain kind of other-worldliness that Schleiermacher, among other theologians, rightly warns about.

Schleiermacher denied that hope for merit or fear of punishment in a future life are, properly speaking, religious motivations. In order to understand why, we might consider the following scenario. Imagine the sort of person whose sole motivation for religious devotion is the expectation of future divine reward or punishment. Such a person can be said to worship and obey God not as an end in itself but as a means to self-interested ends (e.g., eternal life). God is, in short, an instrument he uses in order to obtain that which he really desires. Can such a person, Schleiermacher invites us to ask, really be called “religious” in the proper sense? Grant that such a person really does believe in God, really does expect that there will be a divine judgment, and really does worship and obey God in this life. He still does not get to the heart of the religious spirit. A person can believe and do all of these things and, in the final analysis, lack religion. The spirit of religion is more self-forgetful, less calculating, and less fixated on future expectations than this.

This line of thinking led the young Schleiermacher to flirt with the idea of dispensing altogether with the “other world,” at least in the earliest edition of *On Religion*.<sup>67</sup> He found it necessary to deny immortality in order to make room for true religion. Yet, even if we don’t follow him down that road—and I believe we should not—his basic point still needs to be taken seriously: “In the state of pious emotion, the soul is rather absorbed in the present moment than directed towards the future.”<sup>68</sup> On this point, Schleiermacher is not alone. We find the same conviction present in none other than Luther, Calvin, and Bonhoeffer. In a discussion of merits and rewards, Luther writes in *The Bondage of the Will*,

A kingdom awaits the godly, though they themselves neither

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67 As Richard Crouter notes, Schleiermacher’s revision to *On Religion* “reveals a deliberate effort to give the earlier argument [about God and immortality] a more theistic interpretation.” While it would be wrong to say that Schleiermacher later retracts what he wrote in the book’s first edition, we can rightly say that he attempts to modify his position in certain respects: “In the revision the more radical, relativistic ideas that deny the necessity of belief in God are either softened or supplanted, although traces of these positions linger in the work and continue to enliven debates about the author’s mature system of theological teaching.” See *On Religion* (Crouter 1988), 65–66.

68 Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (Oman 1994), 117 (emphasis added).

seek it nor think of it ... Indeed, should they do good works in order to obtain the kingdom, they never would obtain it, but would belong rather to the number of the ungodly, who with an evil, mercenary eye seek the things of self even in God. The sons of God, however, do good with a will free from self-concern (*gratuita*), seeking no reward, but the glory and will of God only, and ready to do good even if (though this is impossible) there was neither a kingdom nor a hell.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, in a discussion of piety in the *Institutes*, Calvin writes that the truly religious mind “restrains itself from sinning, not out of dread of punishment alone; but, because it loves and reveres God as Father, it worships and adores him as Lord. Even if there were no hell, it would still shudder at offending him alone.”<sup>70</sup> And while reflecting upon what he calls the “profound this-worldliness of Christianity,”<sup>71</sup> Bonhoeffer writes from prison that “Only when one loves life and the earth so much that with it everything seems to be lost and at its end may one believe in the resurrection of the dead and a new world ... One can and must not speak the ultimate word prior to the penultimate.”<sup>72</sup>

On my reading, Luther, Calvin, and Bonhoeffer share with Schleiermacher a concern for this-worldliness—not in spite of their Christian convictions but precisely on account of them. Their religious motivations do not spring first and foremost from the expectation of divine reward or fear of divine retribution but rather from a self-forgetful and uncalculating love of God. When we peer into the deepest recesses of their motivations, their religion is based not primarily on the anticipation of future promises but on a simple, present gratitude. Their religious devotion to God would still burn as hot as ever within them (though this is impossible!) even if “there was neither a kingdom nor a hell” (Luther), “even if there were no hell” (Calvin). Anyone who cannot wholeheartedly claim such sentiments as one’s own has no right to gorge oneself on thoughts of heavenly feasts. If the Last Things are invoked in such a way as to crowd

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69 Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 182, italics mine.

70 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), 43, italics mine.

71 Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 213, italics mine.

72 Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 213, italics mine.



76 out these sincerest of religious motivations by making Christians into mercenary creatures who do good merely with a view to gaining eternal life, then we have gone seriously awry. We have put eschatology toward purposes for which it was never intended—no matter how imaginative or vivid or captivating our eschatological visions. To resist this trend, I submit that Schleiermacher, no less than Kant, is a resource for contemporary theological reflection. He reminds us that,

Only the man who denying himself sinks himself in as much of the whole Universe as he can attain, and in whose soul a greater and holier longing has arisen, has a right to the hopes that death gives. With him alone it is really possible to hold further converse about the endlessness to which, through death, we infallibly soar.<sup>73</sup>

Without negating Sonderegger's insights, or implying that she (or Kant, for that matter) is guilty of the pitfalls warned of by Schleiermacher (et al.), I assert that over-zealous other-worldliness, no less than myopic this-worldliness, misses the mark of true Christianity. The Christian religion is neither purely this-worldly nor purely other-worldly. It is both. The same God who took on flesh to become human in this world also rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven. Therefore, Christians need not have a divided consciousness. On the one hand, we are free to be this-worldly Christians without giving up our hope of eternal life in the age to come. As Bonhoeffer explains, "I believe we are so to love God in our life and in the good things God gives us and to lay hold of such trust in God that, when the time comes and is here—but truly only then!—we also go to God with love, trust, and joy."<sup>74</sup> Consequently, we need not presently insist that this earth is not our true home. Rather, "this-worldliness must not be abolished ahead of its time."<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, we are also free to meditate, as Sonderegger would have us do, upon the glories of resurrection and eternal life that await us. In such moments of meditation, we will doubtless remember "that all earthly things are temporary and that it is good to accustom [one's] heart to eternity, and finally the hours will not fail to come in which we can honestly say, 'I wish that I were home.'"<sup>76</sup>

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73 Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (Oman 1994), 101.

74 Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 228.

75 Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 448.

76 Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 228.

In either case, it is evident that we “remain in step with God and not keep rushing a few steps ahead, though also not lagging a single step behind either.”<sup>77</sup> To be sure, we can expect that we will oscillate between these orientations. Some days, we will rest content to take directly from God’s hands the blessings, tasks, and trials which he gives us in this life, unconcerned about what comes next: “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”<sup>78</sup> In other moments, we will take solace in the promised blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven and the Divine Refuge that awaits us there: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”<sup>79</sup> Neither of these sentiments will be wholly unfamiliar to the Christian, who is both this-worldly and other-worldly.

### CONCLUSION

I have traced the contours of the debate over immortality as it was carried on by Kant and Schleiermacher. Having done so, I made their respective positions fruitful for constructive theological work. I showed that their arguments for and against immortality can serve as an opportunity for thinking about the relationship between this-worldliness and other-worldliness within Christian theology. Sonderegger helped us see the merits in Kant’s more other-worldly position: he reminds us that the earth and our history upon it are fundamentally incomplete and therefore beckon for completion in eternity. Yet I sought to show that Schleiermacher’s more this-worldly position also deserves our sustained attention. He alerts us to the dangers of calculative self-interest in matters of eschatology and reminds us that religious motivations are more interested in present encounters with God than they are postmortem expectations from God. I therefore insist that Christian theologians not force themselves to choose between the two figures, for they each help us see dimensions of our faith that we cannot do without. Because there is room enough within Christianity for other-worldliness and this-worldliness, there is also space for a Kant and a Schleiermacher.

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77 Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 228–229.

78 Matt. 6:34, NRSV.

79 Rev. 21:4, NRSV.

## SABBATH

in the deep end.

Don't think of it as a

and drown your clock

commandment we're bound to

green pastures



it's a promise we're

time travel to still waters

invited into doing,

out of your seven

being, abiding

stop striving at least once

—SARAH KATSIYIANNIS, CALIFORNIA

# FOUR RIVAL INTERPRETATIONS OF AUGUSTINE'S PHILOSOPHY OF TIME

PATRICK CORRY<sup>1</sup>

ABSTRACT: Augustine's reflections in Book XI of the *Confessions* remained a touchstone for philosophical thinking about time in twentieth-century continental philosophy. Yet the nature and significance of the "otherness" of temporality around which Augustine's own thinking turned has been received and interpreted in plural and even divergent ways. After a brief consideration of the Augustinian inheritances in Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophies of time, this paper takes up explicit receptions of *Confessions* XI made by four later twentieth-century philosophers with attention to the way each understands temporal difference to mediate the divine. Most broadly I argue for a dialectical and apophatic reading of the receptions of Augustine by Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Luc Marion, on the one hand, against a more "analogical" reading of the receptions by Jean-Luc Chrétien and William Desmond. The distinction, I argue, concerns the extent to which temporal difference, cognate to the *distentio animi* which is so often the object of Augustine's lament, might be conceived to be, for Augustine, *itself* the site of divine disclosure. In conclusion, I point out the subtle Christological framing of Augustine's own meditation in *Confessions* XI, from which each thinker's approach might be finally seen as complementary within an Augustinian vision of temporality. This concluding suggestion is directed toward the development of a philosophical theology of time, which might at once do justice to the plural resonances of Augustine's thought traced in this paper and help reconcile competing approaches to broader questions about the relation between the finite and the infinite.

“WHAT then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know.”<sup>2</sup> Augustine's perplexity, unforgettably voiced in the eleventh book of the *Confessions*, remains our own. In the 1904 lectures “On the phenomenology of the consciousness of internal time,” Edmund Husserl advised that “even today anyone occupied with the problem of time must study chapters 14–28 of Book XI of the *Confessions* thoroughly.”<sup>3</sup> Husserl's specification of chapters is not without significance: turning to chapter 29, we find Augustine looking forward in time, to the time of Last Things, to “the day when I shall be purified and melted in the

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2 Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xiv.17. All English renderings from the translation of Frank Sheed, unless otherwise noted.

3 Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 21.

80 fire of Thy love and wholly joined to Thee.”<sup>4</sup> Or, were we to begin with chapter 1, we would find a perhaps more original question than “what is time,” namely: “Lord, since You are in eternity, are You unaware of what I am saying to You?”<sup>5</sup> But such thinking and questioning lie for Husserl beyond the brackets of phenomenology. By contrast, this paper will attempt to construct a dialogue between several more recent philosophical receptions of the analysis of time in the *Confessions*, each of which directly engage the reflections on God’s eternity and *creatio ex nihilo* which permeate the more immanent frame of the chapters on temporality specified by Husserl.

More specifically, I construct this dialogue by means of close attention to variations in the ways that four continental philosophers of religion—Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and William Desmond—have taken Augustine to understand the mediatory significance of temporality itself, that is, its capacity to bear disclosure of the divine. At the most general level, these variations suggest a coupling: Ricoeur and Marion present a more equivocal and apophatic Augustine, for whom the negativity of temporal difference reflects the eternal strictly by opposition, while Chrétien and Desmond offer a more “analogical” Augustine, for whom temporal difference is at bottom expressive of the Triune God’s relationality. Within each coupling, I argue that where Ricoeur interprets Augustine’s time more aporetically and dialectically, Marion’s reading is more systematic and immanentized, and that on this issue Chrétien places relatively more stress on created embodiment, Desmond on the metaphysics of creation. I treat these four thinkers specifically as those continental philosophers whose religious thought and sustained engagement with Augustine on the issue of temporality have resulted in compelling “Augustinian” philosophies of time, philosophies which yet exhibit manifold divergences and even contradictions. I therefore intend that the present study will map out the broad range of contemporary philosophical and theological approaches, from the thoroughly aporetic to the robustly metaphysical, inspired by Augustine’s thought on the relatively narrow theme of temporality.

This project is ultimately intended to support a development of a philosophical theology of time which might do justice to the broad

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4 Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xxix.39.

5 Augustine, *Confessions* XI.i.1.

and diverse resonances of the Augustinian texts and thereby provide an especially capacious site of conciliation in the broader landscape of contestation over the relation between God and nature, infinite and finite, and the role of metaphysical philosophy therein (though any explicit development of this aim is beyond this paper's scope). Transitions between this paper's analyses of these four philosophers are intended to nuance the dichotomy presented above in the opposition between the equivocal (Ricoeur and Marion) and analogical (Chrétien and Desmond) interpretations of the relation between time and eternity. To give one example: it will be seen that both Marion and Chrétien privilege the vocal dynamic of "call and response" in their configuration of Augustinian temporality, suggesting an original though asymmetrical reciprocity in the constitution of time, whereas Ricoeur and Desmond in different ways elevate the singularity of time's sudden instants (ἐξαιφνης) and God's "eternal now" (*nunc stans*).<sup>6</sup> I close, then, by suggesting that the receptivity of Augustine's thought to a determinate plurality of interpretations might in turn help us read these four philosophers through Augustine, particularly in view of the often overlooked Christological framing of Augustine's reflections on time in *Confessions* XI. I will suggest that this framing for Augustine already illuminates the differences at play between the philosophers which are the focus of this paper, referring perhaps even moments of apparently fundamental dissonance to harmonious resolution.

#### BACKGROUND: AUGUSTINE & HEIDEGGER

First, a brief review: Augustine comes to the conclusion in *Confessions* XI that time is *distentio animi*, the distention of the soul.<sup>7</sup> Things past are no longer; things future are not yet; and the present cannot have temporal duration without becoming not-present (i.e., past or future). Time inheres, rather, in Augustine's own memory of the past and anticipation of the future, all of which is gathered in the present act of attention. *Distentio*, as the name of the interval of temporal difference which Augustine finds ensouled, is often simply translated "distention." Though admitting of a neutral translation such as "extension,"<sup>8</sup> it also

6 Cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 156d.

7 See *Confessions* XI.xxvi.36: *inde mihi visum est nihil esse aliud tempus quam distentionem; sed cuius rei, nescio, et mirum, si non ipsius animi.*

8 See, for example, the translation of Frank Sheed. Such rendering stresses the continuity between the *distentio* which Augustine often laments throughout Book XI and

82 carries a negative connotation of dispersion, or, as Marion will render it, “distraction.” The soul is “spilled out” upon a past that is no longer and a future that is not yet, grasping in time at that which passes ceaselessly. We are at a loss to say what time is because time is only by being bound up with what is not; and yet we ourselves somehow constitute time’s distention in our very address to God, the eternally present.<sup>9</sup>

As a limit case for our examination of the reception of *Confessions* in later continental philosophy, I will briefly propose an Augustinian genealogy for the temporality of being in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Heidegger’s distinction between ecstatico-horizontal temporality and the ordinary representation of time which presents time as a “leveled-off sequence of nows” renews several Augustinian insights: first, the conception of past and future in terms of the subject’s own temporalizing; second, the rejection of a naive, univocal conception of time as successive presence which fails to understand temporality’s constitutive involvement with non-being; and third, the recognition that the true nature of time must be grasped through a reorientation to futurity.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, *Being and Time*’s concluding citation of Augustine’s dictum in *Confessions* XI, “time seems to me to be nothing other than distention,” seems to concede this Augustinian lineage, in spite of Heidegger’s immediate disavowal. Heidegger adduces this text as a demonstration that while the tradition of reflection on temporality in Western philosophy had occasionally given time a distinctive relationship to soul and spirit, even these breakthroughs remained bound to “world-time” and its connection to the ordinary experience of time, and so were “still a far cry from a philosophical inquiry oriented explicitly and primarily towards the ‘subject.’”<sup>11</sup> But precisely this construal of Augustine’s location of temporal distention in the (individual) soul seems unsustainable in light of Augustine’s (presumably self-conscious) radicalization of Plotinus’ account of the relation of temporal extension to the life of soul in *Ennead* III.7. Where Plotinus locates temporal extension in the world-soul, he cannot say, as does Augustine, *ecce distentio est vita mea*.<sup>12</sup>

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the *extensio*, in which Augustine finds time’s hope, of XI.39.

9 See *Confessions* XI.xxix.39: *ecce distentio est vita mea*.

10 Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie, and Edward S. Robinson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 2008), 425, 427.

11 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 429.

12 “Behold, my life is but a distention.” See *Confessions* XI.xxix.39.

The truly decisive difference from Augustine here, which Heidegger also indicates at the conclusion of *Being and Time*, is the mode of the subject's futural anticipation: for Heidegger, *Dasein's* authentic temporality is an anticipatory resoluteness which consists in being-towards death (*Sein zum Töd*). The horizon of authentic orientation is absolutely negative: "In this state-of-mind *Dasein* finds itself face to face with the "nothing" of the possible impossibility of its existence."<sup>13</sup> *Dasein* anticipates a "nothing" which is unconditional insofar as in death *Dasein's* existence becomes "impossible." Because precisely the "nothing" of death properly sets temporal finitude into relief, this "nothing" radically excludes being conceptualized on the basis of its own mediation of a positive reality. Heidegger's appropriation of Augustine on time thus expressly forbids temporal negativity mediatory significance.

#### PAUL RICOEUR: APORIA & OPPOSITION

In the first volume of *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur announces an intention to reconcile Augustine's and Heidegger's "hierarchies" of temporality by "think[ing] eternity and death at the same time."<sup>14</sup> The essay which opens this classic volume, "The Aporias of the Experience of Time," consists in a close reading of *Confessions* XI. Ricoeur identifies the opposition of *intentio* and *distentio animi*<sup>15</sup> which arises from the analysis of time in *Confessions* XI as the "sharpest expression" of the "antithesis around which the reflection of *Time and Narrative* will revolve."<sup>16</sup> Ricoeur expounds this antithesis through Augustine's reflection on the recitation of a psalm from memory. In *intentio*, often translated "attention," the mind integrates and unifies temporal experience in a present expectation of verse remembered and a present memory of verse passed, all of which invites the present utterance. But if memory, attention, and anticipation give time unity by virtue of the unity of the psalm remembered, this unity is for Ricoeur ever-more "burst asunder" by *distentio*: in the contrast of the three tensions, the noncoincidence and indeed total otherness of the memory of the past to the anticipation of the future discloses an action "divided between the two faculties

13 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 266.

14 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 5.

15 That is, "intention" and "distention" of the soul.

16 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 5.



84 of memory and expectation” so that “the more the mind makes itself *intentio*, the more it suffers *distentio*.”<sup>17</sup>

This paradoxical formulation of the opposition between *intentio* and *distentio* drives Ricoeur’s reader to a fundamental aporia or perplexity. Because discordance for Ricoeur “emerges out of the *very concordance* of expectation, attention, and memory,” Ricoeur’s reading of time in Book XI is characterized by, as Ricoeur puts it, “ontological negativity.” In other words, time’s negativity arises not simply because time borders on non-being, but because temporality is characterized by likeness (*intentio*) which is *itself* overtaken by difference from within (*distentio*). Ricoeur’s *aporetic* narration of the skeptical paradoxes about time presented by Augustine in *Confessions* XI thus deepens our appreciation for the equivocities which arise for efforts to formalize the nature of temporality; the experiential difference is always in excess of formal correlation.

Ricoeur’s emphasis on temporal discordance leads to a conclusion which presents eternity as the dialectical opposite of time, that is, as the “self-same” which negates the proliferation of difference that we experience in time. Augustine’s contrast between time and eternity is therefore interpreted in terms of “the sorrow of the finite and the celebration of the absolute.”<sup>18</sup> For Ricoeur’s Augustine, then, there can be no anticipation of a “celebration” of the finite *as such*. One must further note here that this very opposition between “the finite” and “the absolute,” or the temporal and eternal, significantly restricts our capacity to invoke the eternal *temporally*: Ricoeur describes eternity as a “limiting idea” that strikes time with “nothingness,” thereby negating the possibility that the being of temporal difference could *itself* express the reality of the absolute.<sup>19</sup>

It is worth noting that Ricoeur begins the essay with an open statement of his methodological intent to isolate Augustine’s reflections on time from their setting within a reflection on the relation between time and eternity in Genesis 1, and so to “do violence to the text.”<sup>20</sup> While

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17 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 20–21.

18 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 28.

19 Though this “nothingness” is quite different from that found in Heidegger insofar as it issues from the dialectical counterpoint of eternity, some continuity with the Heideggerian notion may be noted: the finite is nothing just insofar as it does not mediate that which transcends finitude.

20 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 5.

Ricoeur fully delivers on a promise to return to the theme of eternity in the essay's conclusion, we can note that the methodological suspension seems to dictate the terms of this return.<sup>21</sup> We should indeed acknowledge that Augustine's text can suggest an antithesis between time, the "never still," and "the splendor of eternity which is always still,"<sup>22</sup> and that Ricoeur's treatment of the time-eternity opposition allows him to describe beautifully how the recovery of temporality from distended dissolution might unexpectedly come from the recollection of a "resemblance between eternity and time" which deepens the very temporality of narrative.<sup>23</sup> But Ricoeur tends to describe this resemblance in terms of time's capacity to "approximate"<sup>24</sup> eternity, its unfolding emulation of the steadiness and firmness preeminently realized in that eternity which stands over changeability as the source of presence from which time is always passing. Changeability *in itself* remains strictly eternity's antithesis. Only thus do the terms of Ricoeur's formulation of "resemblance" turn to the *Timaeus*: time is the moving image of eternity, but the movement and the image are related only in that they contradict each other.<sup>25</sup>

#### JEAN-LUC MARION: ATEMPORAL SATURATION

Jean-Luc Marion's *In the Self's Place: The Approach of St. Augustine* sets out a plan for reading Book XI which rules out in advance, among other outcomes, any dialectical opposition of eternity and time: "Book XI of *Confessions*," writes Marion, "is not about a definition of time or its supposed psychological reduction ... it aims rather to conceive how time is not closed to eternity any more than it is abolished in it—in short how it could be articulated together with it, without confusion or separation."<sup>26</sup> Augustine's written reflection on time is, according to Marion, first and irreducibly an act of confession addressed to God. Marion will invoke the apophatic dimension of this confession to explain Augustine's resolution of the apparent time-eternity opposition. Because "standing" or "being still" is only

21 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 5.

22 Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xi.13.

23 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 28, 30.

24 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 28.

25 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 28.

26 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 193.

86 possible for that which risks passing and so is already in time, God does not “stand” over and against time but is rather wholly other than time.<sup>27</sup> Thus we can understand the significance for Marion of Augustine’s treatment of the pesky interlocutor who asks, “what was God doing before creating the world?”—in God, there is no before and after.

Time, rather, is for Marion’s Augustine the condition of the “self,” a condition translated by Marion in the language of Derrida’s *differance*, applied to the perpetual deferral of self-identity that constitutes the human self, Marion’s *homo temporalis*.<sup>28</sup> According to Marion, I am belated, delayed behind myself, differing from myself in my self-temporalization, in three ways: first in the *differance* between the call which founds my voice and my constitutively belated response; second, in my memory of the immemorial, of that beginning which both exceeds and gives my memory; and third, in the delay of my full conversion to God, always deferred in the endless splitting of the present, which “fades away in inconsistent and inconstant instants to the point that no decision can any longer be carried out.”<sup>29</sup> Augustine’s aporiai of the self voice this self-difference, manifested, for example, in the memory of forgetfulness, and in the unwillingness of the will. Finally, from the difference of myself from myself stems the difference between the ego and God the *in-differant*—precisely because God does not suffer the abyss of internal difference from which time arises, God’s precedence over and above the ego “goes back beyond time.”<sup>30</sup>

Temporal difference is thus reduced (*reducere*, led back) by Marion to self-alienation (which is also the space of an impossible self-reintegration), and is therefore entirely alien to God: “Time,” says Marion, “my own and finite, imitates nothing, especially not eternity or infinity, but it opens the *creatum tempus* for a decision absolutely proper to me.”<sup>31</sup> Marion thus goes farther than Ricoeur in his own assertion of the absolute otherness of time to God’s eternity—whereas Ricoeur

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27 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 197.

28 “Temporal man” or “the temporal one.” The point is that temporality is supposed to be constitutive of human being or human selfhood. Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 199.

29 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 200.

30 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 198.

31 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 219.

spoke of time's "approximation" of eternity, Marion's rigorous limitation of temporality within the subjective horizon given by *differance* rules out entirely the "imitation" spoken of by Plato in the *Timaeus*. It is crucial to note, then, that Marion's discussion of temporality glimpses the Saturated Phenomenon *par excellence* not within time itself but at the horizon of the "impossible" decision for conversion and of the immemorial memory of God's creation, from which "two-fold event" temporalization originally *comes upon* the self.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the Saturated Phenomenon is glimpsed at time's source and so cannot be a temporal manifestation. Insofar as such an event "gives" time by virtue of its very impossibility for the self thereby thrown into time, the Saturated Phenomenon is saturated precisely by virtue of its atemporality. We can thus even say that the Saturated Phenomenon, that manifestation in which the constituting subject is visited with the excess of transcendence, is understood in this context as that which shows itself in time precisely as that which time, or at the very least distended time, must not condition.

Marion's treatment of *Confessions* XI concludes on the passage which I think opens an alternative destiny for temporal difference. In chapter 29, after a bitter lament for human temporality—"behold my life is but a distention"—Augustine enacts and comments upon a Pauline text, Philippians 3:13, which exhorts an *epektasis* or *extensio* of the soul, a "stretching forward" to things ahead.<sup>33</sup> Augustine op-

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32 The theory of the Saturated Phenomenon is Marion's primary way of making space within philosophy for religious phenomena as such. Saturated phenomena are those for which the intuition is in excess of a subject's intention, and which therefore exceed any limiting concept which might be given to the phenomenon by the constituting subject. See Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 222. Note especially the following: "Two events frame the temporality of the *distentio animi* like so many saturated phenomena *par excellence*: the most proximate being-given (myself in my relation to the other) and the being-given in totality (the world). These two events precede the temporality of the *distentio animi*" [emphasis added].

33 The full passage from *Confessions* will give a sense of the dramatic release of Augustine's invocation of the Pauline *extensio*: "But thy mercy is better than lives, and behold my life is but a scattering [*distentio*]. Thy right hand has held me up in my Lord, the Son of Man who is the Mediator in many things and in divers manners—that I may apprehend by Him in whom I am apprehended and may be set free from what I once was, following your Oneness: forgetting the things that are behind, and not poured out upon things to come and things transient, but stretching forth to those that are before [*non distentus, sed extensus*] (not by dispersal [*distentio*] but by concentration of energy

88 poses this *extensio* to the distraction which occurs in the the soul's *distentio*:

Forgetting the things that are behind and not poured out upon things to come and things transient, but stretching forth (*non distentus sed extentus*) to those that are before, not by dispersal but by concentration of energy (*non secundum distentionem sed secundum intentionem*) I press forward to the prize of the supernal calling.<sup>34</sup>

According to Marion, *extensio*, translated “extraction,” is the “conversion of the *distentio*,” an orientation in time which meliorates the dispersal of temporal life. But Marion has already defined time itself in terms of just this dispersal. How, then, can Marion speak of “another mode of temporality,” a temporality of eschatological decision, if time has been defined by reference to that very decision’s impossibility in and for time?<sup>35</sup> For Marion, extraction temporalizes, that is, gives the distance of time, precisely in the desire which drives towards the purgation of all “distracted” desire, a purgation of what we have known of temporal difference. This is the time of time’s emptying. Thus of the desire which forms *extensio*, Marion writes, “God inspires the desire in me. It is not first to fulfill it by satisfying it, but to fulfill it by *hollowing* it ... Instituted by extraction in desire for the advance itself, I am *uprooted* from distracted time.”<sup>36</sup> *Extensio*, strictly speaking, consists in the process of “hollowing” the distracted desire which constituted the time of *distentio*, and so in a deracination from time as we know it. The desiring soul is thus here “extended” or *temporalized* strictly in desire’s unfolding negation of temporal difference itself, a negation now sustained only by God’s difference and deferral. Here the vestiges of a rela-

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[*intentio*]), I press towards the prize of the supernal vocation, where I may hear the voice of Thy praise and contemplate Thy delight which neither comes nor passes away” (Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.xix.39). Cf., Phil 3:11-13 (NIV): “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

34 Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.xix.39.

35 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 229.

36 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 229.

tively systematic transcendental orientation in Marion's thought allows him to delimit distended time within the horizon set by the sources of the subject's givenness,<sup>37</sup> whereas the paradox and aporiai arising from within time itself constituted a limit for Ricoeur's dialectical reading of Augustine's reflections on finite temporality in its relation to subjectivity. It is perhaps then no accident that unlike Marion, Ricoeur does not discuss Augustine's *extensio* in XI.29.39.

#### JEAN-LOUIS CHRÉTIEN: TIME OF EMBODIED VOICE

This same Philippians 3:13, Paul's *extensio* or *epektasis*, is taken up by Jean-Louis Chrétien in *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For* during a meditation on Augustinian *memoria* in a manner which indicates a more positive relation between the time of *extensio* and *distentio*. Chrétien attends first not to the "pressing forward" (*epektasis*) but rather lingers with Paul's "forgetting" of "those things which are behind." According to Chrétien, such "forgetfulness itself is gift" which is not reducible to simple lack, as we might for example construe the forgetfulness of the old, but which rather "takes part in the movement toward that which renders all things new."<sup>38</sup> The forgetting which attends the Pauline *extensio* will therefore be not simply a negative pre-condition for the reversal of distention but rather an active and integral part of this renewal. Chrétien speaks here of "forgetting myself in what is mine and in what I have already made mine, in order to remember the Other and his promise," but has already in a more general context insisted that this "forgetting is not at all the negation or privation of memory, but rather its foundation and condition."<sup>39</sup>

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37 For a helpful study of the continuity between Marion's thought and Kant's transcendental subjectivity, see Jason Alvis' "Subject and Time: Jean-Luc Marion's Alteration of Kantian Subjectivity" (2014). I intend the above description to in no way prejudice my assessment of Marion's reading of Augustine. The *Confessions* as a whole, and Book XI in particular, are deeply concerned with the nature of human interiority and the manner in which the (temporalizing) activity of the soul conditions human experience. Marion's frequent return to the framework of confession is intended to explain a de-centering of the self towards that from which it is given, a turn to God "In the Self's Place". The above sketch is meant to articulate how uniquely for Marion's Augustine among the four interpretations here presented, time is essentially posterior to and absolutely other than the original difference from which the self is given.

38 Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002) 91.

39 Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, 45.

90 Thus the positive construal of forgetting within the Pauline *extensio* is set up by the integral role which forgetting plays within memory under ordinary conditions, the very memory which is according to Augustine constitutive of distended time. This role is then only accentuated in the *extensio*: Chrétien writes that here forgetting “inscribes in memory the very excess of the *memoria dei* over the *memoria sui*” and so remembers the unforgettable.<sup>40</sup>

That forgetting could take part in, rather than serve as the negative condition for, the renewal of movement and time in the *extensio*, intimates already an important difference between the readings of Ricoeur and Marion. Where for Ricoeur the active unity of *intentio* necessarily fractures into the distended incommensurability of memory, attention, and anticipation, according to Chrétien the very forgetfulness which founds and distends memory participates in a renewed futurity. While Marion frames “extraction” as purgation of the distraction which forgets, Chrétien makes distraction, which gives the distance of memory’s loss, also give the time of stretching forward and of hope in the unforgettable. Thus for Chrétien, the unforgettable, “by which God himself comes to our mind,” is intimate to and encountered within time. Divine visitation is present as a call and appeal *in its very coming*, such that its temporal dynamism is constitutive of, rather than either accidental or antithetical to, its expression of transcendence.<sup>41</sup>

The shift of emphasis from Marion and Chrétien on the Pauline *extensio* maps, I think, their slightly different configurations of “call and response” considered more broadly. I have mentioned that the theme is fundamental to Marion’s sketch of the *differance* in which the self temporalizes, and it is central to his reading of the *Confessions* as a whole. For Marion’s Augustine, the confession that sings God’s praise is possible only as a response to the call of a word which precedes and elicits it—praise is “carried out as a word resaid, which responds by resaying

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40 *Memoria dei* and *memoria sui* may be translated “memory of God” and “memory of oneself.” In *Confessions* XI, Augustine on one occasion identifies himself with his *memoria*. Much of the book narrates an attempt to locate God within this memory. Chrétien emphasizes the role of forgetfulness in re-centering the self, so that one apprehends that one does not grasp but rather is grasped by God. God, we might say, is not within memory but rather gives and exceeds the memory in an excess of which forgetfulness paradoxically becomes the measure.

41 Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, 89.

what it first heard,” that is, the word spoken in the “scripture of God.”<sup>42</sup> The response is intrinsically belated such that its very temporality is posterior to the call. To borrow from *The Visible and the Revealed*, the icon’s gaze constitutes the self through its call, but first by displacement rather than in the self’s responsiveness; precisely here the call has its unconditionality.<sup>43</sup> Whereas a fundamental and recurrent principle of Chrétien’s thought is that the call is strictly heard in and even by the voice of response, albeit in the very insufficiency of the voice to meet the summons by which it is given and through which the summons resonates. We are already the response in which the call, infinite excess of the response, is first heard.<sup>44</sup> Thus Chrétien can echo Nietzsche in *The Call and the Response*: “The most “empirical” aspect of the call is also its most “transcendental,” a voice which has always resounded in the world, right here, where we are.”<sup>45</sup>

Not unrelated, I think, is Chrétien’s somewhat novel insistence in *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole* on the importance of psalmody in *Confessions* XI. Chrétien remarks that where Augustine famously illustrates his “profound analysis of temporality” by the example of a psalm’s recitation, commentators have not been sufficiently attentive to the fact that Augustine turns here to song, a song which Augustine hears himself sing. The significance of the word’s being sung can be confirmed by a parallel example in *De trinitate* XV: for Chrétien’s Augustine, song and lyric forms not one example among others of temporal process and trial, but a site where time in its essence can show itself.<sup>46</sup> Where Husserl often takes the example of the time of a prolonged sound, of a melody remembered, Augustine refers to the sound which he himself sings: “It is in the voice that the soul distends. Time arises at the edge of song (*le temps surgit à fleur de chant*).”<sup>47</sup> We

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42 Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, 24

43 Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 47.

44 See, for example, Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*. (New York, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2004), 6: “We think that we will find a pristine and first call but encounter instead what is already an answer.”

45 Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, 82. My allusion is to the Preface to *The Gay Science*: “Those Greeks were superficial—from profundity!”

46 See Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XV.7.13.

47 Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole*, 1. éd. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), 151.



92 cannot sing but we hear our own voice, our sound returning to us in its very passing from us without audible trace into time.

Here Chrétien's phenomenological attention to embodiment and materiality in their most subtle and "superficial" dynamics forms the depth of his configuration of temporality in Augustine: it is by the very vibrations and resonances of the physical body that hearing is truly internal to voice, so that voice need not be thought to lose itself in its essential extension. Thus in Chrétien, self-difference mediates the melody of a voice which itself sounds out a hearing of the line it follows. The past and future of the *canticum viatoris*, the wayfarer's song, which Chrétien recalls here in *Saint Augustin* from Augustine's exposition on Psalm 66, tremble in the path's silent mists. The singer is the same wayfarer for whom Chrétien had glimpsed a companion in the meditation on Philippians 3:13 in *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, where the Divine Word appeared "unexpectedly like a fellow traveler" alongside the Pauline wayfarer's stretch forward, a fellow traveler who now keeps the time of our footsteps.<sup>48</sup> As Augustine has it in *Confessions* X, "where have you not walked with me, O Truth?"<sup>49</sup> Thus we might say that for Chrétien, the time itself of the journey of our "hearing voice" discloses the beckoning call of the one who descends to accompany us.

#### WILLIAM DESMOND: THE COMMUNITY OF THE INSTANT

The concluding section of William Desmond's essay, "Wording Time: On Augustine's *Confessions* XI," concerns psalmody as the *sonans* and *personans* of agape: agape sounding, resounding, and personal. In the variations of *sonans*, then, Desmond discloses time's unity and its agapaic sources. I cannot do justice to the full essay here, so I will focus on this small concluding portion of Desmond's vast set of "variations and improvisations" on Augustine's theme. "As psalm is a sung prayer," so for Desmond, "we should say that wording a psalm is singing a psalm." Desmond writes,

We [read a Psalm] in successive time; this is how we speak the word; this is how we word. It is worthy of note how our singing, while successive and entirely transient, can come to communicate a sense of fullness achieved in the very passing of the song.

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48 Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, 112. See also Chrétien, *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole*, 151ff.

49 Augustine, *Confessions* X.xl.64.

Is there any analogy between such singing, whose fullness is in the energy of the sounding itself, and the simul-taneous [that is *totum simul*] as the Boethian name for the eternal?<sup>50</sup>

In the very passing of the song, I would stress, in the very succession of word and note, “the synchronic fullness can come to resound.” If, as Desmond says, “the resonant is family of the *per-sonans*, the sounding through,” we must ask just what synchronic fullness sounds through the successive unfolding of song.

From beginning to end, Desmond’s essay is in mind of the wording of creation, creation spoken by God in the divine Word, creation composed of sacred syllables in the flow of the divine wording of time, and so porous to the sounding of the eternal Word, a Word silent to all chattering ears. Thus Desmond writes that “time,” time *itself*, “is a wording of the divine: not just a self-wording, but a wording that releases the *being* of the thing worded.”<sup>51</sup> As with Marion, the setting of Augustine’s text is faithfully interpreted so that the discussion of time is never extracted from Book XI’s inception in Genesis 1:1, “in the beginning,” in the Word. But the divine wording which releases the being of the thing worded sounds a note particular to Desmond. The “being given to be” in which created words are sung into being, from nothing, is itself an *in-stant* in which the eternal *nunc stans* (eternal “standing now”) stands-in, and so gives distance, a double standing, both in the instant and in the nowhere of the transcendent. Of course this doubleness is no dualism: “We do not need to divorce time to receive the love of eternity.”<sup>52</sup> This doubleness is rather a “togetherness that neither obliterates nor sublates the gift of difference,” the tendency to which we have glimpsed in Marion (obliteration) and Ricoeur ([dialectical] sublation) in their treatments of *temporal* difference.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, the agapeic fullness of the sudden instant, while not in itself temporal, is yet a suddenness radically intimate to the wording of time, so that we ourselves as worded can in Desmond’s words “come to understand it’s saturated equivocality”—the too muchness of its constitu-

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50 William Desmond, “Wording Time. On Augustine’s *Confessions* XI: Transcriptions, Variations, Improvisations,” *Maynooth Philosophical Papers* 10 (2020), 89.

51 William Desmond, “Wording Time,” 95.

52 William Desmond, “Wording Time,” 91.

53 William Desmond, “Wording Time,” 88.

tive saturation with the gift of being—as “metaxological plurivocity.”<sup>54</sup> I’ll make an attempt to paraphrase: the poetic act of speaking of and to an already-worded creation can unfold a communion of instantaneity, otherwise equivocal. Such communion is created time. Thus if Chrétien finds time at song’s edge (*fleur de chant*), in the temporal interval between the vibrating larynx and ear, Desmond’s more vertical entry hears the synchronous *in* the diachronous, in the irreducible resonance of that which exceeds both. Desmond’s metaxological metaphysics of creation keeps us mindful of the necessary resonance of the transcendent through the temporally immanent, whereas Chrétien’s phenomenology of embodiment must first return let the reader linger with the profound resonances of the flesh. If for Desmond the “overdeterminate” is “not just equivocal, not just dialectical, but even beyond a dialectical coincidence of opposites,” then the finitude itself of time, the very falling of the phrase, communicates the word of the infinite.<sup>55</sup> The time of *distentio* is thus for Desmond’s Augustine “the space of erring,” yes, but also “the space or *metaxu* of conversion, the space of forgiveness,” internally and from eternity companioned by redeemed time.<sup>56</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

When in his concluding reflection on psalmody Desmond returns to the “saturated equivocality” of the overfull, he names a particular companion: in poetic song, “through the enigma of the equivocal we see the face of the *divine* metaxology: a metaxology of Christ, the Word made flesh.”<sup>57</sup> The reference to “saturation” in this passage invites for me the reflection that where Chrétien and Desmond allude to the time of the incarnate Word, Marion, as well as Ricouer, delimit the discussion to creaturely time and the Word beyond time. I conclude, then, by noting that although the figure of Christ is not prominent in *Confessions* XI as a whole, He does appear at a crucial moment. The *extensio* of chapter 29, which both Marion and Chrétien describe as a conversion or redemption of time, in fact has a Christological set-

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54 William Desmond, “Wording Time,” 92. The notion of the *metaxu* or the “between” is central to Desmond’s understanding of philosophy as *metaxology*. Being is between subject and object, self and other, immanence and transcendence, and Desmond’s thought strives for fidelity to this “betweenness” in both content and form.

55 William Desmond, “Wording Time,” 71.

56 William Desmond, “Wording Time,” 94.

57 William Desmond, “Wording Time,” 92.

ting, beginning “but thy mercy is better than lives, for behold my life is but a *distentio*, and your right hand has held me up in my Lord, the Son of Man, who is the Mediator between you the One and we the many, in many things and many ways (*inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa*).”<sup>58</sup> Throughout this paper I’ve suggested that Chrétien and Desmond’s configuration of Augustine on time can conceive of temporal difference itself as medium of the unconditional, as in fact a privileged site for the disclosure of divine excess and so as analogous to the being of the eternal; whereas the analysis of, for example, Marion makes temporality as such posterior to, indeed received from, the very saturated phenomena to which it is radically inadequate, and so *equivocally* related to the eternal. If this is so, Chrétien and Desmond would have ground to speak freely with Augustine of the Word’s entry into time as we know it, into the very time of my self.

Still, the flight of Augustine’s *extensio* is, in Book XI, quickly earth-bound, and chapter 29 is punctuated by an acknowledgement of time’s futility: “But now my years are wasted in sighs.” A careful reader of Book XI must then sense that Marion’s and Ricoeur’s emphasis on the ontological negativity of time, its fundamental unlikeness to that which abides, profoundly plums Augustine’s own sense of time’s vanity, its perpetual dissolution into non-being. I can only now propose that herein lies the crucial import of the Christological framing of Augustine’s *extensio*. For if there is no temporal forsakenness unknown to the Son of Man—no unlikeness to which he would not descend for us—He also remains *multum* in his very mediation between we the many and the *Unum*. In the temporality of Christ the most radical equivocality between time and eternity prepares the glory of the coming of the One in whom our shifting souls have rest, who makes all things new.

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58 Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xxix.39. Translation my own.

# BONSAI

Down into the earth the Bonsai reaches.  
In connection with the depths, intertwined but distinguished.  
It grows vast highways under the land.  
Every intersection a choice, every bypass a memory.  
Standing steadfast as the wind tears upon it, jealous of its reverence—its fullness.  
The everlasting precipitate hates that which has solid form. And yet, they both are  
named; siblings in their subsistence, whether ever changing or concrete.  
As time trudges forward the elder plants itself more; defiant to natural judgment.

With Spring comes life,  
Yet the Bonsai is living.

With Summer comes growth,  
Yet the Bonsai is growing,

With Fall comes color,  
Yet the Bonsai is vibrant.

With Winter comes silence,  
Yet the Bonsai is still.

Upon the crest of change, it holds.  
Unwilling to be broken by the waves of time and space

Yet

When the end comes, when the roots languish their roost  
When the bark curses its mother and the branches bow low to their Creator

The Bonsai does not fade.

It exists in the minds of those who have witnessed its greatness, its pursuit of  
subsistence throughout all events remembered again and again.

Trees before have come and gone.  
Adorned with snakes and apples.

The Bonsai has no wise fruit telling of good and naught.  
No tricks lay in its purpose.

Trees have hung thieves before,  
A King, once also.

Gallows, crosses, and war machines, made from those of old.

But, the Bonsai is not for evil, for cursing, or for ill.

The Bonsai's fruit is time, always standing still.

While other trees change and warp, the Bonsai is stoic.

But now, it is remembered in the form of icons, in representations, in stories and  
tales, in folklore and history. The tree may be gone, but the Bonsai

Remains

—BRETT SURBEY AND NICHOLAS WRIGHT, ALBERTA, CANADA

# *REFLECTIONS*

## THE CULLING OF POSSIBILITY

**A**s a child, I obsessed over what I wanted to do when I grew up, each season of my youth colored with varying visions for my future. As a young child, I was excited about a future in professional athletics. That desire was tested over the years as new ambitions grew in my heart to become a firefighter, pilot, or missionary. Then, in my early teenage years, I left those ideas behind and entertained new dreams of becoming a writer, carpenter, or teacher. By the time I graduated high school, the fog of vocational confusion had lifted, and I had it in my heart to pursue a career in mediation and conflict resolution.

Ten years into my working life, I have never worked in mediation or conflict resolution. I have, however, done some of the things I dreamed about as a child. For seven years, I served as an overseas missionary, teaching and working in community development, and I was also blessed to both fly a plane—supervised of course—and help extinguish a wildfire. I have also attended an advanced trade school and learned the storied craft of traditional boat building, which set me up for my current career in fine woodworking.

While I now work full time outside the mission field, new dreams have formed in my heart. For instance, as much as I love working with my hands, I would love to become a prosthetist to craft limbs for people with severe injuries or birth defects. I would also enjoy helping my wife pioneer a midwifery education program to make a difference in under-resourced communities. At the same time, I am fascinated with other professional ideas of building instruments, teaching the Bible full time, starting a donut shop, or working in the National Parks System, let alone my personal desires to become a father and, eventually, a grandfather.

My dreams and ideations, both professional and personal, could fill many lifetimes. It feels as if 300 years would not be enough time to explore and accomplish all the things in my heart. In this, I am not unique. Most people, if they really think about it, have at least five different lifetimes of curiosities and vocational desires. The teacher could have become an accountant, the engineer a poet, the chef an interior designer, or the travel agent a surgeon. I have tested this idea against my friends and family and have found that they all could see their lives playing out in a variety of fulfilling careers had they chosen to pursue a different interest somewhere up the line.

This idea of multiple lifetimes of interests is not new. Bill Burnett and Dave Evans researched interests and decision-making, concluding that it is not only the creative who possess a wide array of vocational or life interests. Burnett and Evans then leveraged their findings to pioneer the Design Your Life Lab at Stanford with a core principle that every person, regardless of creative aptitude, can see their life unfolding in a variety of ways as they follow different interests.

What does this seemingly universal notion say about humanity? As a Christian, I think this indicates that we were made to live longer than we do, and that this life is not all there is. Perhaps because the desire to do more with our lifetimes is ubiquitous, it means that something about human experience is not the way it should be. God must have put a more eternal vision for life in the human heart than the death we all experience. Something about the brevity of life betrays the reality for which we were made but do not currently inhabit.

The verity of my own mortality is evident in that, while I am only 28, the sun of opportunity has already set on many of my vocational dreams. At this point it is highly unlikely that I will become a professional athlete—along with many of my adolescent aspirations, this is easy enough to relinquish as a fantasy forsaken—but there are other interests now closer to my heart which I fear I will not be able to explore. For instance, I might not be able to train and work as a prosthetist. My young family cannot afford for me to enroll in five more years of full-time school or to incur the accompanying debt. Thus, it is difficult to discern whether this possibility, too, is behind me. Should I decide that it is not, the debt could place a barrier to reentering missions (debt, unfortunately, is a hindrance in that field); so, an opportunity retained is quite possibly another deferred. But I suppose that's the crux: the passing of time is the culling of possibility.

On the one hand, it is telling of the unfulfilling reality of my finite lifetime that as I ideate new aspirations, others I once thought tenable pass me by, not to be recovered in this life. On the other hand, as a Christian, I contextualize these interests and desires with the hope of resurrection. With my understanding of the theological progression of history, I believe that I will one day rise from the death of this life to live, rule, and reign with Christ in His new and restored creation. I believe the desires that God has given me will carry over into this new world, with a component of eternity being the unending opportunity



100 to explore all that God has made. In this, we can actualize the dreams He has put in our hearts, unfettered by the finitude of life. It is this hope that comforts me through the brevity of my own life and in the face of all things left uninitiated and unfinished.

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## AN ANSWER IN THE ETERNAL

**I**n 2015, war, famine, and persecution created the Syrian refugee crisis; by 2020, more than 1.2 million refugees had made their way to the shores of the Greek islands to seek asylum. That summer, I, too, found myself among those arriving in Greece. I, however, was privileged to arrive in an airplane with a full stomach and a well-rested body. I came firmly believing that if God “watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow,”<sup>1</sup> then I should as well. The urgency to bring the good news to people in the midst of sudden pain and suffering was palpable, but I didn’t know that I was walking into a living hell. It was in this period that the concept of evil and suffering grew both more troubling and more sharpening to my faith, forcing me to grapple with two questions: How do you navigate the truth and love of God when you are staring evil in the face? And how does the unchanging love of God engage a world in which fortune turns to misery in a mere moment?

On my tenth day of serving in the refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, I was given a job by my 18-year-old leader. I hadn’t expected European Christians to be at the heart of the refugee crisis, especially ones younger than I, but they easily outnumbered the Americans. I struggled to process what my eyes saw each day. Multiple families, many of whom were from different nations, were stuffed into small tent “homes” in the sweltering heat, with blankets and tarps dividing the groupings into sections. As I stood on a hill overlooking this sea of tiny tents, I begged God to help us and to reveal Himself in the midst of such injustice.

Just as I thought, “Is this really the best we can do,” a young girl beckoned to me, interlacing her tiny fingers with mine as she led me to tent 800. Upon arriving, I was immediately given a cup of chai and ordered to sit. I quickly learned to not resist such beautiful hospitality and to take a hot drink even if it’s 88 degrees outside and you are sweating through your clothes—it’s a gesture of respect and love. I was given the best seat, which was next to a small fan, and the best meal. This particular family of six fled their country in the middle of the night with nothing but the clothes on their bodies after receiving threats from the Taliban, and while crossing the sea between Turkey and Greece, one of the children was separated from the group. Yet despite the pain they felt, they exhibited grace, hospitality, and love—and they were far from the only family to do so.

1 Ps. 146:9, NIV.

On my way back to our work base, I was greeted by other families I had befriended, people with stories, dreams, and desires for stable homes who instead suffered tragedy and transience, mothers who miscarried due to their excruciating environment, children who would commonly cry themselves to sleep. Many of the refugees had been tortured by the Taliban, traumatized by their own religion, and angered by the lack of response from the world. I learned that shedding tears in silence was the common language. I recalled Jesus' weeping with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus—how, though he knew that he would bring Lazarus back to life, Jesus still mourned with his friends.

It was in the midst of this pain that I was struck by the fragility of time. Nothing was permanent about the refugees' situations. One day they rejoiced when learning that their neighborhood survived a bombing, and the next they mourned the death of a loved one. They watched new friends come, only to see old ones go. At the beginning of the refugee crisis, people gathered at the Greek shores to receive the refugees with blankets and food as they crossed the Aegean Sea; later, the refugees were greeted by nothing but cold winter air. The cruel winds of change blew them about, and such violent developments threatened to make life seem meaningless and hopeless. Even now, my new friends contend with struggles. Some of them have been rejected three times from the European countries that promised to take them in, and children who were born in the camp have now been there two years, knowing nothing but the tumult of the crisis. As a result, I am often asked, now as I was then, about what is true, what is good, and what is eternal and never-changing.

As I mourned with my Father, I was gently reminded by the Spirit that He is close to the brokenhearted, that there is hope for those who have yet to see, that injustice angers God even more than it angers me. I realized that I could offer my new friends a blanket or food, which would satisfy them temporarily, all while introducing them to a friend who forever satisfies our deepest longings. I could share about the One who, throughout my life, has helped me in the midst of my own pain and suffering. I could talk about a Savior who never tires of being gracious and that even though the things of this earth will perish, there is a Kingdom that never will.

As I sought my Father's face in the midst of change and trouble, I found that something in me changed. I recognized how little I am in

this world, how I have little to offer my neighbor when I rely on my own strength. In fact, I have no everlasting offer other than my Savior. At the same time, I also recognized the temptation of bitterness toward my friends back home. I was often met with questions and thoughts such as, “If this is good news and it’s a matter of life and death, why aren’t your friends with you,” and, “Don’t they know about us too?” I bowed my head in sadness as I replayed some responses in my mind: “We enable regimes by helping their people”; “Missions and evangelism aren’t really my things”; “We must help our people at home before we help anybody else.” Such responses never seemed appropriate to share with my refugee friends.

Candidly, I don’t have all the answers to the politics that accompany trying to love our neighbors. I don’t always know why things happen the way they do, and I don’t know how to answer the hard questions that arise in the face of change. But I do know of a hope in the everlasting. I do know the power of prayer and how it changes us. And I do know of Jesus who is gentle and lowly, who saw the masses and “had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”<sup>2</sup>

In the end, I grew in knowledge that changing situations force us to reach out to the One who Himself never changes. To whom else can we run but the One who is omnipotent, omniscient, and immutable? Refugee friends who were left disillusioned by their religion and disappointed with the world had nothing left but to reach out to the same God, the One who spoke to them in dreams, who comforted them in their despair, who saved them from the vicissitudes of this age. Truly, what the enemy meant for evil, God used for good. Thus, I know that it is through an eternal love and grace that a friend in the camp could report, “Coming to this camp is one of the best things that has happened to me. For here God found me, and I am His. That will never change.”

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2 Matt. 9:36, NIV.

## NO TIME BUT THE PRESENT

A friend of mine moved away recently. After his goodbye party, I couldn't help but picture him driving home that night and walking through his front door alone in silence, his ears still ringing from the people and music at the party. I imagined him saying goodbye to "home" and close friends before driving the next day across the country toward the unknown. There seems to be something so raw and grounded about such moments, ones in which you are free from the past and unburdened by immediate obligations. Perhaps those moments feel more real because we are more concerned with the present moment than with the past or future, because the decidedness of the past and the ambiguity of the future are eclipsed by the almost physical feeling of the present.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis addresses the dangers of focusing one's life on the past or future rather than the present. The book is a fictional compilation of letters written by an experienced demon, named Screwtape, to a demon in training. The letters provide guidance to an apprentice demon for effectively tempting a human away from a life of service to and worship of God ("the Enemy"). Screwtape writes,

The humans live in time but our Enemy destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the Present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which our Enemy has of reality as a whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered to them.<sup>1</sup>

Although a human's life is confined to time, the present is the point in time which most displays God's living in eternity. A focus on eternity implies a focus on God, since God resides in eternity and eternity cannot exist without him. At the same time, it also seems evident that eternity holds that which is of true value, harkening back to Jesus' teaching to "Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."<sup>2</sup>

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1 C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters: Letters from a Senior to a Junior Devil*, (Collins, 2012), 75.

2 Matt. 6:20, ESV.

Because of the analogous relationship of the present and the future, valuing eternal things naturally compels us to consider the present. And living in the present requires an eternal focus, while the past and future are, at most, weakly related to eternity. First, decisions, conversations, and thoughts that are primarily based on an anticipation of future events are unstable because the future might never actually occur—and according to Lewis, the future is “the thing least like eternity.”<sup>3</sup> Second, while the past has permanence in that it cannot be changed, we must not be distracted or controlled by the lingering of its effects. Although we can be haunted by our past, and the consequences of our actions might ripple, we should detach our identity from our past, letting go of shame and accepting the forgiveness that Jesus offers. For others, the past is a point of pride. When we leave our pride at the door, we make room for confession, growth, and thankfulness.

We understand that the demons would prefer us to be concerned with anything other than our eternal state, condition, or mode of being. Our eternal state—our communion with God, or lack thereof—is our identity. But what exactly does it look like to live in the present? Lewis describes it like this:

He [God] would therefore have them continually concerned either with eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the Present—either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from, Himself, or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure.<sup>4</sup>

Notice the pairing that Lewis continues to make with the present and eternity. A person who “bears the present cross” does so because he trusts that its eternal value outweighs its pain and the sacrifice it requires. One who receives grace and gives thanks looks upward to God who lives in eternity. Ultimately, the person who lives like this must believe that eternity does exist and that it cannot exist without God.

Meditating on one’s eternal union with or separation from God requires a belief that God exists. To bear one’s cross requires a faith that overcomes the pain of dying to self. Receiving grace requires an understanding of one’s unworthiness to be forgiven and the sacrificial love

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3 Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 76.

4 Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 75.

106 required by God to forgive. Finally, a heart of thankfulness can only stem from a person who recognizes that gifts are from above. And all of these things occur only in attending to the present, the only moment which is truly real, free from obsessions with a theoretical future or a bygone past.

As I sat down to write a note to my friend who moved, I felt the hypocrisy in my suggestion that my friend “live in the present.” Although I had been feeling disconnected for months, I finally realized not only my failure to live in the present but also my obsession with the future. I succumbed to my anxiety about my research project by putting my hope in an unrealized moment in the future, since the present seemed unsuccessful and frustrating. I placed my identity in past productivity and potential future happiness. My hope in the future, once disguised as positivity, caused me to believe that life would improve when I complete graduate school, that some unknown thing in the future would alleviate the pain I felt in the present. My adoption of a “just get through it” attitude had been training me to “skip” the present, and by analogy, the experience of God’s living in eternity! If Lewis is right that this leads to a substanceless life, it is no wonder I felt numb and disconnected.

In God’s mercy, the continual disappointment from hiding in a make-believe future brought me to the realization that this was not the way I was intended to live. I am now learning how invigorating “living in the present” really is. Serving others, especially when it is not in my plans, has become less of a chore and more of a joy. When something is difficult, I ask God how He wants me to grow instead of bulldozing my way through. The thought of life taking unexpected turns is not something I actively avoid or worry about, and when I live in the present, I am quicker to confess and repent of my sin. And I now fully understand what Leo Tolstoy meant when he said, “If people tell you that you should live your life preparing for the future, do not believe them. Real life is found only in the present.”<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, life has more substance because it is a journey God has planned for me rather than a destination for which I must eventually be good enough, a past for which I should be ashamed or prideful, or a future which I should fear.

The past, at one point, was the present—and its consequences do

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5 While a citation for this quote does not exist, the statement is popularly attributed to Leo Tolstoy.

affect our current lives. And while history can be useful, dwelling on the past can lead to both pride and shame. On the other hand, the future might happen, and we should make responsible decisions in the present in case it does. But, oftentimes, our concentration on it leads to an unhealthy fear or hope. While Lewis gives us a new awareness of the past's and future's pitfalls, we must not forget the call to remain focused on the tremendous value of the present. It is the window in time through which God shares eternity with us, the special moment when God's speaking to us occurs. So let's listen. It is also the only moment in which we can adore Him. So let's worship. The present truly is a gift. So let's live in it.

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*BOOK REVIEWS*

Groothuis, Douglas. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022. pp. 839. \$60.00 (hardback). ISBN: 978-1-5140-0276-6.

In this new edition of his grand Christian apologetic, Douglas Groothuis clearly still sees himself working in the tradition of thinkers like Lewis, Shaeffer, Chesterton, and Craig, all of whom appear throughout, both in the body and in the footnotes of the text. Groothuis's tome has three main parts. First, he offers "apologetic preliminaries." The second part is the meat of the book, where he defends "the case for Christian theism." This part includes coverage of (most of) the standard arguments for the existence of God, a defense of the soul, and a fascinating foray into Pascal's apologetic. The final part responds to some "objections to Christian theism."

Groothuis, a professor of philosophy for many years at Denver Seminary, seems right in his intuition that a significant portion of a contemporary apologetic (the first 144 pages of this volume) needs to be dedicated to ground-clearing and scene-setting. In a postmodern context, truth itself cannot be assumed. Thus, Groothuis spends eight chapters laying out his method, most crucially what truth is and why it matters. His conviction, as a Christian philosopher, that faith and reason can never really contradict shines through, as when he says, "the Bible ... speaks of the *knowledge of God* gained through various rational means" (91). In addition to updated material, the second edition comes equipped with seven new chapters which fill out his defense. "Original Monotheism" (ch. 9) now stands in the second part, as well as a chapter on God's hiddenness (ch. 20), two chapters on the atonement (chpts. 23–24), an additional chapter on the Resurrection (ch. 26), a defense of the Church (ch. 28), and a moving chapter at the conclusion of the third part entitled "Lament as Apologetic for Christianity" (ch. 32).

This first part is stimulating, especially as it progresses. That said, the early section on *Method* can at times feel *ad hoc*. For example, the criteria for discerning a defensible worldview are supposed to be "intuitively obvious" (50). Reading this part not as a definitive defense of apologetic methodology but rather merely as an articulation of the roadmap for his own approach, that can be forgiven. The first part concludes with one of Groothuis' strong suits, as he gives an elaborate and thorough treatment of Pascal, illustrating the existential weight of his

(in)famous Wager. For example, Groothuis recounts, “One of my own Christian students had such an aversion to this argument that he refused to attend my lecture on it” (147).

The second part of the book contains a detailed and illuminating survey of all the chief elements of a good Christian apologetic. He first gives an articulation of original monotheism and natural theology (chpts. 8–9). From there, he proceeds to the classic proofs for God’s existence (chpts. 10–17)—including a detailed analysis of Darwinism (ch. 14). His next stop is a defense of the soul (ch. 18) and a Pascalian anthropological argument (again a Groothuian strong suit) (ch. 19). Finally, he transitions to theology proper, where he touches on God’s hiddenness (ch. 20), defends Jesus’s historical veracity (ch. 21), claims (ch. 22), Atonement (chpts. 23–24), Incarnation (ch. 25), and Resurrection (chpts. 26–27), before concluding with a defense of the Church (ch. 28). He helpfully contextualizes the proofs for God: “While the effectiveness of each kind of theistic proof must be evaluated individually, the savvy apologist can combine several types of arguments to form a cumulative-case argument for theism that is stronger than the force of any argument taken by itself” (147). This is an especially important dialectical point when our scientific imagination fallaciously suggests that all fields of human inquiry should operate like a geometrical proof.

With careful dependence upon the clear-sighted argumentation found in names such as Craig, Swinburne, Plantinga, Lewis, and Anselm, Groothuis ably navigates through the ontological, cosmological, design (and beauty), fine-tuning, moral, and religious experience arguments for God. The arguments are presented at a well-struck pitch that avoids both scholarly obfuscation and popular triviality. In the early arguments, one does wonder why Thomas Aquinas and his classic Five Ways are passed over. Aquinas’s classic argumentation fits well with Groothuis’ project in a few different places: Aquinas had a response to Anselm’s ontological argument; his First Way would have contributed productively to Groothuis’s cosmological argument (especially by making it work atemporally); and, lastly, Groothuis’ own concern with the radical contingency of the world is corroborated by the Third Way. Given Aquinas’s stature and his relevance to the themes, including the thinker would only have helped achieve the author’s aims.

Groothuis’ treatment of human consciousness as the hallmark of the

soul comes next (ch. 18). He helpfully outlines several different positions in the scholarly literature and debate on the “philosophy of mind.” He argues quite forcefully and compellingly against a naturalism that would leave unexplained some of the most fundamental aspects of human life—from consciousness to love. He concludes that Christianity is committed to a substance-dualist picture of humans: we are both body and soul, and each is a substance. While this position is certainly a consistent and plausible biblical position, some Christian thinkers like Bonaventure and Aquinas have held other views; namely, Aristotelian hylo-morphism. That said, substance-dualism stands in as a clear and compelling alternative to reductionist naturalism.

Craig Blomberg’s “guest appearance” in chapter 21 offers a satisfying overview of the historical knowledge we have of Christ. After the two chapters contending with Christ’s claims and the logical coherence of God becoming Incarnate, Groothuis moves on to spend two chapters discussing the Atonement. While the first is largely expository, the second provides some fuel against detractors like Kant and Hitchens. He rounds out the middle part of his work with two delightful chapters on Christ’s Resurrection. At times he rings a triumphalist note as he defends the evidence of worship at the empty tomb and Jesus’s appearances to the Apostles: “Of all the world’s religions Christianity alone purports to be based on the resurrection of its divine founder” (567).

The final part of the book is fairly brief as the author offers thoughtful treatments of religious pluralism (ch. 29), Islam—including Americans’ apathy to its challenge—(ch. 30), the problem of evil (ch. 31), and his new chapter on suffering (ch. 32). In these twilight moments of the book his lucid prose becomes at times personal and touching, especially as he describes his own experience with suffering. Thus, when Groothuis says, “Some souls suffer better than others” (699), and that, “Christianity [is] the only religion or worldview that gives meaning and purpose to suffering such that the human lament does not end in frustration or final defeat” (702), he does so with palpable credibility.

Though it may be unfair to expect that an apologetic work would contend with developments in Christian strategies of evangelization more broadly, one does wonder what Groothuis would make of Joseph Ratzinger’s comment several decades ago that reason in modernity has become a “blunt” instrument. Famously, he advocates the witness of saints and the beauty of art as more effective tools of evangelization.

Groothuis of course avoids hyper-rationalism and acknowledges that “one’s favorable standing with God ... comes by grace alone and is received by faith” (37). But how far *can* reason take us? It would be interesting to hear more of Groothuis’ proposed apologetic “strategies” extending beyond the formal structure of the arguments he presents.

It is important to note that Groothuis writes from a largely Reformed perspective, which most clearly comes out when it becomes necessary for him to make precise theological points. Perhaps more attention could have been given to those beliefs that separate his specific type of “biblical faith” (18–41) from other Christian denominations; but then again, he is engaged in a uniting and positive endeavor. Being aware of his perspective, though, helps the reader to contextualize his discussions of Reformed epistemology, the sacraments, and free will.

I conclude with three virtues of this accomplished book that no doubt will build upon the success of the first edition. As a thorough introductory or even intermediate exposition of the Christian faith, *Christian Apologetics* will no doubt be helpful to not only the zealous individual seeking answers, but also continue to serve as one of the best textbooks of its kind at Christian colleges and seminaries. Groothuis is a master at foreseeing and replying to objections to a given apologetic stance. Setting aside his chapters that are justifiably expository, one does not feel that a monologue has prevented the opponent from speaking. Second, he successfully motivates his positions at the beginning of each chapter, often with timely and engaging examples. Lastly, he often deals with the rhetorical as well as the technical side of the argument, providing some guidance on the way a skilled apologist will use the tools he has provided. And his laudable hope and prayer—to quote the conclusion’s title—is that we the readers, now apologetically informed, will “Take It to the Streets.”

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Slade, Kara. *The Fullness of Time: Jesus Christ, Science, and Modernity*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021. pp.ix-xii, 156. \$21.00 (paperback). ISBN: 978-1-5326-8937-6.

The Corpus Clock, a five-foot-wide public clock unveiled by Stephen Hawking on the Feast of the Holy Cross in 2008, sits outside Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. The 24-carat gold-plated steel disc keeps time with flashing LED lights that flicker erratically across three concentric rings, indicating the passing of seconds, minutes, and hours. Atop the disc, a metal monster that looks like a demonic grasshopper “walks” across the gears. This Chronophage—“time eater”—appears to devour each second as it flashes by. “Basically, I view time as not on your side,” the clock’s inventor John Taylor explained. He meant for the Chronophage, chomping away time outside the college named after the Body of Christ, to be “terrifying.”

Kara Slade could hardly open her case against scientific modernity with a more striking image—or a more fitting metaphor. She describes the eerie Cambridge street corner as the place “where two narratives of time collide”: the “secular liturgies” of the science-worshipping twenty-first century, which confess that time is a “threat” and death final (2), and a Christian faith that maintains God created the world and “embraced, redeemed, and liberated human existence in time” through Christ’s incarnation (3). This clash is the central tension that *The Fullness of Time* sets out to explore. A former NASA engineer now serving as associate rector of Trinity Church, Princeton, and canon theologian in the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey, Slade is certainly up to the task.

The book probes, in Slade’s words, “how scientific modernity shapes our assumptions about time” and what “pressing dogmatic and moral implications” those assumptions create for “the proclamation and witness of the church in the late capitalist West” (3). Slade’s central argument is that over the last few centuries, over-rationalized, over-lionized scientific authority has abetted racial and colonial oppression while substantiating certain views that oppose a Christ-centered idea of how humans should understand the past, live in the present, and imagine the future. Slade finds a counterattack against Chronophage in the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard and the systematic theology of Karl Barth, whom she reads from a perspective situated squarely within the Anglican tradition. These thinkers, for Slade, can help us recon-

114 conceptualize time not as raw material “to be seized, instrumentalized, or evaluated from a distance,” but as a gift that comes in the Word made flesh to reveal human sin “even as it overwhelms that sin in freedom and grace” (121). In Slade’s view, this new awareness would transform modern time from a stage of “agonism and violence” into one of “love and redemption” (5).

Slade organizes her argument into four broad-ranging chapters, each of which sets Kierkegaard and Barth against a different set of antagonists representing a different way that scientific authority abuses time.

The first chapter (“Beginnings”) argues against “Big History” partisans like David Christian, who attempt to turn *homo sapiens* into *homo scientificus* by insisting that we ground human identity in neo-Darwinian, millenia-long history. The second chapter (“Endings”) critiques various partisans of progress, ranging from techno-futurists Nick Land and Curtis Yarvin, to conservatives William Strauss, Neil Howe, and Steve Bannon, to theologians Charles Kingsley, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin—all of whom, in Slade’s view, to one degree or another take the kingdom of God into their own hands. The third chapter (“Between”) alleges that social critics like Charles Murray and Peter Kiernan use a strategy of “temporal distancing and denial of coevalness” to marginalize certain racial and political groups on account of their “backwards” views (97). The final chapter (“Beyond”) critiques biologists E. O. Wilson, Ernst Haeckel, and others who allege that scientific authority can step outside of time, into a kind of neutral Darwinian perspective “transparent to reason,” from which they can “manage” populations as undifferentiated groups rather than as individuals (102). One occasionally feels as if Slade has reserved space for politically progressive critiques that could have been better spent discussing what hard natural sciences reveal about time that might work against the scientistic attitudes she targets. Nevertheless, the range of arguments Slade engages is impressive, even if *longue durée* historian Noah Yuval Harai and prominent integralist critics of liberal progress are strangely omitted from the discussion.

Against these views, Slade marshals a suite of arguments from Kierkegaard and Barth’s major works, most notably *Philosophical Fragments*, *Either/Or*, and *Church Dogmatics*. She relies heavily on a few key ideas: time is a gift from God rather than simply raw material; time becomes meaningful not through scientific assessment, but through

the lived experiences in which each person finds herself faced with the “momentous decision” (29) to either believe or reject the crucified and risen Christ, who “encounters us and demands a response” (37); this Christ, per Barth, “is the same yesterday, today, and forever” and therefore demands that we reorder secular constructs of time around Him, not the other way around (34). The general thrust of Kierkegaard and Barths’ arguments, as mediated through Slade, is to reorient scientific time around the experiences, dignity, and ultimate redemption of the individual, who must decide in the time she is given either to reject Christ or submit her own drive for knowledge and power under Christ’s will.

Slade’s attacks against the limitations of scientific time are largely convincing. Her appeal to Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* to reject “temporal distancing” and embrace our neighbors, for example, is moving (91), as is her argument from Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* that a concept of a totality cannot “elide the individual to which God is in loving relationship” (124). Even so, Slade could have perhaps engaged her sources more critically. Does the Gospel of John, for one example, support Kierkegaard’s “emphatic rejection of preferential love,” that is, the act of showing greater love for particular persons than for humankind in general (91)? Jesus’s preferential treatment of the disciple who leans against his breast at the Last Supper might suggest otherwise, as John Henry Newman, a contemporary of Kierkegaard, argued in one of his parochial sermons. And what does Barth make of preferential love? Rarely do we hear critical interplay between Slade’s protagonists, which might have illuminated the more contestable nuances of the claims she often takes at face-value but nonetheless play an important part in her argument.

Perhaps more worrying, however, are the rare occasions in which Slade’s treatment of Kierkegaard and Barth hints at a false dichotomy between the claims of science and those of revealed religion, the very dichotomy that both her biography and her book, taken as a whole, successfully undermine. Slade’s strong emphasis on Kierkegaardian individual experience is helpful only insofar as it does not erode, or at worst exclude, the recognition of the unity of truth revealed by nature and that revealed by Christ. Some of Slade’s claims—for example, when she says in the conclusion that “Scientific knowledge is real, but God is more real than that” (127)—might be rhetorically effective in context, but they also risk overemphasizing an individualistic Protestantism at



116 the cost of the ecumenical Christian tradition that attempts to marry revelation with secular findings in natural law, philosophy, and natural science. The choice between personal conversion experiences and Christian versions of “Big History,” in other words, should not be an either/or. Slade does not argue that it is, but *The Fullness of Time* could benefit from a more extended discussion of what a potential synthesis of these extremes would look like.

As it stands, Slade’s work is an illuminating, if not definitive, step forward in thinking through a Christian response to important concerns about *longue durée* history, progress, and scientism that too often exclude Christianity from the conversation altogether. *The Fullness of Time* will be most useful to normative theologians and philosophers working on these topics, but the questions Slade raises and the answers she presents will be thought-provoking for scholars in any field. Perhaps most of all, the book is a welcome encouragement to academically-minded Christian laypeople who want to engage in these debates while recognizing that the redemption of modern time, in a fittingly Kierkegaardian mode, is meant to be not only discussed, but also “taught, and preached, and lived” (129).

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Williams, Jarvis W. *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity: A Biblical Theology of the People of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. pp. xiii, 189. \$24.99 (softcover). ISBN: 978-1-5409-6462-5.

At its simplest, the task of the biblical theologian is to make manifest the underlying themes present throughout the biblical texts in a fashion applicable to a contemporary audience. The theologian must hold in one hand the themes of an ancient and foreign text, and in the other the issues and contexts of his or her present setting. Such is the work of Jarvis W. Williams in *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity*. Although works expounding upon the biblical theme of a divinely appointed people have been composed by a myriad of scholars, Williams stands apart in his pursuit to apply this theological concept to contemporary societal struggles in the United States. Notably, he lays the foundation for this task by differentiating between nuanced connotations of ethnicity and race. The former is delineated by a set of culturally specific characteristics, such as dialect, religion, values, and behaviors; the latter is a tenuously constructed social concept. With these definitions established, the author turns to the biblical texts, arguing that the divine plan is to restore an ethnically diverse humanity in its relationships with God, among individuals, and with creation through the impetus of Christ.

In his survey of the Old Testament, Williams divides the Hebrew corpus into its familiar sections of Pentateuch, history, wisdom literature, and prophets. In each, the author treats the people of God as it appears in each book before providing a concluding synopsis of the section. Although the book contains brief, intermittent theological synthesis, the themes and insights offered on the motif in each book are usually simply observed and left without further reflection. In the place of analysis is a series of non-sequential notes concerning each book of the Old Testament. Nonetheless, Williams does make broad theological claims regarding the people of God in the Hebrew corpus. One such claim is that Israel was chosen by God to bless the nations because of Adam's and Eve's sin. This community descended from Abraham is to be an ethnically diverse community of unique identity; one that is distinct from its neighbors yet welcoming of foreigners. Williams insists that this community and the texts that surround it anticipate Christ, but are not replaced by Christ.

The methodology and structure presented in the book's survey of the Old Testament persist in its survey of the New Testament. As in the former, this section suffers from the organization and procedure of its survey: space is again dedicated mostly to mere observation rather than robust theological analysis. Concerning its theological synthesis, Williams notes that a chosen people from every ethnicity (Jew and Gentile) are made distinct and holy by the Holy Spirit; they are the new people of God. Although he insists in his survey of the Old Testament that Christ and the church do not replace the people of Israel, the conclusions Williams draws in the present section suggest just that. The employment of phrases like "a new people of God" (149) seemingly clashes with earlier arguments. Though these positions are not completely incompatible, there is a great need for clarification and theological nuance regarding the people of God throughout the biblical corpus.

In the final section of the book, Williams considers possible praxes resulting from his survey and analysis. He applies the biblical concept of an ethnically diverse people of God to contemporary social-political issues in the United States. Utilizing his differentiation between ethnicity and race, Williams analyzes present social struggles surrounding racialization. Specifically, he observes the historical power difference among races in the US and the impact of white supremacy. Moreover, he highlights the pervasive power of racism and the sinful capacity of every human to adopt racist behavior and practices. These, he declares, stand in sinful opposition to the divine plan for an ethnically diverse people of God. Williams' reflection in this section is profound and theologically relevant, providing the social and religious language needed by many in the ongoing struggle of racialization. Its only fault is the limited space allocated to explicating and examining these praxes.

The argument of the book and its application in the final chapter accomplish the task undertaken by the author, joining the biblical texts with contemporary issues through insightful and critical observation. Yet, while the argumentative thrust of the text is largely successful, the methodology and structure with which the author composes his book is not. Organized as a survey, Williams systematically moves through each book of the Protestant Christian canon, noting where the "people of God" are mentioned and proposing general observations regarding each instance. Rather than argue for a unified

biblical theme, Williams simply surveys the many occasions of the motif. Though still satisfactory, at times it can border on proof-texting. The thesis could be better supported by attention to particular pericopes of theological significance, expounding upon specific facets of its thesis in relevant passages. Thus, while Williams' argument and application are praise-worthy, his methodology and structure would benefit from revision.

In sum, Jarvis J. Williams' *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity* presents a well-constructed argument and offers insightful praxes relevant to contemporary social issues. Though its methodology and structure would benefit from reworking and added analysis, the book's fundamental claim rings clear: the divine plan is one of an ethnically diverse people of God. *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity* will be a useful resource for laypersons and scholars alike as the Church continues to navigate the ongoing struggle of racialization in the US.

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120 Mouw, Richard. *How to Be a Patriotic Christian: Love of Country as Love of Neighbor*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022. pp. 160. \$17 (paperback). ISBN: 978-1-5140-0402-9.

American theologian Richard Mouw has written on a variety of topics over the course of his illustrious career. His latest work, *How to Be a Patriotic Christian: Love of Country as Love of Neighbor*, offers insight on the current political climate in the United States and how best to wade through the tension-filled atmosphere surrounding patriotic expression. As he notes, his efforts in this work address basic questions to help the reader assess “what it means to love one’s country in a manner that is appropriate for followers of Jesus” (9). Though modest in his approach, Mouw pushes past a latitudinarian indifferentism without coming off as dogmatic.

In the title, “Christian” is the noun; “patriotic” is the adjective. Mouw intentionally draws this distinction to make clear what undergirds his subsequent analysis. Christians are first and foremost disciples of Jesus Christ who owe their ultimate allegiance to His Kingdom (which is not of this world). Mouw aptly acknowledges that there are many across the globe who are “in Christ,” so there is a diversity of nationalities represented amongst the body of believers (4). How, then, should the Christian faith recast political involvement and patriotic expression for themselves in the country where they reside? This is the question Mouw seeks to address.

At the outset, Mouw identifies the impetus for his writing. There is, he contends, a problem in Christian circles when it comes to engaging the American political arena. He locates it clearly when he says,

The problem these days, of course, is that the public debates about patriotism are often dominated by the extremes. This has been especially true in recent years when polarization seems to have become the rule of the day. The result is that many folks—especially many thoughtful Christians that I know—avoid talking about these things (2).

Mouw ventures to try the very thing he finds Christians reluctant to do: talk about politics. His assessment is succinct. Rather than propounding upon political theory at length, Mouw’s thoughts in this brief book lend themselves to the casual and curious reader. He acknowledges

there may be people who read the book and do not reside in the United States, but he analyzes his own patriotism in the US, and from his own context attempts to draw more general conclusions regarding how Christians anywhere can best live a patriotic life.

In the first chapter, “Wrestling Together,” Mouw gestures towards Jacob’s famous wrestling match with an angel in Genesis 32. His reference to this passage is clear because his proposed method of patriotic engagement is “wrestling.” Mouw employs the physical combat in the text as a metaphor for a methodology for patriotic involvement. Mouw notes that Jacob “engaged in the match in order to be blessed” (3). Likewise, our struggle and great efforts to engage in critical conversations and debates about the health of the nation are what will bless our patriotic endeavors.

In the second chapter, “We the People,” Mouw says that “being patriotic is much more about having an affection for the nation rather than the state” (29). He explains the distinction between the two: “A state is a governmental system that has authority over a territory with definable boundaries” (28–9), while “a nation is a community of people who experience some kind of unity, based on shared memories of our collective past and some cultural practices and loyalties that we have in common” (29). This distinction between state and nation is important, but I am reluctant to concede that cultivating affections for one’s nation is requisite for loving one’s nation in a manner that befits a Christian. Mouw sets up his argument to parallel one’s love for their neighbor, however, when Jesus says to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39), there is no clear imperative to kindle feelings of affection for one’s neighbor. Doing so could help orient the individual to love their neighbor, but it is hardly clear that it is necessary. Even if granting the dubious premise that affection for one’s neighbor is a sufficient condition for loving them, it does not follow that such affections are a necessary condition for loving one’s neighbor and, *mutatis mutandis*, neither is affection for one’s nation a prerequisite for loving it well. Perhaps Mouw will have to pen an Edwards-esque “*Patriotic Affections*” before I follow him on this point.

Later, in a chapter titled “Hopes and Fears,” Mouw states what I find to be one of the most salient thoughts of the whole book. He writes,

If having a loving relationship with my kinfolk can only be sustained by my being proud of them, or by my needing the stimu-

lus of family celebrations, then my sense of belonging does not go deep. To be sure, being proud of the accomplishments of people we love and enjoying family gatherings are good things. But being a healthy family member also means hanging in there with the loved ones even when they bring me grief (137).

To further Mouw's analysis on this point, I would point out that the growth of technological platforms has robbed communication of its healthy soil—relationship. Many people cannot honestly call their neighbors "loved ones." He could have done more to address this issue and its effect on the US political climate, but as he rightly points out, love must endure through hardships for it to be love, and that sometimes means bearing the weight of deep disappointment with a nation's leaders and fellow citizens.

In sum, Mouw offers refreshing insight amidst a contentious political climate in the United States. He rightly notes that prayer is essential to our love of country (78); he exhorts Christians to take issue with simply trying to fit into the two-party system (91); and he encourages Christians to submit to authorities while remaining in solidarity with those who have fallen victim to injustices at the hands of the state (79). *How to Be a Patriotic Christian* can encourage Christians to talk about politics in a way that inspires a mutual attempt to understand each other's hopes and fears while entering into a commitment where love of country is love of neighbor.

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Sunquist, Scott W., *The Shape of Christian History: Continuity and Diversity in the Global Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022. pp. xiii, 177. \$22.00 (paperback). ISBN: 978-1-5140-0222-3.

In this impressively compact book, Scott W. Sunquist, President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, weaves together missiology, theology, and ethics to present readers with a way to understand Christian history.

The book has five chapters. The first chapter addresses the nature of and past trends in historiography. Sunquist discusses three aspects: 1) history as storytelling, 2) evidence that can be used for the writing of history, and 3) “various ideologies and philosophies that have guided (and at times repressed) the study of history in the past,” i.e., “progressivism, positivism, cultural studies, postmodernism, and postcolonial studies” (34).

The second chapter is about the Christian understanding of time: how Christian views of the beginning (creation), center (Incarnation), and end (eschaton) of time have influenced and can be reflected in history and historiography. According to Sunquist, Christianity introduces a linear concept of time which, unlike cyclical understandings, opens up the possibility of improving the world (82). There is, however, the risk of holding to false endings of history—what Sunquist calls “over-realized eschatology” (79) and what political philosopher Eric Voeglin would have called the “immanentization of the eschaton.”

The third chapter is about suffering and mission in the history of Christianity, especially how these two categories can be normative criteria for making value judgments on past figures and events. Taken together, what Sunquist calls “cruciform apostolicity” becomes the standard through which one can “see and evaluate Christian movements as well as our own local church” (94). Judging by this standard, spreading Christianity “through domination, power, coercion, or deceit” is to be condemned (97).

The fourth chapter deals with the counterpart to suffering and mission—glory. Sunquist is not referring here to the state of bliss that the saints enjoy in Heaven, but to the “little glories” that are “seen in the life and work of Christians and their churches throughout history” (123). Circling back to the theme of eschatology, Sunquist warns against placing hope in false glories that “are not grounded in the life and work of



God in this world”—i.e., progressivism, Marxism, and Darbyite dispensationalism (143–45).

In the fifth and final chapter, Sunquist sums up the previous chapters and gives some “historiographical guidance” (150). He suggests that the reader should read history looking for: 1) “little glories,” 2) biographies, 3) “influence of ideas (theology),” 4) lessons for local churches, 5) “ambiguities of history,” 6) missionary involvement, 7) persistence of evil, 8) “the relationship between the kingdom of God and earthly kingdoms,” and 9) “unity and love” (150–65).

This book’s target audience seems to be professors and students working in Protestant theological seminaries. A Google Scholar search for *The History of the World Christian Movement*, co-authored by Sunquist and Dale Irvin (cited numerous times in the volume under review), shows that it is cited mainly by missiologists and theologians, rather than historians working in research universities. I mention this not to impugn the credibility of the author, but rather to explain the fact that some features of the book might seem odd to those outside of the target audience. For example, theologians pop up constantly in the footnotes. By contrast, some classic works on the historical relationship between Christianity and imperialism-colonialism, such as Jean and John Comaroff’s *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991–1997), or Andrew Porter’s *Religion versus Empire?* (2004) are not cited or discussed a single time. In the same vein, the discussion of historiographical trends in chapter 1 would seem rather dated or misleading to many trained in history departments.

Despite arguing that “[s]o many of the assumptions that drove the greatest of Western historians and theologians in the past have to be revised” (22), Sunquist neither specifies what some of these assumptions are, nor names these historians and theologians. Sunquist writes, for instance, that “we had assumed that Christianity always flourished only with political support or favor” (3). This idea is certainly not a consensus among academic historians of Christianity that I have read. The only explicitly cited antagonists are Karen L. King and Bart Ehrman (3), who do not represent historians of Christianity as a whole. It thus seems like certain strawmen are set up in order to exaggerate the contributions of the book.

There is likewise a frustrating ambiguity in Sunquist’s use of the term “church.” At many points it seems to include all professed Christians,

comprehending all communions (5). Indeed, Sunquist admirably calls for Christian unity, urging the reader “to de-emphasize differences between Christian families and within Christian families” (155). At other points, however, “the church” seems to include only Protestants (8–9). This is likely a subconscious yet telling mistake. A large section of Protestants across the globe believes that Catholics and Orthodox are not Christian, and therefore treat majority Catholic- or Orthodox-populated areas as legitimate mission territory. This tension not only lurks behind the whole book, but will likely haunt the future of global Christianity as well.

One benefit of studying history is being forced to become more cautious in diagnosing the causes and prospects of present-day phenomena. Sunquist rightly points out that Christians of the early twentieth century were too caught up with progressivism and imperialism to see that these would both have a limited shelf-life (27–32). This can provide a helpful lesson for evaluating “global Christianity,” which Sunquist is quite optimistic about. We cannot presume that the numerical growth of “Christianity” in any part of the globe will continue in the future. Taking my native Korea as an example, both Protestant and Catholic Christianity experienced a boom for about the first half-century of national independence (1945–2000) but both have been in numerical decline since the 2000s. This should be a cautionary tale about making predictions about the future direction and composition of global Christianity based on recent, possibly short-term, trends.

On a different note, one wonders how much can be done by “studying Christianity on its own terms or according to its own faith commitment” (15). There is, of course, much value in doing so. It is nevertheless questionable how far one can integrate the categories of time, cross, and glory into the study and writing of Christian history. More often than not, the primary sources will contain little to no information that illuminates any of these three points. Yet this should not deter historians from pursuing research topics that are not immediately edifying or transformative. Otherwise, Christian history would be reduced to a collection of morality tales or hagiographies.

It is both disturbing and instructive to note the Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder’s influence on Sunquist. Like the former, the latter rejects Christendom (155–6)—which often seems to be defined

126 as spreading Christianity “through domination, power, coercion, or deceit” (97). That Yoder did exercise some influence on Sunquist is clear, as Sunquist cites him positively (126). There is more than a little irony here. As Rachel Waltner Goossen painstakingly shows, Yoder sexually abused more than a hundred women, and used his position of authority both to justify and cover up his misdeeds.<sup>1</sup> In short, the Mennonite theologian exhibited exactly the kind of violent domination which Sunquist deplors. Ironically, Yoder is totally missing from Sunquist’s discussion of the “sexual sins” of church figures (160).

Lastly, I will note that the book could have used better proofreading. The name of the founder of the Unification Church is Sun Myung Moon, not Sun Yung Moon (14, 81). Toward the end, Sunquist uses the phrase “fifth-century Turkey” (166), which is an anachronism—it should be fifth-century Anatolia or Asia Minor.

Sunquist’s is a welcome but unsuccessful attempt at finding a Christian mode of historiography. For success in this endeavor, theoretical or theological reflection is necessary but insufficient. Attention to the “craft” side of history-writing is a must. Much more helpful for the prospective historian of Christianity would be *The Past as Pilgrimage: Narrative, Tradition, and the Renewal of Catholic History* (2014), co-authored by historians Christopher Shannon (Christendom College) and Christopher O. Blum (Augustine Institute). Not only do they address many of the issues touched upon by Sunquist, Shannon and Blum anticipate many of the objections raised in this review. Furthermore, they point to specific models and authors of historiography, past and present, from which we can draw insights. While Shannon and Blum discuss only Catholic history in their book, many of the points will be applicable to the history of global Christianity.

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1 Rachel Waltner Goossen, ““Defanging the Beast”: Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder’s Sexual Abuse,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89 (2015), 7-80.

# CALL FOR ACADEMIC PAPERS

## SPRING 2023 THEME: VICE, VIRTUE, & CONFLICT

Taken narrowly, vice and virtue comprise both central considerations of virtue ethical theories and peripheral considerations of any sophisticated normative ethics—that is, all plausible normative ethics will comment on vice and virtue in some manner. Taken broadly, the terms relate to goodness and badness, righteousness and evil, morality and depravity, inculcation and elimination. In each of these conjunctions, conflict stands at the forefront. Similar tensions manifest across theory and lived experience, from disagreement and wars to schisms and debates on the very existence of God. The interplay of vice, virtue, and conflict, then, occasions inquiry into the facets of life in a broken world and faith in the One who alone is perfect.

With this topic in mind, we invite undergraduate and graduate students, as well as early-career post-docs, to submit to *Theophron's* spring 2023 issue. Scholarship from all fields, particularly philosophy, theology, history, and biblical studies, is welcome.

Possible topics include but are certainly not limited to:

- Epistemology of Religious or Moral Disagreement
- Virtue's Role in Christian Discipleship across Traditions
- Prophetic & Apostolic Responses to Political-Religious Tensions
- Moral Arguments for God's Existence
- Interpretations of Old Testament Conflict Narratives
- Just War Theory & Pacifism in World War II
- Early Church Understandings of Spiritual Conflict
- Historical Christian Responses to Global Strife
- Metaethics and Theories of Sin
- Protestant, Catholic, & Orthodox Views of Vice

## SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Submissions should be between **4,000–6,500** words (not including abstract), conform to the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition), and be original, unpublished works prepared for double-blind peer review. Please include an abstract of no more than 250 words, uploading the entire manuscript in both PDF and .docx formats at [www.theophron.org/submissions](http://www.theophron.org/submissions). **Do not place your name or any identifying information on the submitted manuscript**—author identities will remain anonymous to reviewers and editors until after final acceptance/rejection decisions.

Submissions received by **February 12, 2023**, will be considered for publication.

Direct all questions to [submissions@theophron.org](mailto:submissions@theophron.org).

Visit [theophron.org](http://theophron.org) for all live calls for papers, including our year-round, open-topic call.

# CALL FOR POETRY & REFLECTIONS

## SPRING 2023 THEME: VICE, VIRTUE, & CONFLICT

As image bearers of the Triune God, we were created to express God in all His goodness and glory. An inner longing within us impels us to become like the One who gave us being and purpose. But in the mystery of creaturely freedom, it is possible for us to refuse the good and pursue our own undoing. By God's grace, virtue is still possible but not automatic, requiring practice, self-denial, imitation, and love; while vice, like gravity, weighs us down unless overcome. Each of us lives at the confrontation of these two dimensions of our nature. Vice, virtue, and conflict can be plotted across many expected domains like friendship, politics, work, and leisure—one thinks of the fruit of the Spirit and the seven deadly sins. But they also inform our finer judgments. Does our use of social media condition us for perpetual outrage? Does our financial conservatism and planning prevent us from radical devotion to God, like the woman in Bethany who “wasted” her savings on Jesus? Do our values of self-reliance and autonomy undermine our experience of being “members one of another?”

With this topic in mind, we invite individuals outside of the academic study of Christianity to submit a poem or personal reflection to *Theophron's* spring 2023 issue. Reflections should not be academic essays but instead journal-like meditations on the above theme. Successful reflections will probe personal experience, illustrate a relevant idea, or relate insights from one's spiritual life to a theological point. Poems can take any form, as long as they retain a discernible connection to the topic.

Questions for inspiration include but are certainly not limited to:

- How do cultural depictions of virtue and vice shape us?
- How should Christians think about vice and conflicts in the Church?
- How do we know good from evil in morally ambiguous circumstances?
- How should Christians relate to political and global strife?
- What propels individuals toward goodness? What seduces them to evil?
- What are the practical implications of God's providing “a way out” of sin when we are tempted?

\*Answering one of the specific inspiration questions above is not required.

## SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Email reflections between **650–1,500** words and poems not exceeding one single-spaced page directly to [submissions@theophron.org](mailto:submissions@theophron.org). In the email, please also include your full name, occupation, and state of residence before attaching your submission(s) in both PDF and .docx formats.

Submissions received by **February 12, 2023**, will be considered for publication. Direct all questions to [submissions@theophron.org](mailto:submissions@theophron.org).

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