
THEOPHRON

Executive Editor
CAMERON HURTA

General Editor
ANDREW RUDOLF

Managing Editor
KYLE BARTON

General Editor
SOREN JOHNSON

Book Review Editor
ERIC ANDERSON

Production Editor
POTTER MCKINNEY

Associate Editors

SAVANNAH CHARLISH
Princeton Theological Seminary

DREW CRADDOCK
Whitworth University

JONI GRAVES
Princeton Theological Seminary

JOEL GUNDERMAN
Princeton Theological Seminary

SUZANNAH OMONUK
Harvard Divinity School

JONATHAN SODER
Truett Theological Seminary

ALEX STRASSER
Texas A&M University

Copyright © 2022 Theophron Journal of Christian Studies
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

No part of this publication may be stored, reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including for general distribution, republication, resale, or advertising or commercial purposes, without prior permission from the copyright holder. The copyright holder grants authorization for copying items for internal and personal use for subscribed libraries, organizations, and private individuals per the subscription agreement. Address permissions inquiries and special requests to: editors@theophron.org

Permission Acknowledgments:

- pp. 7–17, Samuel Korb, “Imago Dei as Imago Trinitatis: Intra-Subjective & Inter-Subjective Aspects.” © 2022 Samuel Korb. Printed with license and permission.
- p. 18, Caleb Choate, “DAN, WHERE’S THE DOG.” © 2022 Caleb Choate. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 19–38, Anthony Scordino, “Bearing Being’s Burden: Suffering & Finitude in the Thought of Emmanuel Falque & Jean-Luc Marion.” © 2022 Anthony Scordino. Printed with license and permission.
- p. 39, Grant Doolan, “Looking Up.” © 2022 Grant Doolan. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 40–56, Randall Price, “Conciliar Christology & the Origin of the Soul: A Theological Argument against Traducianism.” © 2022 Randall Price. Printed with license and permission.
- p. 57, Michael Hausel, “The Deepes.” © 2022 Michael Hausel. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 58–75, Ethan Levin, “Isn’t There a God Who is above (& below) the Ground? Heschel, Tillich, & Truth Beyond Being.” © 2022 Ethan Levin. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 77–78, Elizabeth Burgess, “The Tribe of the Beautiful Broken.” © 2022 Elizabeth Burgess. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 79–80, Haleigh Wilkins, “Peace Amidst Chaos.” © 2022 Haleigh Wilkins. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 81–82, Nathanael Duty, “Dress for Action.” © 2022 Nathanael Duty. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 84–86, Ben Van Haitsma, Review of *The Nicene Option: An Incarnational Phenomenology*. © 2022 Ben Van Haitsma. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 86–88, P.C. McKinney, Review of *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ’s Body*. © 2022 P.C. McKinney. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 89–91, Kyle Barton, Review of *The Gospels: A New Translation*. © 2022 Kyle Barton. Printed with license and permission.
- pp. 92–94, Charles Gillett, Review of *Black Fundamentalists, Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era*. © 2022 Charles Gillett. Printed with license and permission.

Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro

Ornaments in Adorn Ornaments

Journal and production design by Potter McKinney and Cameron Hurta

Published by Theophron Journal of Christian Studies

Manufacturing by Lulu

Disclaimer: The Publisher and Editors may not be held responsible for any errors or ramifications engendered by the use of information in this journal. The views and opinions expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the Publisher, Editors, or Journal.

For calls for papers, submission instructions, subscriptions, and other information, visit: www.theophron.org

ISBN 978-1-4357-7458-2 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-4357-7361-5 (Online)

Contents

Introduction to Theophron	4
Prolegomenon	5
<i>Imago Dei as Imago Trinitatis</i>	7
SAMUEL KORB	
<i>DAN, WHERE'S THE DOG</i>	18
CALEB CHOATE	
<i>Bearing Being's Burden</i>	19
ANTHONY SCORDINO	
<i>Looking Up</i>	39
GRANT DOOLAN	
<i>Conciliar Christology & the Origin of the Soul</i>	40
RANDALL PRICE	
<i>The Deeps</i>	57
MICHAEL HAUSEL	
<i>Isn't There A God Who is above (& below) the Ground?</i>	58
ETHAN LEVIN	
<i>Reflections</i>	76
<i>The Tribe of the Beautiful Broken</i>	77
BETH BURGESS	
<i>Peace Amidst Chaos</i>	79
HALEIGH WILKINS	
<i>Dress for Action</i>	81
NATHANAEL DUTY	
<i>Book Reviews</i>	83
Academic Call for Papers	95
Call for Poetry & Reflections	96
About Theophron	97

Introduction to Theophron

Between the first and second centuries CE, 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 the Christian ivory tower 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 from current graduate students. 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.

Ἔμμεν θεόφροντες

THEOPHRON EDITORS



Prolegomenon

And men go forth to wonder at the heights of the mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the broad flow of the rivers, the extent of the ocean, and the courses of the stars, and omit to wonder at themselves.

Augustine of Hippo
Confessions, Book X, Chapter 8

It was in the context of contemplating humankind's possession of memory that Augustine penned the above musing. Perhaps more interesting than the content of Augustine's introspectiveness into cognitive function is its implicit claim: The capacity for reflection on life and existence, particularly of humankind and the divine themselves, distinguishes humankind from all other earthly creations. The divine creative decree responsible for this life fundamentally plunged all things into relationships and complex senses of being. In one, we are metaphysical beings who express attributes, creatures in a world obtained by God. From this conception, philosophers debate whether we are contingent or necessary, minds or mere physicality, products of a simple or complex God. In another sense, we exist inside of (or as) bodies, tents of flesh and bone which impact our experiences in and of the world. It is in this sense that perhaps our most profound experiences, those of love and of pain, of joy and of distress, occur. In the broadest sense, however, we live as agents in webs of relation, with other contingent beings, with nature, with ideas and concepts, with moral decisions, with families and structures and pain, and, ultimately, with God Himself. These relations inform social, political, and spiritual boundaries, often drawn as distinctions of belonging. It is here that arise the normative questions of where, how, and with whom we should exist. Fittingly, *Theophron Journal of Christian Studies* dedicates its inaugural issue to explorations of these foundational senses of existence, of being, bodies, and belonging.

The included essays and interspersed poems run the gamut of the theme. Samuel Korb's essay, "Imago Dei as Imago Trinitatis: Intra-Subjective and Inter-Subjective Aspects," posits an understanding of the imago Dei as intrinsically rooted in the trinitarian concept of knowledge of both self and others. "DAN, WHERE'S THE DOG," a poem by Caleb Choate, then depicts grotesque suffering amidst everyday life, transitioning into Anthony Scordino's "Bearing Being's Burden: Suffering and Finitude in the Thought of Emmanuel Falque and Jean-Luc Marion," which itself evaluates through a continental phil-

osophical lens humankind's limitation in light of Christ before drawing conclusions relevant for modern apologetic approaches. Next, Grant Doolan's poem, "Looking Up," grapples with a substance dualist understanding of suffering and redemption. Following Doolan's lead into the soul, Randall Price advances a Christological understanding of soul generation in "Conciliar Christology and the Origin of the Soul: A Theological Argument against Traducianism." The final poem-article pairing, "The Deepes" by Michael Hausel and "Isn't There a God Who is above (and below) the Ground? Heschel, Tillich, and Truth Beyond Being" by Ethan Levin, connects the relationship between transcendence and immanence to Jewish-Christian theological interactions.

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. Beth Burgess, a retired teacher and enneagram coach, first shares a story of beauty arising from calamity, while Haleigh Wilkins ruminates on the state and role of faith among her healthcare co-workers. Nathanael Duty concludes the reflection section by wrestling with power and meekness in the context of the US military and a violent world. Finally, the book reviews cover topics such as a continental approach to philosophy of religion, disability theology, a new translation of the Bible, and the role of black fundamentalism in the South's period of segregation.

When the senior staff selected a topic as broad as existence, a miniscule-yet-screaming worry about cohesion etched itself into the back of my mind. Now, at the time of publication, I possess no such concern. The contents inside this issue cohere in their profound cogitations of the significance of being, of relational intricacies, of humankind's wondrous and sporadically painful lives—and they do so while retaining first-rate excellence. May this issue be an occasion for both academics and non-academics to heed Augustine's critique.

Enjoy the wondering.

CAMERON HURTA
Executive Editor
April 17, 2022



Imago Dei as Imago Trinitatis

Intra-Subjective & Inter-Subjective Aspects

SAMUEL KORB¹

ABSTRACT: Beginning from the common conviction that the primary locus of the image of God must be in the highest aspect of human nature, namely its consciousness, I consider how this consciousness images the triune God in its intra-subjective aspect, its inter-subjective aspect, and the union of these two. Looking at Thomas Aquinas and Gregory of Nazianzus, we see how these two aspects of intra-subjective self-knowledge and inter-subjective knowledge coincide perfectly and absolutely in the Trinity. If the human being is to be an image of the Trinity, then it must be these two aspects, and their union, that human consciousness represents. Then, moving to a consideration of human consciousness in itself, we see that it is simultaneously constituted by self-knowledge/self-possession and inter-subjective union with other persons. Thus, theologies that deny either one of these aspects as part of the *imago Dei*—I consider Karl Rahner and Dumitru Staniloae as representatives of the common contemporary rejection of the traditional psychological analogy—implicitly deny the full reality of the *imago Dei*, since it would not be consciousness as such that images the Trinity. Finally, recognizing the paltriness of this finite image in relation to its infinite model, I turn briefly to the eschatological horizon, where alone, in perfect conformation to its archetype, the human representation attains its fullest reality, knowing even as it is known.

Introduction

The revelation of God as Trinity demands a reappraisal of the *imago Dei*, now also the *imago Trinitatis*. A common conviction within Christian tradition is that the highest aspect of human being—mind, consciousness, spirit—must be the preeminent locus of the *imago Dei*.² The difficult task of construing how human consciousness images the Trinity has most famously been undertaken by Augustine in the celebrated and controversial “psychological analogy.”³ In

1 Samuel Korb is a student in the Master of Theological Studies program at the University of Notre Dame.

2 See, e.g., Augustine, *Conf.* XIII, xxxii (47); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 38, 11; Maximus Confessor, *Amb.* 7, 31; Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 3; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 93, a. 6.

3 Although he, of course, never used the term. See *De Trinitate* IX–XV, esp. XIV. The trinity of *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas* is the highest image according to Augustine, because it is able to represent the consubstantiality/identity of the persons within a difference that never amounts to separation.

the middle ages, it was Thomas Aquinas who most profoundly considered the matter,⁴ and in the modern age, Bernard Lonergan.⁵ Yet this purely introspective psychological analogy cannot exhaust the finite image's representation of the eternal archetype. Since in the archetype intellectual procession (the *emanatio intelligibilis* of the traditional psychological analogy) and inter-subjective relation coincide perfectly in the fullness of consciousness, then the finite image can only truly represent its archetype if its intra-subjective and inter-subjective aspects come together as indiscernible moments, each complementing the other's deficiencies, of one *imago Trinitatis*.

I approach this conclusion from two directions. First, kata-logically: that since the divine consciousness contains these "intra-subjective" and "inter-subjective" aspects—where the conception of a Word (intra-subjective) produces a distinct hypostasis with his own subjectivity (inter-subjective)—without severance, we know to "look" for the Trinity's image in the human being in both the intra- and inter-subjective aspects of her consciousness. If the finite representation of only one aspect of this single trinitarian reality (*either* intellectual procession *or* interpersonal communion) housed the *imago Trinitatis*, then the divine would not be truly represented in its image. Second, ana-logically: beginning from the reality of our own consciousness, which we see to be inseparably and doubly defined by "intra-subjective" relation to self and "inter-subjective" relation to other persons, we see that human subjectivity can only integrally image the triune God if both these aspects of consciousness constitute the *imago Trinitatis*. Here, if we were to locate the image only in one aspect or the other, we would be compromising the integral reality of human consciousness. If only one of the aspects which constitute *it* comprises its status as the image of the Trinity, then *it* does not image the Trinity. These are the stakes of the question: both God's power to represent himself in his creation and the integrity of human consciousness as the primary locus of this representation.

There are three movements to the present discourse. First, I consider the unity of what I am calling "intra-subjective" and "inter-subjective" in divine

4 See *Summa contra gentiles* IV, 11–12; 19; 26; the pithiest summary in IV, 26, 6; also *ST I*, q. 27, a. 1–5. Aquinas moves beyond Augustine by seeing the human psychological representation of the Trinity not in the faculties of *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas*, but in the acts of the conception of a mental word (representing the Father's generation of the Word) and the subsequent movement of love. The main category is *emanatio intelligibilis*. The more straightforwardly Augustinian depiction of Bonaventure should also not be overlooked. See esp. *Itinerarium* 3.

5 See Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Buffalo: University of Toronto, 2007), 627–85.

consciousness. Then I will endeavor to consider finite consciousness in itself, in a roughly phenomenological vein, seeking to show how it is constituted by these two aspects, which cannot be abstracted from each other. Last, I will return to the question of this consciousness as the image of the Trinity, seeking to show how both intra-subjective and inter-subjective images are needed to articulate how human consciousness represents the Trinity.

The Trinity's Consciousness

Thomas Aquinas introduces his version of the Augustinian “psychological analogy” as the answer to the question of how we can *understand* the claim of the Christian faith that generation occurs within God.⁶ Although the reality of intellectual emanation, which he proposes as the model by which we can understand the trinitarian processions, does not include any kind of inter-subjectivity (I-Thou⁷ relation) in its human iteration, Aquinas is able to show how intellectual procession in the divine consciousness *does* produce intersubjective relation. The key lies in the notion of God as *pure act*, so that the act of intellectual emanation in which an interior word is conceived is identical with the pure actuality of intellectual reality that God is: “The Word of God, therefore, is the divine being and his essence, and is true God himself.”⁸ This is clearly not the case for human intellection, where the intellect, its act of understanding, and the intention understood are all separate, so that “the word interiorly conceived is not a true man having the natural being of man, but is only man understood, a kind of likeness.”⁹ Since, therefore, the Word conceived by God is true God, the Word possesses the entire reality—that is, personal, hypostatic, subjective reality—of Godhead. Such is exactly meant by the Nicene term *consubstantial*. The Son, as identical in substance with the Father, receives the Father’s entire reality in his generation. If Aquinas is right to consider this generation as a kind of intellectual emanation, it follows naturally that the conception of an intellectual word produces a hypostasis/person with the full personal, conscious, subjective reality of the Father. In this divine generation, no separation between intra-subjective and inter-subjective, interiority and exteriority, obtains. The generation of a word that in a human being is purely intra-subjective—it occurs only in *my* mind—produces another hypostasis whom the Father can address

6 See *Summa contra gentiles* IV, 11.

7 Here invoking Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970).

8 *Summa contra gentiles* IV, 11, 11.

9 *Summa contra gentiles* IV, 11, 11.

in the second person: “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”¹⁰ If it is *God*, if it is the *Trinity* who is to be represented in the human being, then both these aspects must receive expression. As Gregory of Nyssa says, “The image is properly an image so long as it fails in none of those attributes which we perceive in the archetype.”¹¹

Many centuries before Aquinas, the same idea was articulated by Gregory of Nazianzus, who, deep within the battles that led to the first precise formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, said, “each of these Persons possesses unity, not less with that which is united to it than with itself, by reason of the identity of essence and power.”¹² What Gregory means is that each person is as much related to himself as he is to the other two: “unity, not less with that which is united to it than with itself.”¹³ Knowledge of self and knowledge of other persons coincide perfectly. This coincidence of self-knowledge and other-knowledge remains, then, the pattern and staple of human consciousness, where the image of the triune God is located.

Finite Consciousness in Itself

Having established kata-logically that consciousness must bear a certain resemblance to the Trinity, it is best now to turn to a consideration of finite consciousness in itself, to ascertain its basic features in order to articulate just how those features image the Trinity. The inadequacy of the prototypical modern account of subjectivity—the ego of Descartes’ *cogito*, for which relation to the other is “a second derivation,” indeed “a regrettable perturbation,” as Jean-Luc Marion describes it¹⁴—has been keenly felt by many. The basic phenomenological solution to the Cartesian consciousness-world problem is simply to deny the terms in which Descartes considered it, to deny the possibility of separating consciousness and world. So Heidegger’s rejoinder to the Cartesian ego: “This way of formulating the question is absurd, since there never is such a subject in the sense it is assumed here.” Dasein, on the contrary, must be regarded “without presuppositions as in-being and being-with in the presuppositionless im-

10 Mark 1:11

11 Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* xi, 3 (NPNF2 5:396).

12 Gregory of Nazianzus, “Fifth Theological Oration,” in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward Hardy (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1954/2006), 203.

13 Thanks to Fr. Khaled Anatolios for bringing out the significance of this passage to me.

14 Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007), 6.

mediacy of everydayness [*im voraussetzungslosen Zunächst der Alltäglichkeit*].¹⁵ There is no need to build a bridge from consciousness to being, since “being in a world belongs essentially to Dasein.”¹⁶

However more satisfying than Descartes’ this account might be, it remains incomplete as long as the enduring difference between subject and object, knower and known, consciousness and world, is not secured. In fact, when the correlation and mutual belonging-together of consciousness and being is so emphasized, the very opposite of Descartes’ error threatens to ensue, inasmuch as consciousness can now be dissolved into being if the abiding difference between the two is not articulated. D.C. Schindler sees this very problem in Heidegger, who, he maintains, “interprets the essential reciprocal ‘belonging’ together of being and the human essence as consisting ultimately in a nothingness in which all differences are eliminated.”¹⁷ Whether this is a fair interpretation of Heidegger is a serious and nuanced issue that cannot be addressed here.¹⁸ For our purposes, it is crucial to note the two extremes—the dissolution of world into self, the dissolution of self into world—which equally deform the twofold truth of finite consciousness: that it is defined by its outward acts, pre-eminently those which relate to other persons, and that these acts are grounded in a unique and unrepeatable knowledge and possession of self. What we need is a way of understanding consciousness that affords space to the reality of intellectual procession that takes place in internal thought, but in a way that also accords the proper place to inter-subjectivity. In other words, we need a way to articulate how consciousness is one reality with two aspects—intra-subjective and inter-subjective—that are mutually constitutive of itself.

Fulfilling this role for us is Hans Urs von Balthasar, who begins by considering subjectivity (in a typically modern fashion), but in a way which shows how

15 Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1985), 243; German: *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979), 335. Robert Sokolowski represents a similar kind of being-in-the-world as the basic phenomenological solution to the “egocentric predicament” of philosophical modernity. See *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000), 9-16.

16 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. ed. (Albany: State University of New York, 2010), 12. On being-in-the-world, see esp. §§12-13 (Stambaugh, 53-62); also §43(a) (Stambaugh, 194-200) on the problem of the question of demonstrating the existence of an external world.

17 D.C. Schindler, *The Catholicity of Reason* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 46.

18 Schindler references only one page from Heidegger’s *Zur Seinsfrage* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1956), 28; in English, *The Question of Being*, trans. Jean Wilde and William Kluback (New Haven: College & University, 1958), 77.

subjectivity is necessarily tethered to other subjects, and thus how inter-subjectivity is a defining aspect of finite consciousness. This is accomplished through Balthasar's sourcing of the "awakening" of consciousness in the child's waking to the smile of his mother: "The little child awakens to self-consciousness through being addressed by the love of his mother."¹⁹ For Balthasar, this "awakening" shows not only that no person is ever devoid of movement toward an other but that this movement is precisely what constitutes selfhood: "It is in movement toward the 'Thou' that the 'I' becomes aware of itself,"²⁰ which is to say, becomes conscious, and becomes a consciousness. Thus, any elimination of other into self becomes impossible, since self-consciousness only becomes itself through the presence of another, and the same is true of an elimination of the individual into a morass of Being, since there is an abiding distinction between the mother's "I" and the child's "I". This "awakening" is a real constitution of the self, insofar as it 1) brings it into being, and 2) provides the basic horizon within which all subsequent acts of consciousness will take place. For Balthasar, the life that follows this primordial encounter is an unfolding of and growth within the love into which one is first born.

When Balthasar's starting point is assumed, it becomes clear that any investigation into consciousness which neglects its inter-subjective aspect will ultimately be an abstraction (i.e., a separation from the fullness of its reality) and will never reach the level of concretion which the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* demands. Still, both the inter- and intra-subjective aspects need to be given their proper treatment. Many Catholic phenomenologists tend to emphasize the inter-subjective aspect,²¹ but the same devotion must be given to the intro-

19 Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Movement Toward God," in *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 3, *Creator Spirit*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 15; cf. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 5, *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, trans. Oliver Davies, et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 613-27, esp. 615-18, "The Miracle of Being and the Fourfold Distinction." See also Schindler, "Surprised by Truth: The Drama of Reason in Fundamental Theology," in *The Catholicity of Reason*, 35-57, esp. 44-47; *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University, 2004), 36-39, 96-162.

20 Balthasar, "Movement Toward God" 16; So Balthasar describes "the Thou" as "the hard criterion for truth and for Being [das harte Wahrheits- und Seinskriterium des Du]," *The Glory of the Lord* 5:462-63; German: *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik*, Bd. III, II: *Im Raum der Metaphysik*, Teil II: *Neuzeit* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1965), 799. Cf. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 192-98, in which Pickstock argues for the primacy of the inter-subjective over the subject-object relationship through an analysis of the medieval Roman rite.

21 Pope Francis recently cited Gabriel Marcel in *Fratelli Tutti* §87: "Nor can [human beings] fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons: 'I communicate

spective aspect since it is only as “one who is consciously anchored in himself,” as John Crosby puts it,²² that one can reach out to another. Even the child awakening to the smile of her mother only knows her mother *mediately*, through her own consciousness, while the only thing she knows *immediately* is herself, even when the awakening of this self-knowledge coincides with awakening to the other.²³ These two postures are absolutely inseparable as aspects of one unified consciousness. The danger of all philosophy, at least in a fallen state,²⁴ is to absolutize one side over the other. Just as with many philosophical antinomies, it is the revelation of the Trinity which provides the grammar within which this dilemma can be peacefully resolved. It is only in knowledge of the Trinity, in whom knowledge of self and knowledge of other perfectly coincide, that the unity of these two aspects of consciousness can be appreciated and maintained, since it is precisely this unity that imitates the Trinity and grounds the finite *imago Trinitatis*.

Trinity & Consciousness

Having sketched, however cursorily, what finite consciousness entails, we can now consider its relation to the Trinity. What is at stake when we speak of intra- and inter-subjective images is humanity’s being made in the image of the Trinity, which entails that consciousness as such reflects the Trinity. When one image is rejected, so implicitly is the truth that consciousness in its essence images God and therewith the *imago Trinitatis*.

The Intra-Subjective Image

The precise contours of the traditional psychological analogy, whether in its

effectively with myself only insofar as I communicate with others,” citing Marcel’s *Du refus à l’invocation*; cf. *The Mystery of Being*, vol. 1, *Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1950), esp. 171-98.

22 John F. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1996), 84. Crosby’s book, firmly rooted in the Catholic phenomenological tradition, was prompted by the fact that the kind of phenomenology exemplified by Scheler and von Hildebrand frequently “did not explore the selfhood and subjectivity of the person with the same zeal that they showed for the objects of consciousness” (5).

23 See David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 227-28.

24 Appropriating Erich Przywara’s terminology. See his “Philosophy as a Problem,” in *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 400-8.

Augustinian or Thomistic rendering, cannot be recapitulated here.²⁵ What is more urgent is to defend the legitimacy of such intra-subjective (mental, psychological) analogies against their present-day detractors. We will consider two theologians who strongly resist the traditional Latin psychological analogy: Karl Rahner and Dumitru Staniloae.

Karl Rahner, in his “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ‘*De Trinitate*,’”²⁶ lays out many of his concerns with contemporary trinitarian theology: a certain “anti-trinitarian timidity affects theologians,”²⁷ such that the Trinity is “isolated” within dogmatic theology and depicted as “unrelated to us in the real ontological order.”²⁸ Against these trends, Rahner insists on the unity of the immanent and economic trinities²⁹ in such a way that the self-communication of God is a communication of the persons—“each in his own special and different way of personal being”—and that the Trinity “takes place in us.”³⁰ He admits that the two divine processions have something to do with the acts of knowledge and love but heavily downplays the psychological analogy because of its inability to develop a personal concept of word and love.³¹ Yet in his *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Rahner speaks far more harshly about the psychological analogy, dismissing it as “completely unrelated to us,” as not giving enough weight to the historical revelation of the Trinity, and even as “almost gnostic speculation about what goes on in the inner life of God.”³²

Many of Rahner’s concerns are not only reasonable but are akin to our own. The basic concern is the same—that the significance of the Trinity for our understanding of all reality has been hastily bypassed. Yet the vigor of Rahner’s antipathy toward the psychological analogy subverts his own logic. He *does* admit that there is some relation between the conscious acts of knowledge and love and the trinitarian processions, but the harshness of his later dismissal suggests that the analogy has virtually no relevance. In fact, what Rahner’s rejection of the psychological analogy does, if taken to its natural conclusion, is remove the significance of the Trinity *for us*—precisely the problem he sought to solve!

25 For an extremely brief summary, see nn. 2-3 above.

26 In Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 77–102.

27 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 81.

28 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 82–83.

29 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 87.

30 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 95, 98.

31 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 83–84.

32 Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 135.

The import of the psychological analogy is that our interior consciousness—whether in the triad of *memoria*, *intellectus*, *voluntas*, or the acts of *emanatio intelligibilis*—is an image of the triune God. What could be *more* significant “for us” than the fact that we image the Trinity in our very thinking and willing, our very knowledge and possession of ourselves?

Dumitru Staniloae, on the other hand, grants great significance to inter-subjectivity as an image of the Trinity—“for the most suitable image for the Holy Trinity is found in human unity of being and personal distinction”³³—yet rather vigorously rejects the intra-subjective psychological analogy. Like Rahner, Staniloae is concerned with the “impersonalism” of the psychological analogy; he also worries about the affinity between it and the Catholic *filioque* and the putative rationalism associated with the Catholic theology that defends the psychological analogy.³⁴

What is significant in Staniloae is that his rejection of the psychological analogy, just like Rahner’s, subverts his own logic. Staniloae, just like us, is primarily concerned with showing how the acts that constitute human subjectivity and personhood are grounded in its position as the *imago Dei*: “Our love finds its explanation in the fact that we are created in the image of the Holy Trinity.”³⁵ This is a logic that no coherent theology can deny. Nevertheless, as we have argued above, and as basic experience shows, inter-subjectivity does not exhaust the meaning of human consciousness. When it is said that the intra-subjective psychological analogy is totally illicit, it is tacitly asserted that no likeness to the Trinity is found within our self-consciousness. One of two conclusions naturally follows therefrom: either the double orientation of consciousness which we have observed must be jettisoned and only the inter-subjective be admitted as an essential posture of consciousness, or the human being is not the image of God since only one of two fundamental aspects of her consciousness images God. Staniloae, of course, has no intention of making either of these conclusions, but one of them necessarily follows from his rejection of psychological analogies *tout court*.

Both Rahner and Staniloae, then, miss the true stake of the question: if interior self-consciousness, which is an indelible aspect of human personhood, does not image the Trinity, then the human being is not the image of God. A rejection of the psychological analogy *as such* constitutes a kind of anthropo-

33 Dumitru Staniloae, “Holy Trinity: Structure of Supreme Love,” in *The Experience of God*, vol. 1, *Revelation and the Knowledge of the Trinity*, trans. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), 250.

34 Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 274.

35 Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 245.

logical violence. This is not to say that either the Augustinian or Thomistic iterations of the psychological analogy must be unconditionally defended. It is to say, however, that if the human being is the image of the Trinity, and an *essential* aspect of human consciousness is its unique interiority, then that interiority must image the Trinity—dimly, distantly, imperfectly, but truly.

The Inter-Subjective Image

Rahner and Staniloae, however unsatisfying their rejections of the psychological analogy are, are certainly right to point out the analogy's deficiencies as an articulation of how humanity images the Trinity.³⁶ If the psychological analogy is to be construed as an expression of how the mind images the Trinity—Augustine is very clear that it is³⁷—then it must be observed that it fails to achieve its goal. It fails not simply because every finite image of God must be struck through by an infinite *maior dissimilitudo*,³⁸ but because the psychological analogy, construed in isolation from an inter-subjective image, fails 1) to articulate how consciousness *as such* images the Trinity and 2) to account for the inter-personal element that must be present in the finite representation of the eternal Trinity. Focusing on just this first failure: if the psychological analogy were the only image of the Trinity in human being, then inter-subjectivity would have to constitute merely an accidental aspect of consciousness, not a fundamental one.

This is where, again, Balthasar proves to be a salutary voice. Balthasar notices that each image is deficient and requires the other as a “complementary counterimage”:³⁹ “The interpersonal model cannot attain the substantial unity of God, whereas the intrapersonal model cannot give an adequate picture of the real and abiding face-to-face encounter of the hypostases.”⁴⁰ The two images

36 As noted above, this is not the principal goal of Aquinas' psychological analogy, which primarily intends to present a model within which we can understand the trinitarian processions (although the imago-aspect does come in: e.g. *ST I*, q. 93, a. 5). An important distinction should be drawn between “analogies” which intend to articulate how the one God can be understood as Father, Son, and Spirit, and “analogies” which intend to show how this reality is reflected in humanity. To say that the psychological analogy fails in the second (which it does) is not necessarily to say that it fails in the first (which it does not).

37 See *De Trinitate* VII, 12; XV, 25; cf. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 45, a. 7; *ST I*, q. 93, a. 5, 8.

38 “*Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda*” (Lateran IV, DH 806). Book XV of Augustine's *De Trinitate* is largely devoted to this *maior dissimilitudo*.

39 Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 2, *The Truth of God*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 40.

40 Balthasar, *Theo-Logic* 2:38. Balthasar does, keeping with his tendency to emphasize the

must be taken together, since it is precisely the union of the intra-subjective and inter-subjective that grounds the *imago Trinitatis* in human being, which mirrors and reflects the eternal Trinity.

This brief sketch would require further elaboration in order to be complete and convincing. But even amid this further elaboration, the analogy between finite consciousness and infinite consciousness would remain ineffably distant. While the two moments of consciousness are perfectly united in God, where intellectual procession is no different from interpersonal union, they can only be represented in two distinct (yet inseparable) aspects in the finite image. But it is precisely this non-absolute character that points to the Absolute as that infinite wellspring in whom perfect self-consciousness and perfect other-consciousness coincide. Thus Balthasar: “The creaturely image must be content to look in the direction of the mystery of God from its two starting points at the same time; the lines of perspective meet at an invisible point, in eternity.”⁴¹ Not only must we *look* to God where these two images meet in eternal perfection, but we must also become *like* God precisely insofar as these two aspects of our consciousness and personhood come closer together. To return to Gregory’s idea briefly sketched above, it is the ideal of human knowing and loving for unity with self and unity with other persons to coincide perfectly. Such, indeed, is the pattern and shape of a good marriage, to take one kind of human relationship as an example. Unity with self is maximally attained not merely in relation to other human persons but ultimately in relation to the triune God. Only eschatologically, when the image is totally conformed to the archetype, knowing just as it is known (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), will the fullness of the image of God, here seen only in shadow, be attained.



inter-subjective (as we have already seen), prioritize the interpersonal image, even describing the father-mother-child analogy as “the most eloquent *imago Trinitatis* that we find woven into the fabric of the creature” (62).

41 Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 527.

DAN, WHERE'S THE DOG

television violins croon over
the rolling black and white of
marionette lovers dancing
gay and caucasian over
fresh cut american lawns and

—yawp;

fractured cling wrap gaze
pulls the meridian of her lips
back like leather reins
eye wide contractions
she bleats

—dan, where's the dog;

hoarfrost gralloch of
dull and rusting razors
ice drift pelt of frozen scales
king mangled in a bear trap's jaw

—snarling; foaming; gasping;

as rabbits tear round
jeering in perfect circles
backwoods t.v. tray crucifixion
the stones watching cry in protest

—and what say ye, jehovah;

CALEB CHOATE
New York



Bearing Being's Burden

Suffering & Finitude in the Thought of Emmanuel Falque & Jean-Luc Marion

ANTHONY SCORDINO¹

ABSTRACT: Emmanuel Falque and Jean-Luc Marion stand out as two contemporary Catholic intellectuals who have critically appropriated the (post)modern continental philosophical tradition for theological and apologetic ends, intent on articulating a Christianity “credible” to their secular, nonbelieving interlocutors without forfeiting the faith of ages past. In so doing, they assume modes of discourse, engage thinkers, and address sets of questions common to Western academia’s ongoing philosophic conversation, a prominent stain of which has since the early twentieth century been characterized by an existentialist-phenomenological approach grappling with embodiment, suffering, and being in a distinctively melancholic mode. The present work revolves around a critical analysis of Emmanuel Falque’s recent contribution to this discourse—his “Philosophical Triptych”—with a particular focus on his depiction of human suffering and finitude as experienced “without” God (which he believes is, in fact, humanity’s atheistic experiential *a priori*), drawing out and explicitly articulating a claim oft only implicit in his work: finitude lived bereft of relation to God not only necessarily *entails* suffering but in fact *is* suffering. A brief analysis of Jean-Luc Marion’s similarly morose, but nonetheless contrasting, portrait of atheistic human experience in *God Without Being* will then be placed in constructive dialogue with Falque’s work. A study of their respective descriptive “diagnoses” of the contemporary God-less human dilemma (as opposed to their Christian-transformative “prescriptions”) provides illuminating examples of an apologetic strategy that is philosophically appropriative, empathetic, non-triumphalist, and uniquely tailored to dialogue with Western secular postmodernity.

Introduction

Finitude isn’t lived—it is suffered.

At least, such is the impression one gets from a dominant strain of twentieth century continental philosophy,² particularly from those operating with

1 Anthony Scordino is a student in the Master of Theological Studies program at the University of Notre Dame.

2 See Brian Treanor, “Joy and the Myopia of Finitude,” *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 8:1 (2016), 6-25. Treanor argues for “the melancholic imbalance of continental philosophy—its obsession with death, tragedy, alienation, and loss,” identifying Freud, Heidegger, Levinas, Sartre, Camus, *et al.* as exemplifying this “myopia.”

non-theism as a methodological or phenomenological *a priori* (if not also a philosophical conclusion).³ God-less existence⁴—*Being without God*—endures more than it enjoys and laments more than it lauds the finitude to which it is bound. Suffering's ontic components (physical, emotional, and psychological pain; perishing, corruption, and disease), its ontological components (anxiety and not-being-at-homeness; vanity, boredom, and acedia; dying and death), and the latter's inscription in the former (*enfleshed* anxiety; *embodying* death) can be neither wholly, nor even mostly, circumvented and eluded.⁵ Finitude is an *a priori* of existence, not a choice. Like the death to which it inexorably leads, the suffering co-extensive—if not coterminous—with finitude is always and only *my own*. The other is barred from authentically co-experiencing my anguish as empathy, compassion, and solidarity meet their limits.⁶ Suffering can be as little “shared” as it can be “explained” or “articulated.”⁷ Most troubling of

3 Insofar as atheism presupposes the explicit intellectual (if not also performative) rejection of a particular notion of “God”—and thus some modicum of consideration of the question of God—“non-theism” is preferred to “atheism.”

4 “God-less” as opposed to (but not incompatible with) “God-denying” will be the preferred usage, with the former signifying finitude as experienced (phenomenological, descriptive) before the question of God and the possibility of explicit atheism arises (theoretical, volitional). Positing atheism as a phenomenological *a priori* is a methodological presupposition elaborated upon below.

5 Despite receiving no explicit definition in the texts to be addressed in this work, the following heuristic description of “suffering” and brief elaboration will be capacious and supple enough to account for the various modalities of its referent: to experience the deprivation of some perceived good (physical, psychological, existential, spiritual, etc.) beyond a subjective threshold of intensity. “Threshold of intensity,” although a vague phrase, is a necessary concession to common parlance as well as a means of preserving a modicum of gravitas and respect for the subject matter. While “crossing a threshold” instinctively conjures scalar, quantitative images of pain hitting X units and therefore constituting “suffering” (which is in some ways accurate), it is meant to signify something more akin to a qualitative experiential shift (say, from mere discomfort to true suffering). When the experience of the deprivation of some perceived good reaches a particular pitch of intensity, one endures it not as fleeting, isolated, or unremarkable, but as demanding the attention of, engaging, and affecting the whole self, threatening its coherence or integrity and (usually consciously) monopolizing attention. Further, the “threshold” is subjective, fluid, and contingent, unique to each person, subject to variations and development throughout one's lifetime, and oft dependent upon environment, habituation, and mental state (amongst much else).

6 Chronic pain uniquely illustrates this reality: what becomes repetitive, tiresome, and routine for even the most empathetic of companions remains ever-new and ever-urgent for the sufferer.

7 Consider all that is lost in the frustrating and often futile translation of one's pain into a “1–10” number scale in a hospital or doctor's office.

all, suffering is both practically inevitable and often beyond our control⁸—an immanent indefinite, an uncertain certainty.

Christians, in a sense, possess a uniquely pertinent point of contact for dialogue with this prominent strain of secular postmodernity: for we, with Paul, proclaim “nothing except Christ crucified.”⁹ Contemporary Catholic philosopher-theologian Emmanuel Falque boldly capitalizes on this point of contact by systematically addressing death, suffering, the flesh, and finitude in his “Philosophical Triptych,” and he does so with the express intention of establishing phenomenological common ground with nonbelieving, contemporary postmodern interlocutors. Although he ultimately suggests the possibility of a Christian transformation of the initially “atheistic” structures of reality and experience he outlines, Falque draws from, builds upon, and deeply sympathizes with an array of broadly “melancholic” twentieth century philosophers (most notably Heidegger, but also Levinas, Derrida, Camus, and Sartre) in a part-accompanying, part-apologetic dialogical-evangelical strategy.

The present work offers a critical exposition of Falque’s forceful depiction of God-less suffering and finitude—the “default” human state—drawing out and explicitly articulating a claim oft only implicit throughout his writing: finitude lived bereft of relation to God not only necessarily *entails* suffering but in fact *is* suffering. Subsequently, a clarifying because contrastive vision of the suffering pervading the horizon of finitude will then be set forth: that of Jean-Luc Marion in *God Without Being*—another Catholic philosopher-theologian (and a former teacher of Falque) engaging the contemporary continental philosophic tradition in a similar, quasi-apologetic mode. The two depictions of finitude will then be placed in dialogue on two points of tension: their characterization of secular Western postmodernity’s chief malaise and the presence or non-presence of a desire for the infinite. Although emphasizing different aspects of finitude-as-burdensome, both Falque and Marion concur that the experience of human being (without God) is that of *suffering finitude*—a *finitude to be suffered, finitude as/is suffering*. In so doing, they provide examples of an apologetic strategy that is philosophically appropriative, non-triumphalist, empathetic, and uniquely tailored to engage with secular postmodernity.

8 Given the physical environment we inhabit, the social environments we have constructed, and the practical necessity of interpersonal interactions with autonomous agents (which, from a Christian perspective, are fallen agents), we live lives of radical vulnerability.

9 1 Cor. 2:2.

Emmanuel Falque: Suffering Finitude

Accompaniment & Apologetics: A Brief Introduction to Falque's Method & Relationship to the Thought of Martin Heidegger

For Falque, the “passive nihilism” characterizing (post)modern Western unbelief demands a suitably contemporary response from the Christian community,¹⁰ a response rooted in the faith of ages past yet made “credible” by being “expounded through the methods of research and the literary forms of modern thought.”¹¹ He answers this half-century-old summons of Pope John XXIII with his “triptych,” opening each volume “philosophically” (which for him means phenomenologically) by setting forth “bare Dasein’s”—(human) being-there without God¹²—ontological and existential contours as birthed and enfleshed (volume II), as embodied and erotic (volume III), and as anxious, suffering, and dying (volume I). Afterward, he argues for the transformative potentialities Christianity offers this *a priori* atheistic existence and the finitude characterizing it, proposing a “theological metamorphosis of the philosophic structure of the world.”¹³ In each volume’s philosophical portion (most notably in *Guide* and *Metamorphosis*), Falque uses Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* as his phenomenological touchstone for describing humanity’s *a priori*

10 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 28

11 “Pope John’s Opening Speech to the Council,” October 11, 1962, quoted in *The Guide to Gethsemane*, xv.

12 In *Being and Time*, Heidegger seeks to ask the question of the meaning of Being anew, offering what he terms an existential analytic of “Dasein” [Being-there]: an analysis of the being of that being who questions and is concerned about its own being, whose essence “lies in its existence” with existence understood as its existential possibilities to be. In other words, Dasein, as being-possible, is fundamentally determined by its possibilities, and such results in the paradoxical affirmation of the dynamism of Dasein’s being as becoming—its being is its becoming, since it is always already both in potentiality and becoming. In his view, the history of philosophical and theological anthropology consists of a series of objectifications of “human” being that fail to address the question of being of this being—they raise questions about human being, not the question of human being. Although Heidegger would in many ways resist using “Dasein” conterminously and interchangeably with “human existence” or “human being,” such is a necessary concession if one’s work is to be rendered intelligible to those unfamiliar with his work. And, insofar as Falque uses “Dasein” as functionally synonymous with human being or existence, the present essay opts for the latter usage when possible. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2010).

13 Emmanuel Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection*, trans. George Hughes (New York, NY: Fordham University, 2012), xiv.

God-less existence in “irreducible finitude,”¹⁴ since by his estimation Heidegger provides a portrait of “humankind in pure and simple humanity.”¹⁵ Although moving “through and beyond” Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein in a twofold fashion—first, by filling in lacunae in Heidegger’s work, and second, by letting rays of Easter light illuminate and transform the bare Dasein it describes—*Being and Time* consistently undergirds Falque’s phenomenological analysis of finitude.¹⁶

Falque willingly cedes theoretical ground to his postmodern, nonbelieving interlocutors in a pseudo-apologetic strategy that could be termed *existential accompaniment*.¹⁷ He forgoes straightforward debate and “teaching”—modes of discourse termed “didactic and downward directed”—in favor of a “heuristic and upward directed” movement “from below” that seeks to take on the Being-there of humanity “without God” so that their questions and experiences aren’t simply *understood*, but *lived*.¹⁸ Falque beckons the Christian to take empathy to its limits, going beyond (or *beneath*) didacticism toward a sincere existential engagement willing to learn from and accompany atheistic existence on its own terms: “We need to appropriate [atheism] before we condemn it, and we need to see it not simply from the point of view of the certitudes of the faith.”¹⁹

Insofar as he functions within the self-imposed methodological parameters this accompanying-apologetic project requires, Falque concurs with the sharp demarcation Heidegger draws between phenomenology (coterminous with “philosophy”) and theology, bracketing revelation—albeit, imperfectly—by commencing each volume with an analysis of human being “pure and simple.”²⁰

14 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 2.

15 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, xviii.

16 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 36.

17 Falque does not use the phrase in his triptych. I choose “existential” because he asks believers to take on and sincerely appropriate nonbelievers’ questions and anxiety. I choose “accompaniment” rather than “compassion” because, in the Christian and particularly the Catholic tradition, accompaniment suggests compassion not only for its own sake but also for the sake of opening up a space wherein one walks with the other toward a further end and a fuller transformation of his or her current self.

18 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 37. Falque’s work could be classified alongside Paul Tillich’s “apologetic” (or “answering”) correlational theology and in contra-distinction to a more Barthian kerygmatic, proclamatory theology.

19 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 35. Elaboration on a specifically Christian empathy (and its limits) would have been a welcome addition to the passages where he outlines this method. For Falque, the paradigmatic instance and ultimate justification for this existential accompaniment is the Incarnation itself (*Metamorphosis*, 37).

20 See Martin Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology” in *Pathmarks*, trans. James G.

Falque understands the existential analytic of Dasein offered in *Being and Time* to be the normative and foundational (even if incomplete)²¹ phenomenological interpretation of being and finitude. Despite expressly stating his intentions to transform philosophy by theology, Falque nonetheless acknowledges himself to be doing so only by “going through and beyond Heidegger—who for me represents not a doctrine but a vision of the world starting from things as they are,”²² calling for a “return to the pure and simply facticity of our Being-there (Dasein) described in *Being and Time*, because it is only that facticity, initially at least, that we know.”²³ As grace perfects nature—resituating it within a simultaneously preservative yet transformative higher integration—so theology is to philosophy and Falque is to Heidegger.

Falquian Finitude—A Précis

No consistent definition of finitude can be found in Emmanuel Falque's triptych, but descriptions abound. Given his heuristic approach “from below,” finitude must be distinguished from “finite,” since the latter not only inevitably imports or implies reference to the Infinite and therein disallows plain and simple humanity to speak on its own terms, but also because the term “finite” denotes particular imperfections (finite functioning as an *ontic* category) as opposed to the determinative mode of human being (finitude functioning as an *existential* and *ontological* category—a more illuminating usage).²⁴ Finitude is “the first given”²⁵ of ordinary human experience. The horizon of finitude is “closed” or “blocked” by an “impassable immanence”²⁶—“the horizon of pure imma-

Hart et al., ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 39-62.

21 Regarding the “incomplete” nature of Heidegger's existential analytic, Falque cites Heidegger's “neglect of the flesh or of bodiliness in general” (*Guide*, 67) as exacerbating the already problematic “Heideggerian occlusion of suffering” (*Guide*, 84). Beyond sporadic citations in the same vein, Falque performatively demonstrates his discontent with these portions of Heidegger's analysis by authoring entire volumes on both the former (embodiment, *Wedding Feast*) and latter (suffering, *Guide*) “neglected” topics.

22 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 36.

23 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 17.

24 See *Guide*, 13–18. From p. 17: “Heidegger (interpreting Kant) [argues] that ‘in order to designate the finite in human beings it might suffice to cite any of our imperfections. In this way, we gain, at best, evidence for the fact that the human being is a finite creature. However, we learn neither wherein the essence of his finitude exists, nor even how this finitude completely determines the human being from the ground up as the being it is.’”

25 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 13.

26 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 14.

nence²⁷—because of which claims to a directedness towards transcendence, a yearning for the infinite, a supernatural existential, or a structurally rooted desire for God are “arbitrary” and theologically superimposed.²⁸ “Existential atheism” is maintained as the “*a priori* of existence.”²⁹ Moving beyond existential finitude (and despite frequently cautioning against articulating finitude in terms of finite or ontic qualities), Falque insists that, as corporal and incarnate, humanity is subject to “the most fundamental law of incarnation”:³⁰ “insurmountable corruptibility”³¹ unto death. Finitude blocks the horizon of our existence both existentially (ontologically, as beings-towards-death) and physically (ontically, as corporal beings subject to the law of corruptibility). Finitude constitutes human existence in such a way that “life is completely dominated by care [*Sorge*], and it makes of our Being-there a simple ‘between,’ caught between birth and death.”³²

27 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 64.

28 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 7. To quote him at length: “In fact nothing seems more arbitrary, to me and to many others, than some kind of experience, given to us or proffered us, of the Infinite, above all when it is taken to be a kind of requisite deriving from some structure of humanity. Everything seems to indicate, at least when we take our ‘human condition’ seriously (see Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Deleuze), that the temporality, which gets called “ecstatic,” is nothing less than a finite temporality of which ‘the future is closed’ and the ‘foundations nonexistent.’ Only the closed horizon of our Being-there (finitude) convinces us in the first place, at least, that we exist.” Although oftentimes related to constraints concomitant with his heuristic approach, even in the more explicitly theological portions of his texts he resists positing any intrinsic or inborn “desire for God.” This point will be taken up later and placed in dialogue with the quite different stance of Jean-Luc Marion.

29 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 29, 43.

30 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 50.

31 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 2.

32 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 13. For Heidegger in *Being and Time*, Dasein is thrown toward death, into death, and unto death. Death flows from being-in-the-world while being-in-the-world flows toward death. Dasein lives (towards) its death and dies (as long) as it lives. Since Dasein only is in terms of its relations to its possibilities, and since the “ownmost, nonrelational, and insuperable” possibility to which it relates is death (241), Dasein is above all and before all related to its own death—a “being-toward-death,” “always already delivered over to its death” and constitutively relating/related to it (248). The mode by which one relates to one’s death singles one out as the being one is; analogously, the fact that Dasein is uniquely self-relational singles it out among beings as the being that it is, one “concerned about its very being” in its very being (which, for Heidegger, constitutes it as ontological and not simply ontic) (211). We are always already dying, always already moving toward the insuperable and inevitable possibility of our impossibility—the absolute impossibility of any being-possible beyond “no-longer-being-able-to-be-there” (241). As long as Dasein is, it is toward its death—or, rather, one could say that it dies toward its death (“Being toward its death, [Dasein] dies factually and constantly as long as it has not reached its demise” (248).)

Incarnating (Suffering) Dasein: Falque's Critique of Heidegger and the Phenomenological Tradition

Heidegger's analytic in *Being and Time* insufficiently accounts for the totality of Dasein's horizon of finitude (and the burden it thereby entails) to the extent that he disregards bodiliness, suffering, and embodied suffering.³³ Chaos, animality, corporality, corruptibility, embodied suffering, and enfleshed anxiety blur the lines between the existential and the ontic; each is a fundamental modality of human existence, and each is largely or entirely absent from Heidegger's corpus and much of the phenomenological tradition more broadly.³⁴ Falque fills in these gaps—enfleshing Dasein's Cartesian skeleton—and in doing so severely exacerbates the already bleak Heideggerian depiction of finitude.

To accomplish this feat, Falque introduces what he believes to be an insufficiently remarked upon—since subterranean—facet of human existence: what he terms “Chaos,” a nebulous concept depicting a correlatively nebulous reality and used conterminously with “*tohu-bohu*” from Genesis 1 and “the abyss.” Chaos is not nothingness, but confusion and darkness, the untamable and utterly opaque foundation of being-there, “the openness and the obscurity of the world and of myself.”³⁵ “Chaos is invasion,” invasion from the depths of our existence—Dasein revolting against itself for being itself.³⁶ Chaos takes on a twofold dimension in *Wedding Feast*: first, as the originary substructure and cornerstone of our humanity—“The abyss makes humankind. It is what humankind is constructed upon: it is what we can never destroy”³⁷—and second, as the frenzied amalgam of preconscious, unchosen, and uncontrol-

33 Since Falque uses body, flesh, embodiment, and enfleshment synonymously until their distinction and the distinction's import are worked out in the trilogy's final volume, *Wedding Feast*, they will be used synonymously throughout this paper.

34 In the “Introduction” to *Wedding Feast*, Falque terms this the “swerve of the flesh” (away from the body), a movement in the phenomenological tradition wherein the “flesh” as “subjective lived experience” and consciousness (only tangentially related to embodiment) is foregrounded while the body and corporality—the condition for the possibility of “the flesh”—is forgotten (*Wedding Feast*, 1-4 and 15-24). Falque lists a host of factors contributing to this general neglect, a few of which are: upholding passivity over force and activity, forgetfulness of the biological dimension of our being, and an unwillingness to move beneath phenomenology (which often either presupposes or imposes order and coherence) to “the initial Chaos” by which we are constituted (*Wedding Feast*, 15-24).

35 Emmanuel Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, trans. George Hughes (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016), 29.

36 Falque, *Wedding Feast*, 22.

37 Falque, *Wedding Feast*, 5.

lable (at least insofar as their existence is concerned) passions, drives, and desires—“our interior Chaos of feelings, that accumulation of passions and drives that ensures we open up to the world by the body rather than by the consciousness.”³⁸ Regarding the former, Chaos is neither univocally identified with sin or evil nor simply “beyond good and evil.” This originary abyss is beneath good and evil as part of our created being-there. But, even if morally neutral in and of itself, Chaos refuses designation as “raw material” from which autonomous, conscious agents construct lives pretending to immunity from it. In fact, a few pages later, Falque intensifies language regarding Chaos’s disruptive proclivities to the point of near (if not actual) inconsistency with Chaos’s purported amorality: “My thesis is that ‘what we wish to recognize is the following—surely some terrible, savage, and lawless form of desires’ is in every man,” going by the name of Chaos.³⁹

Moving beyond Chaos-as-originary, Falque progress into a depiction of Chaos-as-organic. Chaos is always bodied and always invading—always invading as embodied. It is an inescapable constituent (pre)condition of humanity’s embodied finitude. Originary Chaos founds humanity, but the mode by which this Chaos is experienced by human beings is what Falque terms “animality.”⁴⁰ Before the Cartesian *cogito* or Heidegger’s being-toward-death is “the animal that therefore I am,”⁴¹ neglect of which forms “an omission even more fundamental than the neglect of being” against which Heidegger protested.⁴² To neglect animality is to neglect both the Chaos upon and by which we are constituted as well as the means by which we encounter this constitutive Chaos and the world around us. While animality is occasionally portrayed by Falque as a bastion against finite corporality’s entropic corruptibility (insofar as biological animality undergirds “the life the human being enjoys without needing to think about it”—an evolutionary-adaptive forgetfulness of finitude), it is more profoundly the source of existence in finitude’s unease (insofar as “the fundamental experience of the world as ‘chaos’”—both organically and existentially—has its roots in “animality”).⁴³

38 Falque, *Wedding Feast*, 100.

39 Falque, *Wedding Feast*, 18.

40 Falque, *Wedding Feast*, 63–99.

41 Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (address to the 1997 C erisy Conference), trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University, 2008), quoted in *Wedding Feast*, 66.

42 Falque, *Wedding Feast*, 43.

43 Falque, *Wedding Feast*, 29, 66.

Characteristic of animality is not only Chaos, but also embodiment; and characteristic of embodiment is not only passions and drives, but also *suffering*. To neglect the flesh is to neglect suffering; to neglect suffering is to neglect the flesh; to neglect both is to neglect the totality of human being in finitude. Falque repeatedly denounces the “Heideggerian occlusion of suffering” along with “Heidegger’s neglect of the flesh or of bodiliness in general.”⁴⁴ He calls attention to the phenomenologically inadequate and inaccurate portrait of finitude generated in their absence as well as the “Promethean” measures Heidegger recommends regarding authentically living one’s finitude, measures “doomed to failure” to the extent that they neglect suffering, the flesh, and enfleshed suffering.⁴⁵ Suffering remains stubbornly obtrusive, chaotic, and insurmountable, unable to be mitigated by a heroic act of the will. Humans don’t simply exist within the horizon of unsurpassable finitude but within the horizon of unsurpassable *enfleshed and suffering finitude*. These aren’t mere ontic additions of a qualitatively different and less meaningful order than the ontological and existential finitude Heidegger outlines because, for Falque, existential anxiety (over death) *inscribes itself in the flesh* given the incarnate nature of the Dasein who suffers.⁴⁶ Strict demarcations between the ontic and the ontological are blurred, crossed, and transcended. You cannot plumb the depths of anxiety and existential suffering until you’ve plumbed the depths of the flesh—or, rather, until you’ve described how such suffering itself plumbs the depths of our flesh.

Yet, the flesh isn’t solely downstream from existential anxiety and suffering. Causality works in the other direction, given “the unbearable *existential* weight of *physical* suffering, of illness, age, or death.”⁴⁷ Suffering overtakes us and then takes over us. Amidst the “ineradicable experience of [the] suffering body,” our “body [becomes] so excessive as to be invasive” in an overtaking so severe that we in fact “[become] in fleshy terms totally suffering.”⁴⁸ The overwhelming corruptibility and passability of fleshy finitude comprise an unavoidable burden on all who pass through this world—or, better, who the world passes through. Falque, in profound agreement with Tertullian, argues that “It was not enough, then, in Tertullian’s impressive phrase, that Christ ‘carried the cross’; it was also necessary for him to ‘carry the flesh,’” submitting Himself to an incarnate suffering impossible to either master or overcome given the corruptibility, Chaos,

44 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 84, 67.

45 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 67.

46 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 65–67.

47 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 14.

48 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 94, 88, 95.

and vulnerability intrinsic to fleshy finitude.⁴⁹ The flesh is a cross of its own that all must carry along with the ineradicable and insurmountable suffering it entails—suffering so profound that in its face, words fail. Out of the excess of this burden, only the flesh can speak.⁵⁰

The Manifest Burden of Being

Falque's Chaotic and suffering enfleshment of Heideggerian finitude adds depth and density that intensify the already morose aura hovering over Dasein's being-in-the-world. Chaotic animality, corruptible embodiment, enfleshed suffering—each a modification of the original existential analytic of Dasein, and each either heightening burdensome elements identifiable in Heidegger's original description or adding entirely new burdens to an already beleaguered Dasein. Both gasoline and kindling are added to the pyre of finitude. If Heideggerian finitude is *to be suffered* and is arguably functionally coterminous with *suffering*, then Emmanuel Falque's is all the more so.

First, a synthesis of more explicit claims and statements from throughout the triptych will be mustered to argue that, for Falque, human beings *suffer finitude*. Afterward, the argument will be bolstered by gleaning inferred and implied arguments: namely, moments where his insistence on Christianity's exclusively transformative potential reveals the radicality (albeit, only implicitly and negatively) of the dark and hopeless burden that finitude is when borne without God. Taken in tandem, the two produce a philosophical-aesthetic portrait of a wretched finitude desperate for healing, hope, metamorphosis, and salvation.⁵¹

A suffocating and radical *immanence* haunts us, engendering a state of existential claustrophobia and “enclosing [us] on all sides.”⁵² As beings thrown towards their ownmost absolute nullity, humans are marked by an “ineradicable anxiety” in the face of “the absurdity or meaninglessness of death,”⁵³ a contagion metastasizing into the whole of one's being and therein infecting our lives with “striking,” “profound,” and even “absolute,” meaninglessness.⁵⁴ The specter

49 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 65.

50 See Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 82–84. Falque uses the Christ's agony in the garden as a paradigmatic example of the excess of suffering producing a silenced voice and a shouting body: “His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground” (Luke 22:44).

51 This is likely an apologetic strategy—the worse Godless finitude is, the more desirable is the strength and transformation Christianity offers.

52 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 16.

53 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 9.

54 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 7, 25, 7.

of death never offers a moment's respite, and dying offers no happy ending. In "morbid and humiliating" anxiety, humans instinctively recognize "the *tragedy* of their own deaths."⁵⁵ Rather than re-articulate and refine Heidegger's anxiety-induced yet authenticity-provoking existential solipsism, Falque intensifies its isolating tendencies and denies its positively transformative potential, speaking instead of "the abandonment of the self to the self," "the pure unbreakable solipsism of suffering and dying flesh," and "Promethean ambitions ... doomed to failure."⁵⁶

To plunge deep within ourselves is to discover an incomprehensible Chaos; to look outward is to witness "the general shipwreck of the totality of beings";⁵⁷ and to look forward is to (re)discover the unavoidable tragedy bound to overtake us. Falque approvingly echoes, as apposite, Nietzsche's definition of humankind as "the animal not yet properly adapted to his environment,"⁵⁸ both existentially because of an "anxiety from which man on his own cannot liberate himself: 'I am a burden to myself'"⁵⁹ and physically because of a "suffering [that keeps us from becoming acclimatized to this world]."⁶⁰ The structures of Dasein's horizon of finitude ensure both humanity's "enduring (i.e., suffering) this world" and "suffering (from) this world."⁶¹ This omnipresent and polyvalent "burden of finitude"⁶² weighs upon us daily, so unbearable that even Christ "begged ... that the Father [would] break the pain" after having learned "what [finitude's] burden is."⁶³ In his view, dying and death—and the existential and corporal suffering necessarily concomitant with both—is such an "unbearable burden";⁶⁴ one could reasonably argue that death *disburdens us of life*. To sum, here is a quote containing some of the bleakest language found in the triptych:

Everything seems to indicate, at least when we take our "human condition" seriously (see Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Deleuze), that the temporality, which gets called "ecstatic," is nothing less than a finite temporality of which "*the future is closed*" and the "*foundations nonexistent*." Only *the closed horizon* of our Being-there (finitude) convinc-

55 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 30, 22.

56 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 35, 107, 67.

57 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 46.

58 Friedrich Nietzsche, citation not given, quoted in *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 105.

59 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 113.

60 Maurice Blondel, *Action*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2004), 351, quoted in Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 99.

61 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 2. Cf. *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 74.

62 Falque frequently describes finitude as a "burden." See *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 6, 118, and 119, and *The Guide to Gethsemane*, xxviii, 66, 70, and 102.

63 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 77.

64 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 93.

es us in the first place, at least, that we exist—albeit in *the tormented excess of the existence that is imposed on us*. “We have not the slightest reason to be here, not one among us,” says Sartre’s Antoine Roquentin.⁶⁵

Writhing in the agony of a tormented, meaningless existence involuntarily forced upon us, God-less Dasein (to which finitude *a priori* binds each and all) gropes haplessly amidst isolation and darkness for a place to discard, or a means to ameliorate, the unbearable burden of Being-there. Whether it be a supreme act of the will, an authentic being-toward-death, a radical existentialist freedom, or a nihilistic resignation, “the absence of an *a priori* validity of the ‘Being-there’ of ... life confronted with death” forces us into willing, imposing, creating, or renouncing meaning and purpose.⁶⁶ From Falque’s perspective, nothing other than the metamorphosis made possible by Christ’s Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection—God’s dwelling with us and as us in the flesh, living finitude to (and beyond) its limits—satisfies our desire for transformation. Philosophy reaches its limits in finitude: “in the eyes of the philosopher, the ultimate truth concerning suffering and anxiety cannot be told other than in the inescapable finitude of the human condition and thus in death.”⁶⁷ “The triple closure of the world, of time, and of man without God” is the first and last word for the nonbeliever.⁶⁸ We are burdens unto ourselves from which we cannot be set free, and any such “Promethean ambition” is “doomed to failure.”⁶⁹ Quoting Falque again: “Any ground on which to rest will *only* find its true base in God the Father and *never* in humankind.”⁷⁰ The Absolute Other that is the Father, through resurrecting the Other-with-us that is the Son, opens the sole pathway to freedom in the Spirit—“only the resurrection is capable of breaking through the chains of both finitude and temporality.”⁷¹ Writing with an insistence too systematic to carry rhetorical import alone, Falque (philosophically) maintains the unsurpassable, meaningless, and anxiety-ridden burden of finitude while

65 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 7, emphasis added.

66 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 60.

67 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 1.

68 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 94.

69 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 67.

70 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 52, emphasis added.

71 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 22. Through rebirth in the Spirit by the waters of baptism—baptized as we are into his death so as to be reborn with his life—we unite the cross of our fleshy finitude to the cross of Christ, and we “do this less to free [ourselves] from the weight of that burden than to accept it in another way,” to bear the burden of being otherwise through power of the Other-with-us (*Metamorphosis*, 118). For Falque, “all that counts in reality is our way of carrying these burdens.... The lightness of [Christ’s] yoke comes from the spiritual power of him who carries it (the Holy Spirit)” (*Metamorphosis*, 119).

(Christian-theologically) maintaining the miraculous possibility for its transformation, meaningfulness, and joyfulness. As he describes it: “God himself makes possible, even realizable, what man legitimately holds to be impossible.”⁷² Those unaware of, indifferent towards, or rejecting Christianity and the transformation it proposes are confined, then, to “the pure unbreakable solipsism of suffering and dying flesh,”⁷³ prisoners within “the impassable immanence of a world without God.”⁷⁴

Jean-Luc Marion: (Human-)Being Without God

Examining the similarly bleak yet substantively disparate vision of God-less finitude articulated by Jean Luc-Marion in *God Without Being* will provide another example of a postmodern Catholic “soft” apologetic, one that characterizes the contemporary Western malaise in less drastic but nonetheless dismal terms. Similar to Falque, Marion defines finitude in Heideggerian terms as “ontic and above all ontologically determined, [discovering] (itself in) the openness of Being, which does not cease to bring about being’s possibility.”⁷⁵ The “first visible”—that object, person, concept, or ideology that serves as the limit at which our “gaze” halts—circumscribes the horizon of finitude, becoming an idol that “dazzles” the seeker by “the brilliance of its light.” This light is then reflected back upon the idolater and suffuses her field of vision or horizon while simultaneously delimiting its scope. “The idol consigns the divine to the measure of a human gaze” that ultimately (though often unwittingly) only looks upon itself.⁷⁶ Insofar as it is we who have opted to rest our gaze upon a first visible, we erect an idol that functions as a clouded mirror by which we insert ourselves as the limit and measure of all being, the light or lens in which all else appears. All idolatry terminates with autoidolatry, even if unbeknownst to the idolater.

Notably, though, Marion refuses to place human agency (“an ethical choice”) as the sole or even primary source of idolatry: “That which renders a gaze idolatrous could not, at least at first, arise from an ethical choice: it reveals a sort

72 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 124, emphasis added.

73 Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane*, 102.

74 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 128. A more formal analysis of the latent theology of religions within Falque’s work would be necessary to properly substantiate these claims. He holds firmly to Christianity’s radical uniqueness, the uniquely transformative power of the Christian faith, and the Christian believer’s (ideally) qualitatively different mode of being-in-the-world.

75 Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A Carlson, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2012), 109.

76 Marion, *God Without Being*, 11–14.

of *essential fatigue*. The gaze settles only *inasmuch as it rests*—*from the weight of upholding the sight of an aim without term, rest, or end.*⁷⁷ What is described here is *existential exhaustion* overtaking Dasein: the moment when the gaze’s apparently interminable journey through and beyond each and every visible transitions from a hopeful yearning into a *burden* (“weight”) too heavy to endure (“uphold”). The gaze “abandons ... the invisible” “as unbearable to live,” as a fictitious and self-deluding construction.⁷⁸

Yet, what meager gods they make! Insufficiently equipped to bear the burden of their (infinite) desires, these simultaneous idol-idolators suffer under the infinite pretensions of the “fiery eyes” whose gaze has been turned upon themselves.⁷⁹ “The radical immanence to the one who experiences [the idol]”⁸⁰ opens up the possibility of an “idoloclastic gaze” transpiercing every idol and never fixing on a visible. Marion terms this “untenable but trampled interspace” between idol and icon, visible and invisible, finitude and infinity, seeing and being seen, boredom. Boredom’s horizon is not akin to vast, ever-expanding (because ever-transpiercing) cosmos, but it is a black hole, consuming and negating all it encounters. This “intolerable suspension” leads not only to a “detestation” of every idol (and every visible along with it) but also to the gaze’s “hating itself” for its own insufficiency⁸¹—“suicide by contempt of self.”⁸² Or, to quote as Marion does from Valéry’s *Monsieur Teste*: “Without any trouble I found within myself everything necessary to hate myself.”⁸³ Strikingly, for Marion, this is “a situation that is both possible and actual every day: our own”—Western secular postmodernity induces a slow demise (or even self-destruction) by self-loathing despair, successively erecting and toppling idols in a movement both desperate and cynical.⁸⁴

From the gaze follows the idol, from the idol follows boredom, and from boredom follows *vanity*: an indifference to ontological difference—to the fact that what is, *is*—because of which “the cohesion, the consistency, and the opaque compactness” of reality dissipate.⁸⁵ Boredom’s all-transpiercing and insatiable gaze—unsatisfied because unsatisfiable—spawns a suspension with-

77 Marion, *God Without Being*, 13, emphasis added.

78 Marion, *God Without Being*, 26.

79 Marion, *God Without Being*, 11.

80 Marion, *God Without Being*, 28.

81 Marion, *God Without Being*, 113–116.

82 Marion, *God Without Being*, 258 n.7.

83 Marion, *God Without Being*, 258 n.8.

84 Marion, *God Without Being*, 114.

85 Marion, *God Without Being*, 125.

in the interspace between idol and icon, and this engenders a further suspension—that of being itself. This vanity is a fundamental (existential) mode of being-in-the-world rather than merely a passing disposition, and it “suspends” being insofar as it reveals the fragility of being—its “caducity,” impermanence, and transience.⁸⁶ In a single moment, all can evanesce—all is caduke, held in suspension, and existing as that which, at any moment, just as easily can not exist such that its existence is suffused with its inevitable non-existence. Marion, in a sense, extends Heidegger’s being-toward-death beyond humanity’s experience of self and toward all that is: as humans carry their death within themselves as long as they are, so too is “[Being/being’s] present permanence ... saturated with its abolition”; just as the fact that Dasein hasn’t succumbed to its ultimate not-yet is a testimony to the not-yet’s inevitability, “[Being/being] resists its disappearance only in order better to indicate that the very possibility of disappearing defines it.”⁸⁷

Similar to Falque and to Heidegger before him, Marion describes God-less Dasein as inhabiting a closed horizon of finitude, and suffering from idolatry’s insufficiency and existential fatigue, boredom’s blind gaze and self-hatred, and vanity’s ontological indifference and intolerable suspension. For Marion, as for them, one suffers or endures rather than lives finitude.

Analysis: Falque, Marion, & the Desire for God

The preceding pages outline two distinct yet convergent phenomenological depictions of human being without or “before” God—bare Dasein as existing within the closed horizon of finitude—and argue that, for Falque and Marion, one suffers finitude rather than lives it amidst suffering. Tragedy, pain, and existential turmoil colonize—or, rather, constitute—finitude’s horizon. Yet, given the two figures’ Christian commitments and evangelical-apologetic impulses, description without prescription is insufficient. Christ’s cry of dereliction on the Cross—akin to and embracing the cry we utter while suffering finitude’s burden—was answered in the Resurrection. In Christ, a metamorphosis of finitude is attainable. Falque and Marion, concerning themselves with God-less humanity’s predicament, describe the existential state of affairs endemic to postmodern persons and the particular mode by which they suffer finitude and only afterward present the Christian means to its transformation. Thoroughly evaluating their respective description-prescription nexuses requires more flu-

86 Marion, *God Without Being*, 128.

87 Marion, *God Without Being*, 127.

ency and space than is presently available. But, seeing that they each recognize the widespread and proliferating (performative) atheism-turned-nontheism⁸⁸ in similar terms while describing its concrete manifestation in different ways, concluding observations comparing their respective arguments are in order.

“Modernity is characterized first by the nullification of God as a question ... The question of his essence or existence becomes irrelevant,”⁸⁹ remarks Marion in language consonant with Falque’s description of “a new mode of being of atheism (the surpassing and the relinquishing of God, rather than combat with God).”⁹⁰ Nonbelief supplants atheism as the secular status quo, and “pure indifference” displaces agnosticism—once pilloried by many due to its decision for indecision—because even agnosticism involves taking a stance on (and thus asking) the question of God.⁹¹

For Marion, fruitless and existentially exhausting (auto)idolatry, boredom, and vanity characterize this postmodern nonbelieving predicament, while Falque argues that “what makes mankind in modernity is ... the anxiety that human beings undergo, and sometimes the absurdity of our ‘being in the world,’ of being thrown into existence” along with the existential and physical pain accompanying this.⁹² Marion’s person-in-Godless-finitude suffers from *deficiency*, while Falque’s suffers from *excess*. The burdensome character of finitude as described by Falque stems from weakness, meaninglessness, (enfleshed existential) suffering, anxiety,⁹³ and death (with its ever-haunting specter)—unbearable because insufferable, too much to endure—while for Marion it stems from

88 The shift from atheism to non-theism denotes a transition—either individual or socio-cultural—from the positive or active denial of God’s existence within a practical, intellectual, and existential context wherein the question and an answer to the question remains meaningful (a-theism) to a situation wherein the question of God is perceived to be bereft of practical, intellectual, or existential import and thus simply ignored (non-theism; God’s being or non-being is irrelevant).

89 Marion, *God Without Being*, 57.

90 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 35.

91 Marion, *God Without Being*, 116.

92 Marion, *God Without Being*, 116.

93 Notably, Marion explicitly names and rejects the Heideggerian anxiety that Falque presupposes and develops, arguing that it is insufficiently severe to the extent that it holds open the possibility of hearing and answering the claim that Being addresses to it (i.e., attaining what Heidegger terms “authenticity”): “[For Heidegger], a voice still cries out an appeal for anxiety—the claim that Being silently utters. Boredom, on the contrary, can hear nothing here” (*God Without Being*, 117). To marvel, question, and answer one’s way into authenticity remains a possibility for the anxious, while the bored lie beyond even this fraught and freighted “hope” (if it can be named as such). Boredom’s disinterest knows no limits.

idolatry, boredom, and vanity—unbearable because insufficient, not enough to satisfy.

An important anthropological rift opens here between the two thinkers: they diverge on the question of an innate desire for God. Marion posits it outright: it takes the form of the gaze. The gaze's "first intention aims at the divine," moving "insatiably" beyond itself, transpiercing visible after visible.⁹⁴ Although it "no longer aims beyond" and "no longer progresses" with the advent of the idol, the idol nonetheless "registers ... a certain advance of the aim at the divine."⁹⁵ Experiencing finitude as insufficient is rooted in and only makes sense given this desire for the Infinite and the Otherwise, insatiable by anything other than that at which it aims but can never reach of its own accord, bound to forever desire what it alone cannot attain. Falque criticizes Marion for attributing this desire to Dasein *qua* Dasein and thereby failing to give immanence its due. The unsurpassable "horizon of pure immanence" is a given—the "first given"—of human Being-there.⁹⁶ What for Marion is (at least partially) a choice⁹⁷ for idolatry, boredom, or vanity is for Falque our a priori mode of existence—"finitude 'as such,' understood here as the immanence of a truly insurmountable mode of Being that blocks all vertical transcendence."⁹⁸ "Impassable immanence, as opposed to any supposition of an immediate opening up to transcendence" is a constitutive "characteristic" of finitude.⁹⁹ To suggest otherwise is to surpass a phenomenology of bare Dasein by superimposing faith-based claims and properly theological presuppositions, to highlight openness to phenomenal saturation from the Infinite Other by forfeiting an honest account of finitude's existential aridity.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, though—and further corroborating this paper's

94 Marion, *God Without Being*, 11–12.

95 Marion, *God Without Being*, 27, emphasis added.

96 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 64, 13.

97 Marion remains somewhat unclear on this point, both exonerating (*God Without Being*, 13) and incriminating (pp. 109, 131) those disallowing their envisaging by the Infinite Other and remaining within the horizon of finitude in the modes of idolatry, boredom, or vanity.

98 Falque, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. Lucas McCracken et al. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 123, emphasis added.

99 Falque, *Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 14. See also p. 7: "In fact, nothing seems more arbitrary, to me and to many others, than some kind of experience, given to us or proffered us, of the Infinite, above all when it is taken to be a kind of requisite deriving from some structure of humanity." This is a not-so-thinly veiled criticism of Marion.

100 A stark contrast between Marion and Falque presents itself on this point, insofar as Marion insists upon the existence (i.e., phenomenal reality) of *saturated phenomena* describable and permissible in "strict" philosophical or phenomenological discourse. For reasons pertaining to his method of existential accompaniment and his desire to "say something which counts in the eyes of unbelievers" (*Guide*, xv), Falque declines to address saturated

thesis—both Marion and Falque deploy their respective affirmation and negation of an innate desire for God in such a way as to intensify finitude’s burden. For Marion, the gaze’s Infinite ambitions torture God-less existence as it copes with the insufficiency of idolatry, the indifference of boredom, the transience of vanity, and the pain of insatiable want. For Falque, finitude’s unsurpassable immanence closes the horizon of our Being-there and makes of death a totalizing and anxiety-inducing existential hermeneutic. To be (without God) is to suffer, whether or not we long for an Other or an Elsewhere.

But, does the pitiless, unbearably painful, and hauntingly immanent finitude—the common burden of our humanity—laid out in Falque’s triptych map onto his (and also Marion’s) characterization of (post)modern atheism as indifference? If “the most ordinary experiences of our lives” are “the experience of failure, of lack, indeed of a night so impenetrably dark that it destroys, in its very existence, any and all pretension to [saturation or] luminescence” as we bear the unbearable and suffer the insufferable, would utter indifference to the question of God result?¹⁰¹ In other words, is Falque’s philosophical triduum tailored towards atheists of a past generation—continental atheists combating with a God they deny out of bewilderment at rampant, senseless suffering and death? In which case, does God Without Being—with its emphasis on auto-idolatry, boredom, vanity, and finitude’s insufficiency—provide a description (and thus articulate a prescription) more apt for the current Western nonbeliever’s predicament? To all these questions, I would offer a tentative and all-too-generalizing yes. For much of the secularized West, theirs is the situation of Qoheleth, not Job.¹⁰² Those nonbelievers who do look to God do so

phenomena in his triptych. Another, related source of Falque’s declination may also be his desire to *turn* those figures influenced by the so-called “theological turn” in phenomenology *back* towards the ordinary and away from (an overemphasis on) the extraordinary. He explicitly names—even if only parenthetically—Jean-Luc Marion as a phenomenologist guilty of carrying over the Cartesian-inspired “preemptive right of the infinite over the finite” in *Metamorphosis*, 16–17. In *The Loving Struggle*, Falque argues that Marion makes excess the norm, thereby obscuring “the ordinary” and losing a real account of immanence and finitude along the way. See p. 125: “In my view, the *limited phenomenon* should, at this point, supplant the *saturated phenomenon*.... *A phenomenology of the ordinary* dares, inversely and painstakingly, to call the unlimited—which we know only to a vanishing degree, at least for now—back to the limit(ed) which constitutes us.”

101 Falque, *The Loving Struggle*, 120.

102 Interestingly, Falque points out as much, contrasting the “absence of things but the presence of meaning” (the situation of Job) and the “presence of things and the absence of meaning” (the situation of Qoheleth) (*Metamorphosis*, 28). This insightful characterization fails to suffuse and influence his broader argument and rhetoric.

only indirectly at first, uttering not a cry of dereliction, but instead—in the transitory and frightful “now” between idol or diversion past and idol or diversion future—posing the simple question: “Is this all?” In fact, blessed are these who reach Qoheleth’s phase of questioning, as means of diversion, transient satisfaction, and individual or collective idol-erection abound. Awash in ontic comforts yet living in an existential vacuum, indifferent to the question of God yet pursuing fulfillment only God can offer, those “indifferent” to the question of God are not necessarily or even mostly tortured by finitude’s burdensome ontic and ontological suffering as described by Falque. Instead—and more akin to Marion’s depiction of suffering finitude—they are more likely to be trapped in the horizon of (obscured) autoidolatry and, if escaping for even a moment, asking, “Only this?”

Conclusion

Despite the dissonance between Falque’s stated audience and the suffering finitude he describes—his Job-esque characterization of a generally more Qoheleth-esque situation—both he and Marion offer a vision of God-less human existence as an agonizing and isolating horizon bound by a finitude impenetrable from this side of divinity. Yet, they both call for its transformation rather than its nullification—a call to live and to suffer finitude differently in such a way that it paradoxically no longer remains “suffering” finitude at all when broken open and metamorphosed by Christ, our pioneer and guide. For just as Christ conquers death by death and overcomes the world through the world, so too does he transform suffering by himself suffering. As with death, he does this not so that our suffering becomes unnecessary, superfluous, or soteriologically ancillary, but so that it becomes (potentially) participatory, christoformic, and thereby ultimately redemptive. Both finitude’s existential suffocation and suffering’s monopolizing and totalizing pretensions can be broken open, resituated, and endured anew. After setting forth their respective attempts to appropriate and philosophically articulate the maladies endemic to secular God-less modernity—and despite differing diagnoses—such is ultimately what both Falque and Marion propose to their nonbelieving interlocutors: that in and with Christ, one can bear the burden of being otherwise.



Looking Up

a soul's encasement
symptomatic, failing tent
seeming abasement

granted perceived pain
—from a downward, stumbling Fall—
of contingency

yet high decree sings
dualism now and to be
oh! what heaven brings

self, ailment redeemed
the ancient union honored
by blood and Most High

thus not misgiving
to now feel even darkly
the joy of living

GRANT DOOLAN
Texas



Conciliar Christology & the Origin of the Soul

A Theological Argument against Traducianism

RANDALL PRICE¹

ABSTRACT: Two views of the origin of the human soul have persisted as live options throughout the Christian tradition: traducianism and creationism. Though proponents of traducianism propose several arguments in support of this view, the primary motivating factor put forth by its adherents is its natural fit with the Christian doctrine of sin. This article examines the merits of traducianism and its close connection to the view of original sin known as “inherited guilt” in light of conciliar Christology, and argues that the two taken together are incompatible with an orthodox view of Christ’s humanity. Though creationism has its own problems, it is able to accommodate a robust understanding of original sin without affirming inherited guilt, and is consistent with conciliar declarations concerning Christ’s humanity. The article concludes that creationism is a preferable theological anthropology for Christians wishing to affirm an orthodox Christology.

Introduction

In this essay, I will argue that the traducian account of the origin of human souls, in conjunction with an understanding of original sin as “inherited guilt,” is incompatible with an orthodox understanding of Christology as set forth in the ecumenical councils of the Christian church.² Though traducianism is not necessarily connected to original or inherited guilt, this connection is the primary motivation for affirming traducianism that most of its defenders appeal to, as will be discussed below.³ In light of the arguments presented Christian

1 Randall Price is a Master of Arts student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

2 “Orthodox” Christology throughout this essay will be used in reference to the doctrine of Christ set forth in the first seven “ecumenical” councils of the church.

3 The thesis of this essay is specifically aimed at arguing against traducianism in conjunction with inherited guilt. One could certainly avoid the argument presented by affirming traducianism and rejecting inherited guilt. However, the argument could be taken further as challenging traducianism simpliciter for the following reason: there seem to be no compelling theological or biblical motivations for affirming traducianism apart from its natural fit with inherited guilt. I do not make such an argument here, as more extensive work would need to be done to establish that conclusion, which is beyond the scope of this essay.

theologians ought to reject traducianism in favor of a creationist view of the soul's origin, and accept a "softer" account of original sin known as original corruption.

Only two views of the origin of the soul are discussed throughout the essay—traducianism and creationism. After explaining these views, some general comments concerning methodology in theological anthropology are presented to guide the rest of the discussion. The main argument of the essay involves drawing the connection between traducianism and inherited guilt, and the articulating the problems this presents for an orthodox understanding of Christ's human nature. In order to further undermine the appeal of traducianism, the final section of the essay examines how a creationist anthropology can account for a robust view of original while avoiding the pitfalls of inherited guilt.

Two Views on the Origin of the Soul

There are two generally accepted views of the origin of the soul in the Christian tradition: creationism and traducianism. Of course, there are other options, including pre-existence, materialism, and idealism. However, creationism and traducianism are the dominant views in the Christian tradition, while the others carry issues beyond the scope of this essay. Of these two, creationism is by far the majority view. Joshua Farris defines creationism in the following way: "The picture that applies to traditional-creationism is the idea that God creates each individual soul directly and immediately and attaches/infuses that soul to a body."⁴ Traducianism, on the other hand, "says that God created one human soul directly and immediately that somehow contains all other un-individualized human souls. Souls are thus propagated primarily through a generative process becoming individualized souls."⁵ Both views endorse something like soul-body dualism, but offer different accounts of how souls come into existence. The creationist account is fairly straightforward and represents the popular notion that God creates each soul and pairs it with a human body whenever that body begins to exist. The traducian account is less intuitive and will require some further explanation.

According to the traducian account, God created just one original human soul (Adam), and all other individual souls come into being as they are propagated from a pairing of two parent souls. While the mechanics of this are

4 Joshua R. Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology: A Cartesian Exploration* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 64.

5 Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*, 61.

mysterious, theologians who take this view often employ analogies from human sexual reproduction, in which a new body with a unique DNA sequence is formed through the pairing of male and female reproductive cells. It is important to note that, on the traducian account, the metaphysical substance that constitutes each individual soul is contained within the created soul of Adam. That latent substance is individualized into a unique soul, with its own consciousness and identity, through an act of reproduction that occurs along with sexual reproduction. One might say that the propagation of souls, on the traducian account, supervenes on sexual reproduction. Oliver Crisp helpfully captures the essence of the traducian view by employing this sort of imagery:

Individual souls are produced by fission or parturition, being generated by the soul of one or both parents as part of the process of natural generation. The parent souls are produced in the same fashion from their parents, and so on, going all the way back through the generations to the first human pair.⁶

Creationism, as stated above, is overwhelmingly dominant in the Christian tradition, so it will not be necessary to discuss its major proponents throughout church history. Traducianism has persisted as a minority view since the patristic era, finding support from several notable theologians. Tertullian (born c. 160 CE) was one of the most significant theologians of the second century and is the earliest known proponent of traducianism. He expresses this view in an interpretation of the creation narrative in Genesis 1:

Accordingly from the one [primeval] man comes the entire outflow and redundancy of men's souls—nature providing herself true to the commandment of God, 'Be fruitful, and multiply.' For in the very preamble of this one production, 'Let us make man,' man's whole posterity was declared and described in a plural phrase, 'Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,' etc.⁷

According to Tertullian's view, there is only one "created soul," and each soul after Adam is "passed down from parents." Tertullian's view of the soul appears to have been motivated by his understanding of how original sin is transmitted from Adam to his progeny (this association will continue through most proponents of traducianism).⁸ As Anthony Thiselton identifies, "Tertullian had a neat phrase that paralleled the transmission of the soul and the transmission of

6 Oliver D. Crisp, "Original Sin and Atonement," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Flint (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 438.

7 Tertullian, "De Anima," in *The Writings of Quintus Sept. Flor. Tertullianus*, trans. Peter Holmes, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1870), 476.

8 Tertullian, "De Anima," 505.

sin, namely: ‘*Tradux anima, tradux peccati*,’ this is, the transmission of the soul [is] the transmission of sin.”⁹

Augustine (born c. 354 CE) entertained a traducian view similar to Tertullian’s for mostly the same reason. In one of his earlier writings, Augustine states, “If only one soul was created, and all human souls are descended from it, who can say that he did not sin when Adam sinned?”¹⁰ It seems, then, that Augustine saw traducianism primarily as a means of understanding the transmission of original sin and divine justice. However, between the four views of the soul that Augustine discusses in that work, he cautions that “it would be rash to affirm any of these.”¹¹ Augustine would later go on to narrow the serious choices down to creationism and traducianism (the other two views implying the unorthodox notion of pre-existing souls that become embodied). For him, “creationism made original sin very difficult to explain, traducianism was functional in this respect.”¹² However, many of Augustine’s readers understand him as ultimately siding with creationism later in life. Traducianism seemed to entail a non-reductive materialism that was inconsistent with Augustine’s Neo-Platonism, and its association with Tertullian was troublesome since Tertullian had been condemned as a heretic for his allegiance with the schismatic Montanists.¹³

Millard Erickson is a contemporary evangelical theologian who holds to a traducian understanding of the soul’s origins that differs significantly from Tertullian and Augustine. Rather than finding motivation for his view in the doctrine of original sin, Erickson frames his discussion around the bioethical issues of abortion and fetal personhood. Hebrews 7:9–10 is the starting point for Erickson’s discussion: “Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.” Commenting on this passage, he writes, “Taken at face value, this comment would argue for the humanity not only of an unborn fetus, but even of persons who have not yet been conceived, since Levi was a great-grandson of Abraham.”¹⁴ Hebrews 7, according to Erickson, implies traducianism and that making a hard distinction

9 Anthony C. Thiselton, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 156.

10 Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 108.

11 Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, 111.

12 Christian Tornau, “Saint Augustine,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, September 25, 2019), last modified September 25, 2019, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/#AnthGodSoulSoulBody>.

13 Tornau, “Saint Augustine.”

14 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 506.

between the body and soul of a human fetus is inconceivable.¹⁵ If the soul of each individual exists within the soul of their ancestors, and its individualization occurs alongside or supervenes upon sexual reproduction, then there is no time in the biological development of a human at which it is not a person comprised of body and soul. Therefore, since abortion is the voluntary termination of a human fetus, and a human fetus is a person on this view, abortion is murder and never justified.

The arguments from original sin appear to be a popular and compelling motivating factors to endorse traducianism.¹⁶ And, if one shares Erickson's convictions on the issue of abortion, as many evangelicals and Roman Catholics do, then this will count as a pragmatic argument in favor of traducianism. Nonetheless, I will argue below that traducianism is not an option for orthodox Christians on christological grounds. Additionally, there are reasons to doubt that the doctrine of original sin is in fact a compelling motivation for affirming traducianism.

Methodology in Theological Anthropology

A brief clarification on the methodology employed in the remainder of this essay will help guide the rest of the discussion and give necessary background for the main argument. According to this method, Christology is the primary lens through which Christian theologians ought to think and theorize about theological anthropology. In other words, one's theological anthropology should be in harmony with the orthodox doctrine of Christ's full humanity as established in the ecumenical councils of the church, particularly the council of Chalcedon (451 CE). If tension exists between the two, it will likely require an adjustment in one's anthropology.¹⁷

15 Erickson's interpretation is not common among biblical scholars. Gareth Lee Cockerill suggests the phrase "in the loins of his father" is simply meant to emphasize the representative role of the patriarch Abraham; see Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 312. See also, R.C.H. Lenski, *Interpretation of The Epistle to The Hebrews and The Epistle of James* (Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1946), 221.

16 Other theologians who endorse traducianism for this reason include Dispensationalist theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer, and Presbyterian theologian William Shedd. See, Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 177-179.

17 The theologian could, of course, adjust her Christology accordingly. However, I will assume an orthodox Christology as established by the ecumenical councils of the church throughout this essay.

It is natural to expect that theological anthropology should begin with Adam rather than Jesus. After all, Adam is the first human being according to the Christian story. However, it is in fact Christ, according to his human nature, who is the supreme archetype of humanity, and that taking Adam as a starting point is not a preferable strategy. We know relatively little about Adam compared to Jesus, and the information we do have is clouded by the interpretational difficulties surrounding Genesis 1–3. Such difficulties need not detain us here, as there is a more fruitful path available.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, indicates Jesus is the true exemplar of humanity as bearing the “image of God” first mentioned in Gen. 1:26–27: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”¹⁸ It is likely that Paul intends to echo Genesis 1:26 here by utilizing the word εἰκῶν (“image”) which is similar to the Septuagint’s translation of עִלְמוּן (“image”) as εἰκόνα. Concerning the Old and New Testament use of the “image of God,” Thiselton writes, “The term ‘image of God,’ then, shows humankind as God had intended and called humans to be. It signifies the potential of human beings for the future. Its measure is Jesus Christ, the person who actually bears God’s image.”¹⁹

Additionally, Paul goes to great lengths to underscore the distinction between the “first” Adam (the historical Adam) and “second” Adam (Jesus) in Romans 5:12–21. Adam is presented as a representative of humanity in the sense that “one trespass led to condemnation for all men.” Yet Adam’s headship is reinterpreted typologically, as Jesus becomes the new representative of humanity, whose “one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.” N.T. Wright summarizes this passage in the following way:

And this in turn means that Jesus, completely in line with the hope of Israel, was to be seen as the genuine human being, the ‘true Adam,’ the ultimate image-bearer, doing for Adam what Adam could not do for himself, reversing the ‘fall’ and reinscribing the notion that image-bearing humans were to be set in authority over God’s creation.²⁰

Crisp captures the focus on Christ’s preeminence as the paradigmatic image bearer as well when he writes, “God has ordained from before the foundation of the world that Christ would be the archetype of true humanity, and that his human nature (in hypostatic union with God the Son) would be the blueprint for all other human natures.”²¹ If Christ truly does serve as a “blueprint,” then

18 Col. 1:15

19 Thiselton, *Systematic Theology*, 137.

20 N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 908.

21 Oliver D Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ* (Grand

theologians ought to look to him as a starting point for constructing a theological anthropology.

My employment of a christologically driven anthropology is not unique. As Marc Cortez explains, Karl Barth was a proponent of placing Christ at the forefront of any Christian account of humanity. For Barth's anthropology, "Essentially it involves the conviction that 'the nature of the man Jesus alone is the key to the problem of human nature.'"²² Barth also appears to agree with the Pauline insights mentioned above: "it is also epistemologically decisive because Jesus is the one in whom we see true humanity unspoiled by sin."²³ Myk Habets makes a similar point, stressing theological priority of the revelation of Christ's perfect humanity over the chronological priority of Adam's life:

a deeply Christian way to read Scripture is to read it in light of Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, and submitted to Jesus Christ ... when such an approach is taken to Scripture and we ask about the self and salvation we clearly see things differently.... When in Genesis 2 we read of God (*Elohim* אֱלֹהִים) creating humans in his image as male and female, we understand by this that what is meant is that humanity was created in the image of the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ—for as Paul states so emphatically, Jesus is the Image of the invisible God, he alone is the *imago Dei* (see Col. 1:15-20 and Phil. 2:5-11). This means that the rest of humanity are images of the Image—Jesus Christ—and that means that Jesus is the archetype of humanity.²⁴

With these insights in place, the following principle is applied for Christian theological anthropology: orthodox Christology serves as a guiding and corrective standard to theological and philosophical speculation concerning human nature. If a theological anthropology is consonant with what is expressed in Scripture and the ecumenical creeds about Christ's human nature, then it is within the realm of orthodoxy and remains a live option for theologians. However, if a theological anthropology is found to be inconsistent with the same data, then it ought to be abandoned by theologians who affirm an orthodox Christology.

Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 63.

22 Marc Cortez, "The Madness in Our Method: Christology as the Necessary Starting Point

for Theological Anthropology," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 19.

23 Cortez, "The Madness in Our Method," 19–20.

24 Myk Habets, "Spirit, Selfhood and Salvation," in *Being Saved: Explorations in Human Salvation*, ed. Marc Cortez, Joshua R. Farris, and S. Mark Hamilton (London, UK: SCM Press, 2018), 146–47.

The Case for Traducianism

What exactly is the primary attraction that motivates a traducian account of the soul for Christians? Farris summarizes the case for traducianism well:

Defenders of traducianism have traditionally charged the creationist with an inability to respond to the problem of divinely created souls, which bear the property of original sin.... They argue that the direct creation of each individual soul presents a problem for the creationist because there is no clear metaphysical relation that individual souls bear to Adam (i.e., original sin's relation to the primal sin).²⁵

In other words, the creationist account has two problems that traducianism accommodates quite well. First, creationism fails to offer a robust account of how original sin is passed on from Adam to his descendants as seen in Romans 5:12. Second, the creationist account seems to entail that, if the condition of original sin applies to all post-fall humanity, God must create human souls intentionally with the property of original sin. It is argued that, since all humans are in some sense guilty in Adam's sin, God must be imputing sin and guilt to each new soul that is created, since individuals born after Adam were not directly involved in Adam's sin. This seems incredibly difficult to reconcile with a biblical view of justice, in which it is immoral to punish the innocent).²⁶

What stands behind these arguments in favor of traducianism is a particular view of original sin that I will call "inherited guilt."²⁷ Oliver Crisp helpfully explains this view:

Advocates of this view claim that original sin includes both the state of moral corruption with which all humanity post-Adam are born, which inevitably leads humans into acts of sin, and the culpability aspect of guilt that accrues to Adam's first sin. Both the moral corruption engendered by Adam's primal sin and the culpability aspect of his guilt is transferred, on this way of thinking, from Adam to his progeny. This transfer of Adam's sin and guilt to me is just provided God somehow organizes things such that Adam and his posterity are one metaphysical entity so that what the first part of that entity does has moral implications for the later parts of the same entity.²⁸

Traducianism, it is argued, does a much better job at accounting for the "one metaphysical entity" than creationism. God would be justified in holding one morally guilty and administering punishment for Adam's sin because each soul

25 Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*, 120.

26 Prov. 17:26

27 This view is popularly referred to as "Augustinian Realism." I am inclined to reject that title as it presumes to articulate Augustine's view of original sin, which is far from clear and a matter of debate among scholars.

28 Crisp, "Original Sin and Atonement," 437.

was “part” of Adam’s soul when he sinned.²⁹ Crisp writes, “Though ‘individualized’ or otherwise brought about through natural generation, I retain the property of original sin that has been passed on to me as would be the case with inherited physical diseases.”³⁰ Traducianism is preferable given inherited guilt since it accounts for the transmission of original sin without “invoking God as the direct cause and explanation for sin.”³¹

The Case Against Traducianism

In this section, I lay out my argument that traducianism in conjunction with inherited guilt is incompatible with orthodox Christology.

If traducianism is true, then Christ’s human soul would have been “part” of Adam’s soul and individualized into a unique soul when Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. The problem is that, given the understanding of the transmission of Adam’s sin to his progeny discussed above, Christ would bear original sin and inherit the moral guilt of Adam along with the rest of humanity. In other words, Christ being part the “one metaphysical entity” according to his human nature seems to entail that he has all those properties common to human beings in Adam’s lineage, including original sin and guilt. This is problematic considering the declaration at the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), which states the Christ was “like us in all respects, apart from sin.”³² Christ shares fully in our human nature but is sinless. The Chalcedonian Definition reflects the teachings of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”³³ Traducianism, in conjunction with inherited guilt, contradicts the affirmation of Christ’s sinlessness and innocence found in Scripture and the creeds.

The argument can be expressed more formally in the following premises:

- (1) All souls that descend from Adam are souls that inherit guilt for Adam’s sin. [Inherited Guilt]
- (2) Christ’s soul is descended from Adam. [Traducianism]
- (3) Therefore, Christ is guilty of Adam’s sin. [from 1 and 2]
- (4) Christ is sinless. [Orthodoxy]

29 Crisp, “Original Sin and Atonement,” 438.

30 Crisp, “Original Sin and Atonement,” 440.

31 Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*, 120–121.

32 “The Definition of Chalcedon,” in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 4th ed., eds. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54.

33 Heb. 4:15

(3) and (4) entail a contradiction. (4) is nonnegotiable for orthodox theologians. (3) must be false. However, (3) follows from (1) and (2). Thus, one or both of premises (1) and (2) is false. It seems easy enough to simply deny (2) and affirm Christ's sinlessness. However, assuming the theological commitments of traducianism, the following issue arises:

- (5) All members of humanity are descended from Adam's soul. [Traducianism]
- (6) Christ is not descended from Adam's soul.
- (7) Therefore, Christ is not a member of humanity. [from 5 and 6]
- (8) Christ is a member of humanity. [Orthodoxy]

(7) and (8) entail a contradiction. (8) represents a dogmatic claim of Christianity: Christ has a human nature. Since (7) follows from (5) and (6), it must be the case that one or both premises are false. I posit here that if one denies traducianism and inherited guilt (1, 2, and 5), the problems are avoided while maintaining an orthodox Christology and a proper understanding of original sin.

The denial of (2) in favor of (6) would require postulating that God commits a special act of creation with Christ's human soul, similar to the act of creating the original soul of Adam. Since Jesus would not stand in continuity with Adam, he would not inherit original sin or be guilty of Adam's sin. This seems to be the most plausible move that traducianism could make to accommodate orthodox Christology. However, such a move comes at a cost. On the traducian account, humanity exists as one metaphysical entity, or one sinful "lump" that is intimately connected throughout. Each individual human exists in a tight relationship to the overall metaphysical whole that is humanity. For Christ to stand outside of this "lump" with a soul that is similar, but unrelated, to the rest of humanity calls into question how a robust understanding of Christ being "like us in all respects" can be true for traducianism. Creationism, on the other hand, can avoid the problem altogether, as it is not committed to such a strong understanding of the metaphysical unity of the entire human race. Though it could be said that Christ is human in many important respects on the traducian account, it is hard to see how, as stated in Hebrews 2:17, Christ was "made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become and merciful and faithful high priest." Christ would appear to be part of another humanity, or subset of humanity, that is similar to but metaphysically distinct from the humanity of Adam and his descendants.

A Neo-Apollinarian Response

One way the traducian could respond to the argument above is to adopt a Neo-Apollinarian Christology and deny that Jesus has a human soul. Apollinarianism was a fourth-century christological heresy that affirmed Christ was a human being but denied that he had a human soul. Neo-Apollinarianism is put forward by a number of prolific philosophers and theologians (Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig, and J.P. Moreland being among them) who make similar but slightly different moves that are reminiscent of Apollinarianism. On this view the divine logos inhabits or ensouls Christ's human body. Thus, Christ's humanity is still thought of in dualistic terms, but instead of a soul/body dualism, there is a logos/body dualism. An Apollinarian who wished to affirm traducianism while avoiding the consequences of the argument above could posit that Christ does not have a human soul because the divine logos stands in place of what would normally be a human soul. Thus, Christ does not inherit original sin and guilt from Adam.

Such a response is inadequate for several reasons. First, this scheme aims to revise Christology in light of anthropology. While such a revision is possible, the methodology outlined above requires the theologian to adjust her anthropology (and any other relevant doctrine) in response to Christ as revealed in Scripture and confessed in the tradition of the Christian church. As previously discussed, christological revisions motivated by anthropology are less preferable to an anthropology that is informed by orthodox Christology.

Second, I fail to see how this would fare any better than positing Christ's human soul is created directly by God, in contrast with the rest of post-Adam humanity. For on the Apollinarian account, Christ is dissimilar to the rest of humanity in significant ways, making it seem that he isn't really human at all. Even contemporary theologians sympathetic to Neo-Apollinarianism such as William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland point out that "a body without a mind is a truncation of human nature. By merely clothing himself with flesh, the Logos did not truly become a man. For essential to human nature is a rational soul, which Christ lacked."³⁴ Moreover, such an account runs contrary to the influential teaching of St. Gregory of Nazianzus connecting Christology to soteriology, which became authoritative for later christological debate: *quod non est assumptum non est sanatum*—"that which is not assumed is not saved." As Craig and Moreland recognize, "Apart from the truth of this principle, there is

34 J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian World-view*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 597.

no rationale for the incarnation at all. Thus Apollinarius's Christology undermined Christian soteriology.³⁵ Moreover, the church's rejection of Apollinarian Christology is enshrined in the declarations made by the Synod of Alexandria (362 CE) and the First Council of Constantinople (381 CE).

Inherited Guilt, Creationism, and Original Sin

In this final section, I offer a few reasons why creationism is a preferable theological anthropology in contrast with traducianism. First, traducians are right to charge creationism with being irreconcilable with inherited guilt as an understanding of original sin. This is a welcome conclusion, for inherited guilt is a biblically and philosophically inadequate account of original sin. Inherited guilt holds that there are two aspects of original sin: (1) being born into a state of moral corruption that inevitably leads to sin; and (2) culpability for the sin of Adam. (2) is the controversial aspect that I am inclined to reject.

Romans 5:12–19 is often appealed to for support of (2), but closer examination reveals that the passage does not grant strong support to this idea. Paul states in verse 12, “just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” The language here suggests that death spread to all of humanity because all men sinned like Adam, not because they were culpable of Adam's sin. However, verses 18–19 appear to offer a tighter connection between Adam's guilt and the sin of humanity, “as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.” Here, Paul presents a clear link between Adam's trespass and the condemnation of all who follow. However, even these verses fall short of supplying an unambiguous endorsement of inherited guilt. F.F. Bruce makes it clear that Paul is teaching in this passage that “the whole human race is viewed as having originally sinned in Adam.”³⁶ Yet in his discussion of verse 12, Bruce admits to two equally plausible interpretations: that all have sinned by their own volition like Adam, or that all sinned in and with Adam.³⁷ Surprisingly, John Calvin seems to endorse something like the former interpretation. In his commentary of Romans 5:12, Calvin writes,

35 Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 597.

36 F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 119.

37 Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 122.

Paul distinctly affirms, that sin extended to all who suffer its punishment: and this he afterwards more fully declares, when subsequently he assigns a reason why all the posterity of Adam are subject to the dominion of death; and it is this—because we have all, he says, sinned.... For as Adam at his creation had received for us as well as for himself the gifts of God's favor, so by falling away from the Lord, he in himself corrupted, vitiated, depraved, and ruined our nature; for having been divested of God's likeness, he could not have generated seed but what was like himself. Hence, we have all sinned; for we are all imbued with natural corruption, and so are become sinful and wicked.³⁸

According to Calvin, Adam's sin results in the depravity of human nature which, being passed on to all his descendants, inevitably leads to sin. This is similar to the interpretation offered by Richard N. Longenecker:

It seems best ... to understand Paul's words in 5:12 as speaking of such a twofold understanding of (1) inherited depravity, which stems from one man's sin and the resultant experience of death that has permeated all human history, and (2) actual sins of every person down through the course of history, which are the inevitable expressions of people's inherited depravity and add by accumulation to the weight of that depravity.³⁹

I am not claiming here that an interpretation of Romans 5:12–19 in support of inherited guilt is implausible. In fact, there are many biblical scholars who take such a position and offer compelling arguments for it.⁴⁰ However, I do wish to bring attention to the fact that the passage lends itself to other plausible interpretations, and that it is far from obvious that Paul was endorsing anything like inherited guilt in Romans 5.

In addition to lack of clear biblical grounds for inherited guilt, this view introduces the dubious notion that one can be morally guilty for an act without actively participating in it, or even existing at the time it was committed. The traducian appeal is that this difficulty may be alleviated by positing that each human soul does in fact exist in Adam when he sins and can therefore be held liable along with Adam. However, even on the traducian account, humanity only exists in Adam in a very thin sense. The unindividualized souls are not the sort of conscious, independent, and free causal agents that are capable of making morally significant decisions. They simply exist as metaphysical parts

38 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), 200–1.

39 Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 591.

40 Examples include Douglas Moo, *Romans 1–8* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 328–41;

Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 228–40; John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 151–53.

of Adam's soul that will eventually become individualized into unique persons. The traducian move does little to counteract the unjust implications of inherited guilt.

Lest one think that the charge of injustice laid against inherited guilt is the result of replacing the assumed ethical presuppositions of the biblical authors with those of modern western individualism, several Old Testament passages appear to lend support to the idea that culpability is nontransferable from one generation to the next. Ezekiel 18:19–20 states,

Yet you say, 'Why should the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?' When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer from the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer the iniquity of the son.

This undoubtable reflects the law in Deuteronomy 24:16, "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin." Though these passages are not addressing the topic of original sin, there is a principle underlying the biblical judicial system that forbids punishing someone for the sin of his ancestors. There are passages that appear to suggest the opposite of this. In Deuteronomy 5:9, the God of Israel describes himself as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." However, what this verse suggests is the generational effects of sin, not generational culpability. Those who hate God will be punished, and the residual effects of that punishment will be felt through the generations after them. This is not the same as being held morally culpable or being directly punished for the sins of one's ancestors.

So, it seems that inherited guilt is not a promising account of the original sin whether one is a creationist or a traducian. And without an affirmation of inherited guilt, there is little motivation to endorse traducianism. But how is the doctrine of original sin to be conceived on a creationist theological anthropology? Creationists tend to interpret original sin as original corruption. This view agrees with inherited guilt in affirming that humans are born into a state of moral corruption that inevitably leads them to sin but rejects that Adam's progeny are guilty for his sin and are punished for it. Robert Matthew Adams describes this view in the following way: "It can be called 'tinder for sin'... waiting to burst into flame if sin comes along to set it off. But it is not ignited unless the soul, by its own free will, sins."⁴¹ Farris outlines how original sin can

41 Robert Matthew Adams, "Original Sin: A Study in the Interaction of Philosophy and Theology," in *A Reader in Contemporary Philosophical Theology*, ed. Oliver Crisp (New York,

be interpreted in accordance with the creationist anthropology:

If the human person is a compound of body and soul, then one might think that God creates the soul-part and attaches it to a body-part. The body completes the human person and is literally a part of an individualized human nature. If this is true, then the soul can be the bearer of original sin in light of embodiment, but this would require one to construe original sin more loosely as original corruption not original guilt.⁴²

On this account, Adam's sin and the punishment God inflicts on him introduces moral corruption that has consequences for the rest of humanity that descends from him. It resists the idea that Adam's descendants are considered blameworthy of Adam's sin and are punished for it.

Is original corruption a sufficient understanding of original sin? One may argue that, by eschewing the aspect of original guilt and claiming that each human is condemned solely for his or her own volitional acts of sin, this view may entail a semi-Pelagian understanding of sin and salvation. Semi-Pelagianism, according to Crisp, is the idea that "human beings are able to exercise their free will independent of divine grace in order to cooperate with divine grace in bringing about their own salvation."⁴³ In other words, each human has the ability to not sin and live in accordance with God's expectations, and by doing so can earn or merit salvation. Inherited guilt resists this by claiming that humans are born guilty, and only an act of undeserved divine grace can remove that guilt. Original corruption, it is thought, leaves open the possibility that one could freely choose not to sin throughout one's entire life and thus never incur guilt that requires divine grace for salvation. However, this is a misunderstanding of the position. The working definition of original corruption offered thus far has held, in agreement with inherited guilt, that the inherited state of moral corruption inevitably leads to sin in the life of each individual apart from Christ.⁴⁴ It differs in that it rejects inherited culpability for Adam's sin.

NY: T&T Clark, 2009), 235.

42 Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*, 123.

43 Oliver D. Crisp, *Analyzing Doctrine: Toward a Systematic Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 144.

44 It could be said on this view, in agreement with much of the tradition, that Christ does not have original sin due to the circumstances of his miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost through the Virgin Mary. Christ's human body is genetically derived from Mary, but the work of the Holy Spirit in providing the material necessary for Christ's conception makes it such that the property of original sin does not pass on to Christ and there is no corruption in virtue of embodiment. One could also claim that Christ did have original sin as interpreted as original corruption, but that this did not lead to sin by virtue of the hypostatic union between his human and divine nature.

Moreover, original corruption is compatible with the church's traditional teaching on original sin. There is no explicit statement about the nature of original sin in the ecumenical councils of the church, and much of the discussion occurs in the context of the western Latin speaking church. The Council of Carthage in 418 CE, probably the earliest conciliar statement on the debate over original sin, ruled in favor of Augustine's teachings on sin and grace and formally condemned Pelagianism as heresy.⁴⁵ The Synod of Orange in 529 CE upheld the decision of Carthage and went on to condemn semi-Pelagianism, as well as more extreme forms of Augustinianism.⁴⁶ These hamartiological controversies were common to the late patristic and early medieval era in the West, but were relatively unknown in the Eastern Church. The debate over original sin increased significantly during the Reformation era, but these developments introduced even more diversity rather than clarifying the orthodox position and remained irrelevant to the Eastern Church. Due to the lack of ecumenical consensus and the occasional nature of the Western Church's statements, it is difficult to know what exactly is orthodox when it comes to the doctrine of original sin.

However, Crisp identifies three core tenets that are common to all of the traditional and orthodox statements on original sin:

First, that there was an original pair from whom we are all descended; second, that this pair committed the primal sin that adversely affects all their offspring; and third, that all human beings after the fall of the original pair are in need of salvation, without which they will perish.⁴⁷

If Crisp is correct in his assessment, then it is clear that original corruption is an adequate understanding of original sin in line with the historic teaching of the church. It is also clear that inherited guilt, while also compatible with these three tenets, is not required by them.

The late nineteenth-century Reformed Baptist theologian Augustus Strong opposes the creationist account of original sin and its transmission, claiming "it makes God indirectly the author of moral evil, by teaching that he puts this pure soul into a body which will inevitably corrupt it."⁴⁸ Strong's argument does not hold much weight here. If humans are taken to be body-soul compos-

45 Justo L. González, *The Story Christianity Volume II: The Reformation to the Present Day*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010), 418.

46 Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 284.

47 Crisp, *Analyzing Doctrine*, 145.

48 Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: Three Volumes in One* (Philadelphia, PA: The Judson Press, 1907), 493.

ites, as the view expressed above implies, then God must create individual souls in tandem with the propagation of new bodies in order for human persons to continue coming into existence even after the Fall. Moreover, though the moral corruption of original sin makes it such that each human will inevitably sin, the creationist can still affirm a libertarian understanding of free will in the choice to sin. This would likely require the creationist to make a modal distinction by claiming that, while it is logically possible for corrupt human beings to choose not to sin in some possible worlds, God has instantiated in the actual world a state of affairs in which each person does freely succumb to the corruption of original sin.

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this essay that traducianism in conjunction with inherited guilt for Adam's sin is incompatible with an orthodox understanding of Christ's human nature. Together, these two ideas would entail that either Christ inherits original sin from Adam, or that his soul does not descend from Adam and cannot be considered a member of the human race in a meaningful sense. Though traducianism is certainly advantageous for those who prefer an inherited guilt understanding of sin, it is exactly this advantage that gives rise to the problem. Traducians could, of course, reject inherited guilt and offer other arguments in favor of their anthropology, but accommodating the idea of inherited guilt has historically been the primary motivation behind traducianism among theologians. Inherited guilt is not the only plausible biblical and theological understanding of original sin, and that creationists who favor an original corruption understanding of the doctrine have solid grounds for doing so. So then, it seems that a creationist theological anthropology can offer more plausible account of the origin of the soul and a robust understanding of human sin while avoiding the pitfalls associated with traducianism and inherited guilt.



The Deeps

Valleys of the land
Cover the young boy
Blocking the light of the bright sunset
Desperate to annoy;

Hollers in his hand
Hide a hidden race
People perfectly proportionate
To the young boy's face.

One among the band
Gives a zealous jeer
To an eager throng of personlets:
"as above, so here,

Our Father's command!"
But the boy's heart sings:
"as below, so it goes low, so low,
To the deeps of all things."

The deeps of the land,
The deeps of the hand,
Deeps deeper than one can know,
Tiny as the sand.

MICHAEL HAUSEL
Virginia



Isn't There a God Who is above (& below) the Ground?

Heschel, Tillich, & Truth Beyond Being

ETHAN LEVIN¹

ABSTRACT: Abraham Joshua Heschel is renowned as a Jewish theologian who willingly engaged with the theology of his Christian contemporaries. His theological project in the English idiom often borrowed language from these Christian theologians. Heschel developed his own method of “depth theology” that focused on the shared existential moment of man’s anxiety over his ultimate concern, regardless of religious tradition. In this essay, I argue that Heschel used the method of depth theology to critique Paul Tillich’s ontological definition of God. Tillich’s ontological understanding did not account for Heschel’s own depth experiences of an imminent and commanding God. Heschel argued that if God was only the bedrock of ontological surety, then God could not intervene directly “above the ground” in the lives of humans. In addition, in Heschel’s final English and Yiddish works on the Hasidic thinker Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk (the Kotzker), Heschel uses the method of depth theology to compare the Kotzker’s theology with that of Søren Kierkegaard. I argue that this is a thinly veiled theological comparison between Heschel himself and Tillich. In these works, Heschel presents a theological articulation of Truth buried “below the ground.” The ultimate concern of humanity is to unbury the Truth, and anxiety arises at the pervasiveness of falsehood. Truth is grasped as a reality beyond ontology, and God beyond that as the arbiter of Truth. In the conclusion, I reflect upon the relevance of the ontological question in Heschel’s corpus and its role in Jewish-Christian theological exchange.

Introduction

In his English language theology, Abraham Joshua Heschel used the method of “depth theology” to speak to the sublime experience of faith regardless of tradition.² As a result, Heschel became popular among a wide readership, not just Jews. He found thinkers who resonated with his passion for the prophetic mode of religious experience among contemporary Christian theologians. Heschel, therefore, engaged with Christian theology in the creation of an Ameri-

1 Ethan Levin is a student in the Master of Theological Studies program at Harvard Divinity School.

2 Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Depth Theology,” in *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 116.

can theological discourse of the prophetic.³ He saw the potential of interfaith cooperation to improve the conditions of the here and now. But Heschel did not take the responsibility of engaging Christian theology lightly in the new era of Jewish-Christian relations in America. He insisted upon the maintenance of theological particularity, as well as the necessity of theological critique in true interfaith dialogue.

Heschel attempted to walk the middle path of engagement with Christian theology. He resonated with Christian theologians on what he described as the level of depth. In particular, the theological system of Paul Tillich proved ripe ground for Heschel to make a Christian theological vocabulary resonant to an American Jewish audience.⁴ Heschel often borrowed productively from Tillich. But Heschel remained skeptical of the primary claims of Tillich's theology. In this essay, I argue that Heschel used his method of depth theology to constructively engage Paul Tillich over the question of God and ontology. Throughout his work, Heschel uses a similar vocabulary to that of Tillich, particularly in the use of "ultimate concern" and "anxiety" to reflect experiences of the divine. Heschel argues that Tillich's definition of God as the "ground-of-being" fails to capture both what is "above" the ground, the imminent encounter of God in the world, and "below" the ground, the reality of God that is beyond being.

I will show the "above" critique is seen clearly throughout Heschel's work. Indeed, Heschel thinks Tillich writes about God but does not believe in God. The "below" critique comes from Heschel's late-life publications on the thought of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859), whom I will re-

3 On Heschel and the development of his interreligious theology, see: Shai Held, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 2013), 72–93, Edward K. Kaplan, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Mind, Heart, Soul* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019), 253–292, Harold Kasimow and Byron L. Sherwin, eds. *No Religion is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), Stanislaw Krajewski and Adam Lipszyc, eds. *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Philosophy, Theology and Interreligious Dialogue Jüdische Kultur*. 21 (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009), and Joseph Palmisano, *Beyond the Walls: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Edith Stein on the Significance of Empathy for Jewish Christian Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

4 How much he intentionally co-opted the vocabulary of Tillich is debated among scholars. Certainly, there was an affinity between their vocabulary, correlative methods, and employment of space and time. See: See: Shai Held, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 264, Alexander Even-Chen, "Faith And The Courage To Be: Heschel And Tillich." In *Interaction Between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*, 17 (2009): 337–56, Fritz A. Rothschild, "Architect and Herald of a New Theology." *Conservative Judaism* 28 (1973): 55.

fer to as the Kotzker Rebbe and the Kotzker.⁵ I read Heschel's posthumously published works on the Kotzker, the English *A Passion for Truth* and the Yiddish *Kotzk*: in gerangl far emesdikayt, as a thinly-veiled critique of Tillich. In comparing Kierkegaard to the Kotzker in *A Passion for Truth*, Heschel projects himself onto the Kotzker Rebbe, and projects Tillich onto Kierkegaard. Heschel situates his shared vocabulary with Tillich in the theological system of the Kotzker Rebbe, showing to great effect how the ultimate concern for Truth and anxiety over falsehood points beyond ontology to a more radical understanding of the divine.⁶

Heschel Among Jewish Theological Responses to Christianity

Heschel's engagement with Tillich comes from a particular approach to understanding the religious experience described by Christian theology. Where did Heschel himself stand in terms of entering a theological dialogue, particularly with Christians? Many Jewish thinkers after World War II began to take the possibility of a theological engagement with Christianity seriously in light of Jewish American modernity. Differing relationships to Jewish language and Jewish observance tended to affect the extent to which these Jewish thinkers were willing to engage with the theological vocabulary of American Christianity. Heschel willingly engaged with Christian theologians, including Tillich, over a prophetic concern for social and political conditions.

To show his unique position, I wish to situate Heschel in between the inter-religious thought of Will Herberg and Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik. Raised in a secular Jewish household in Brooklyn and a relative latecomer to the Jewish

5 The Kotzker was a student of Reb Simcha Bunem of Pshischa, and succeeded him as Rebbe after his death. He marked a turning point in the Hasidic movement. While the name of the movement derived from the Hebrew word for kindness, the Kotzker emphasized an aggressive pursuit of Truth and integrity. He berated the Jewish people for faithless performance of the mitzvot, and was notorious for his brutal treatment of his disciples. His aggressive demands did not grow a large following, but his sayings today are still treasured for their great spiritual value. See the recent study of his life and work: Morris Faienstein, *Truth Springs from the Earth: The Teachings of Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotsk* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018).

6 Though Heschel has been accused of misrepresenting both the thought of Tillich and Kierkegaard. See: Jack Mulder Jr., "Abraham Joshua Heschel: Heschel's Use of Kierkegaard as Cohort in Depth Theology," in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgard, 2012): 155-170 and Aaron Mackler, "Symbols, Reality and God: Rejection of a Tillichian Understanding of Religious Symbols." *Judaism* 40 (1991): 290-300.

religious tradition, Will Herberg argued for Jews to define their Judaism in explicitly religious terms to participate fully in an American democracy built on Judeo-Christian principles.⁷ Herberg considered Judaism to be a solely religious identity.⁸ Politically, he thought that American Jewish cooperation at the cultural and theological level with the Christian mainstream would contribute to a collective effort against godless Communism. Herberg found that the translation and creation of a common Judeo-Christian theology in America was not only possible but necessary to the development of American democracy. He relied heavily on the vocabulary of Reinhold Niebuhr in order to create this common theology.⁹ Rabbi Soloveitchik, on the other hand, set a firm limit on theological exchange between Jews and Christians in his famous 1964 article “Confrontation.” While he allowed for an exchange at the level of mundane human affairs, he feared that the theological confrontation between Jew and Christian risked the objectification of the Jew by a Christian subject who historically dominated any sham attempt at “dialogue.”¹⁰ True interfaith dialogue must occur between two subjects of equal standing, and Soloveitchik was skeptical of the possibility for such a dialogue in his historical moment. He insisted upon the mutual untranslatability of the Jewish faith to a Christian audience that was not yet prepared to meet the Jew as equal. Anything which could be described as “Judeo-Christian” existed only on the level of culture, which excluded exchange at the level of theology.¹¹

In contrast to Soloveitchik, Heschel insisted that Jews and Christians can meet through shared faith experiences, on the level of “fear and trembling.”¹² The experience of radical amazement in the face of the existence of God is Heschel’s common denominator for religious experience. It is at the level of “depth”

7 Captured in his most famous work: Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1960).

8 His most cohesive theological statement is found in Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man: An Interpretation of Jewish Religion* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1951). See also Nahum Glatzer, “Review of Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man.*” *Commentary* 13 (1952), 296.

9 Niebuhr himself had a relatively high estimation of Judaism. See, for instance: Reinhold Niebuhr, *Pious and Secular America* (New York: Scribner, 1958), 86-112, and Reinhold Niebuhr, “Jews after the War,” in *Reinhold Niebuhr: Major Works in Religion and Politics*, Elisabeth Sifton, ed. (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2015), 639-650.

10 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” *Tradition* 6:2 (New York, 1964), 23.

11 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” 22.

12 Abraham Joshua Heschel, “No Religion is an Island,” in *No Religion is an Island: Abraham*

Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 9.

that the religious person is confronted as the “object of God’s concern.”¹³ This experience goes beyond the level of dogma to the horizon of faith, prompting Heschel to write: “*the prerequisite of interfaith is faith.*”¹⁴ The faith experience is shared between Jews and Christians at the level at which the human subject becomes an object in the eyes of God. But at the level at which two human subjects interact, Heschel maintains that both “communication and separation are necessary.”¹⁵ Heschel did not think that maintaining particularism would be a barrier, as there has never been such a thing as a truly monolithic society in human history. Rather, Heschel wonders in his prophetic voice whether “perhaps it is the will of God that in this æon there should be diversity in our forms of devotion and commitment to him.”¹⁶ This diversity in forms of worship to the same God should be utilized as the basis for an interreligious dialogue that can benefit humanity in the “terrible predicament of here and now.”¹⁷

Heschel saw Paul Tillich and his fellow Neo-Orthodox theologian Reinhold Niebuhr as a genuine bridge to Protestant theology in America. Their theological treatment of the Jewish tradition was more respectful than Heschel was used to, and he engaged in meaningful dialogue with their theology, particularly the systematic theology of Paul Tillich. In “No Religion is an Island,” perhaps Heschel’s most famous work on interfaith dialogue, the Neo-Orthodox theologians are the primary examples of Christian respect for Judaism. In particular, Heschel names his passion for the prophets as a site of genuine theological exchange between himself, Tillich, and a Catholic theologian Gustave Weigel. Their shared appreciation of the Prophets as particularly relevant to their current moment in history stood out to Heschel from the usual Christian objectification of Judaism.

In conversations with Protestants and Catholics I have more than once come upon an attitude of condescension to Judaism, a sort of pity for those who have not yet seen the light; tolerance instead of reverence. On the other hand, I cannot forget that when Paul Tillich, Gustave Weigel, and myself were invited by the Ford Foundation to speak from the same platform on the religious situation in America, we not only found ourselves in deep accord in disclosing what ails us, but above all without prior consultation, the three of us confessed that our guides in this critical age are the prophets of Israel, not Aristotle, not Karl Marx, but Amos and Isaiah.¹⁸

13 Heschel, “No Religion is an Island,” 9.

14 Heschel, “No Religion is an Island,” 10.

15 Heschel, “No Religion is an Island,” 11.

16 Heschel, “No Religion is an Island,” 14.

17 Heschel, “No Religion is an Island,” 22.

18 Heschel, “No Religion is an Island,” 10.

Here, Heschel describes a moment between a Protestant, Catholic, and a Jew which would seemingly support Will Herberg's thesis that the combination of those three faiths could share a vocabulary based in Biblical theology. Tillich, Weigel, and Heschel shared a deep concern for the prophetic voice of the divine in their historical moment which was concerned more with the material than the theological. Heschel was drawn to the theology of Tillich because he sought to reintroduce an awareness of the "lost dimension of religion." Tillich argued that questions of meaning and "ultimate concern" for humanity had been eschewed by a vapid secularism.¹⁹ Heschel saw in Tillich's work the possibility of a truly shared vocabulary of faith between Jew and Christian. But, unlike Herberg, who borrowed wholesale both the concepts and vocabulary of Tillich's fellow Neo-Orthodox theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Heschel attempted to translate theological concepts rooted in Jewish thought into a vocabulary shared with Tillich. Although he saw the possibility of genuine exchange between Jew and Christian, Heschel was not afraid to critique Tillich's theology along the way. In the next section, I will show how, throughout his work, Heschel relies upon Tillich's ontological definition of God to emphasize the imminent and dialogical nature of the divine.

Above the Ground: Tillich's Anxious Ontology in the Work of Heschel

On one side of Broadway at 122nd Street in New York during the 1950s, Paul Tillich wrote that God was the ground of being, completely transcending our reality. God was the object of our ultimate concern from which all other subjectivities arise. Meanwhile, on the other side of the street during the same decade, Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that God was in search of man, and that man must respond. The concern of man for God was reciprocated in God's concern for man. For Paul Tillich, the ultimate concern is the ontological concern. Tillich wrote that reality begins with an act of grace from a totally transcendent God who is the foundation of being. Humanity is perpetually estranged from this ground of being and seeks paths towards reunification. For Heschel, the ultimate concern is the pressing awareness of God's existence, radically perceived as "more than real."²⁰ If God exists, in Heschel's theology, then the ultimate

19 Most famously articulated by Tillich in "The Lost Dimension in Religion," in *The Essential Tillich: An Anthology of the Writings of Paul Tillich*, ed. F. Forrester Church (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 1–8.

20 To use the words of Heschel in Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Phi-*

concern is how to respond to that divine reality. Humanity's ultimate concern is born of God's ultimate concern for humanity; humanity is indebted to God's concern. Humanity's ultimate concern is "above" the ground of the divine reality.

Heschel was known to critique Tillich's conception of God publicly. Though I believe Heschel had great respect for Tillich as a philosopher and systematic thinker, as a theologian, he sharply disagreed with Tillich. Throughout his work, Heschel critiques the ontological understanding of the divine, particularly the language of the ground of being. While not always explicitly citing Tillich, it is often clear that the Protestant theologian is the one whom Heschel has in mind. For instance, in his interview with broadcaster Carl Stern, Heschel implies that Tillich doesn't really believe in God:

There are a great many who read the word of God and don't believe in Him. Let me give you an example. One of the most popular definitions of God common in America today was developed by a great Protestant theologian: God is the ground of being. So everybody is ready to accept it. Why not? Ground of being causes me no harm. Let there be a ground of being, doesn't cause me any harm, and I'm ready to accept it. It's meaningless. Isn't there a God who is above the ground?²¹

While giving Tillich some credit as a "great Protestant theologian," Heschel is not afraid to renounce his understanding of the nature of God. In Heschel's view, acceptance of God as the ground of being held no practical implications for the way people led their lives. It is a minimalist conception of God which asks nothing from the individual in return for the acceptance of grace. The God of Tillich is passive. To Heschel, man is an active creature in conversation with an active God. The philosophical God of Tillich could never be dynamic enough to meet the demands of human religion.²² Certainly, Tillich's passive theology is far removed from the Biblical theology to which Heschel devoted much of his thought. In Heschel's opinion, Tillich's modern approximation of the God of the Bible kept God at too far a distance from the modern believer.

For Tillich, the entire basis of reality rests upon the inconceivable vastness that is the totally transcendent divine. This vastness, and the abyss between us and its comprehension, is the question that Tillich assigns to the ultimate concern.²³ The ultimate for Tillich is universal, final, and impossible to grasp.

osophy of Judaism (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1955), 172, and *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (New York: Scribner, 1954), 131.

21 Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Interview with Carl Stern," in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1996), 408.

22 Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 17.

23 Paul Tillich, "God" in *The Essential Tillich*, 11–12.

Considering the subjective concerns of life in light of the ultimate concern allows human language to gesture in the direction of the transcendent: “symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate.”²⁴ The symbolic logos becomes the incarnation of the divine in humanity insofar as it is born out of their intellectual grasp of a culturally-conditioned “unconditional character.”²⁵ The relationship between God and man is one-directional: God blasts open the gates of heaven and delivers the grace of the logos to humanity who inadequately receives it. For Heschel, the logos, the apprehension of the divine through language, is not experienced haphazardly but is rather received in a dialogical relationship with God. In a passage that appears in different forms throughout his writings, Heschel refers opaquely to Tillich’s definition of God as being of ultimate concern to humanity:

The supreme issue is not whether in the infinite darkness there is a being of grandeur that is the object of man’s ultimate concern, but whether the reality of God confronts us as a pathos—God’s ultimate concern with good and evil—or whether God is mysteriously present in the event of history. Whether being is contingent upon creation, whether creation is contingent upon care, whether my life is dependent upon His care, whether in the course of my life I come upon His guidance. I, therefore, suggest that God is either of no importance or of supreme importance.²⁶

If God is just being, then God is just a concept, just logos. Placing the logos as the object of ultimate concern will not lead to the worship of God, but rather the worship of the logos, and not God Himself.²⁷ Pathos, not logos, is the means through which God is most closely confronted in human experience. Pathos is the immediate identification with the personal, compassionate, and demanding God. Pathos is God experienced at an ontological level. Heschel’s system emphasizes that God needs man, though not in the same way that man needs God. The question of ontology in a theological system where God is radically present is not whether God is a being, but rather, how to be with God.²⁸ Man is not a passive being but an active, living being. The relation of man to transcendence is not inherent but must be sought through human action met with a living God. The ultimate concern of God confronts humanity without

24 Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 41–47.

25 See Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 1–4, and Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967): vol. 1. 25–28, 57, vol. 2 111–112

26 Heschel, “Jewish Theology,” in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, 163, with a similarly phrased remark in the same book: “The God of Israel and Christian Renewal,” 270.

27 Heschel, *Man’s Quest for God*, 129.

28 Abraham J. Heschel, *Who is Man?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1965), 69. Encountered in: Daniel Herskowitz, “God, Being, Pathos Abraham Joshua Heschel’s Theological Rejoinder to Heidegger.” *The Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 26:1 (2018): 95.

discretion as a living being at once beyond being. This confrontation between man and God is the occurrence of pathos.

Both Heschel and Tillich find anxiety intimately bound up with their understanding of ultimate concern in relation to God. The harbinger of anxiety in Tillich is finitude and the possibility of non-being.²⁹ If God is the ground of being, then anxiety arises at the possibility of non-being. Anxiety is the creeping suspicion that being itself can cease to be. Those in the grips of anxiety are helpless in the face of oblivion.³⁰ The object of Tillich's anxiety is "the negation of every object."³¹ He explicitly identifies that anxiety over the concern that there is no ground of being, that God may not exist, is a modern phenomenon. In contrast, the object of Heschel's anxiety is born out of the dialogue between God and humanity. The ultimate concern appears as an awareness of God's concern for humanity, and anxiety arises from the uncertainty of how to answer the challenge of God.³² Anxiety does not occur over the question of "does God exist?" Rather, anxiety asks "since God exists, what is to be done?" While Tillich's anxiety is ontological, Heschel's is epistemological. In the next section, I will show how Heschel rearticulates his understanding of ultimate concern and anxiety in his works on the Kotzker. The ultimate concern becomes the concern for Truth, and anxiety arises over the realization that Truth is buried, and much of life is lived in falsehood.³³

God Below the Ground: Heschel & Tillich as a 20th Century Kotzker & Kierkegaard

Heschel's critique of Tillich was consistent throughout his later works, but it appeared in a new form in his fixation on the thought of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. So intense was Heschel's preoccupation with the Kotzker that he produced not just a Yiddish publication aimed toward capturing the sayings of the Kotzker as Heschel received them orally in Yiddish, but he also produced the English *A Passion for Truth* to give the language of the Kotzker to his English-speaking audience. In *A Passion for Truth*, Heschel reworks the vo-

29 Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 31–38.

30 Tillich's notion of anxious helplessness draws close to Rosenzweig's paralyzing "sickness of reason." See Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy: A View of the World, Man, and God* (Cambridge, M.A., London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

31 Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 35.

32 Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, 137.

33 My capitalization of Truth is intentional and reflects Heschel's use of it in *A Passion for Truth*.

cabulary of “ultimate concern” and “anxiety” into the Kotzker’s system. Truth is the object of ultimate concern, but it is buried in the reality of human existence. Truth is “below” the ground upon which the kingdom of man stands.³⁴ The closer humanity gets to Truth, the closer they are to responding to God’s call. Thus, anxiety ensues over the pervasiveness of falsehood.

The differences between Tillich’s ontological approach and Heschel’s epistemological approach are made evident in Heschel’s juxtaposition of the Kotzker Rebbe and Søren Kierkegaard. For the purposes of this essay, I wish to read Heschel’s focus on Kierkegaard as a thinly veiled reference to Paul Tillich. Heschel’s work on the Kotzker clearly showed the internal struggles which burdened him in his final years.³⁵ In *A Passion for Truth*, Heschel paints a bleak picture of the situation of American religion. Edward Kaplan argues that Heschel included Kierkegaard in this work in an attempt to draw a wide readership.³⁶ I might argue rather that Kierkegaard is used to speaking to the theological situation of Protestantism in his day, and that Heschel establishes Tillich as the Kierkegaard to his Kotzker.

In *A Passion for Truth*, Heschel substantiates his comparison of Kierkegaard and Kotzker using his method of “depth theology.” Depth occurs at the level of human experience, at the level of pathos. It is the raw emotional reaction to life situations that precedes the implementation of particular theological dogma. Depth theology emphasizes “self-reflection,” rather than “speculation.”³⁷ It is the translation of pathos to logos. The comparison of two thinkers from disparate traditions is legitimized through the similarity in their internal crises. “The two resemble each other in many of their inner situations—in depth-experiences, in modes of concern, in earnest intensity.”³⁸ Though this quote describes the affinity between the Kotzker and Kierkegaard, this criteria is seen applied by Heschel above in his resonances with Tillich and Weigel in “No Religion is an Island.”

Tellingly, Heschel puts a limit on the comparison between the Kotzker and Kierkegaard in his Yiddish publication *Kotzk*. There, he explicitly states his belief that the Kotzker Rebbe’s philosophy should be as popularly received as

34 Paraphrasing Heschel’s gloss in Yiddish on *Bereishit Rabbah* 8:8: Heschel, *Kotzk*, 12.

35 For an analysis of Heschel’s struggles in his final years, see Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940-1972* (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 339–357.

36 Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 342.

37 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *A Passion for Truth* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973), 86.

38 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 86.

the work of the contemporary Kierkegaard.³⁹ In addition, he refuses to put the Yiddish phrases of the Kotzker into Kierkegaard's philosophical terminology because it will distort the meaning of the language:

The Kotzker Rebbe, one of the most original thinkers that the Jewish people possessed, struggled with the deepest problems of mankind's existence. His opinions are of great importance for modern religious thought. In order to perceive clearly and distinctly the scope of the Kotzker's system, one might translate it into the language of philosophical terminology. I want to do this but do not. For, by pouring the language of the Pesukim into the language of secular terminology, its smell and taste is evaporated, and the content's worth easily goes missing.⁴⁰

Like in *A Passion for Truth*, Heschel highlights the similarities between the Kotzker's system and Kierkegaard's existential philosophy. But Heschel rejects the comparative method of depth theology because of the risk of stripping the Kotzker's words of their unique character, their "taste and smell." The reverse may also be true, that the method of depth theology cannot be conveyed in Yiddish.⁴¹ In addition, Heschel states that among his reasons for writing the Yiddish book is the fact that he may be one of the last people alive who received the teachings of the Kotzker orally in Yiddish. Thus, Heschel understands it as his duty to preserve these teachings in the language in which he received them.⁴² This context of preservation is entirely missing in the English edition.⁴³

39 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Kotzk: in gerangle far emesdikayt* (Tel Aviv: ha-Menorah, 1973), 16.

40 My translation. Heschel, *Kotzk*, 15.

41 Thank you to my teaching fellow Mr. J.J. Kimche, Ph.D. candidate in the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University, for this helpful comment.

42 Heschel also says that the Hebrew records of the Kotzker coming from Poland in the generation before the Holocaust are an unreliable source for the Kotzker's system. They reflect more the thought of the disciples of the Kotzker than the Kotzker himself, and they use a suspect form of Hebrew. Heschel provides no evidence for his claims. AJ Heschel, *Kotzk*, 8-9.

43 Annette Aronowicz, one of the few scholars to comment on the Yiddish Kotzk, poses the tantalizing question of what is at stake for Heschel in writing in Yiddish: "Could not Heschel be saying, through his choice of language, that the continuity of the Jewish tradition requires a leap out of the world of American and Israeli culture?" What is the purpose of writing in a dense and idiomatic vernacular pushed to the brink of extinction? Did Heschel anticipate the resurgence in interest in the Yiddish language, and wanted to make sure the new generation was equipped with an existential system native to the language? Or was it a pure act of preservation, an attempt to capture what Yudel Mark called Heschel's neshome-loshn, his language of the soul? These questions lie outside of the scope of this paper, but deserve further attention. Annette Aronowicz, "Heschel's Yiddish 'Kotzk': Some Reflections on Inwardness," in *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Philosophy, Theology, and Interreligious Dialogue. Jüdische Kultur*. 21. Edited by Stanislaw Krajewski and Adam Lipszyc (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009), 113. Similarly, Heschel scholar Michael Marmor wonders if "the turn to the Kotzker

What then is at stake for Heschel in writing about the Kotzker in English? What is at stake for an emergent American Jewish theology in English in the second half of the twentieth century? Heschel recognized that after the events of the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel, American Judaism was no longer running away from matters of spiritual concern. There was a renewed interest in the spiritual life of Judaism. But Heschel found that the younger generations were dissatisfied with the “stereotypes in our interpretation of Judaism” widely used in American Jewish education.⁴⁴ Thus, he was actively engaged in the construction of an American Jewish theological vocabulary in the English language which he hoped would better serve the spiritual needs of the Jewish people. He understood that putting the Kotzker in English was doing something new, and thus makes no false claims towards preservation in *A Passion for Truth*.

Like Tillich and Heschel, both Kierkegaard and the Kotzker were concerned with the unity of man’s existence and the near impossibility of realizing this unity in society. Kierkegaard sought “to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom.” The Kotzker pushed to emphasize the ultimacy of Truth in a Hasidic movement that he considered to be increasingly inauthentic.⁴⁵ Heschel ultimately maintained that the differences between Kierkegaard and the Kotzker were insolubly rooted in the alternative accounts of reality in the Judaisms and Christianities of their times. Kierkegaard was engaged in the world of Hegelian dialectics, while the Kotzker was submerged in Talmudic dialectics and a “search for depth in religious experience” in the tradition of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism.⁴⁶ While both the Kotzker and Kierkegaard emphasized a need for faith and recognition of a power above nature, they did so from starkly different understandings of the ultimate concern of humanity. Heschel describes this difference as one between guilt and expectation:

One [Kierkegaard’s understanding] is that man must atone for a guilt; the other [the Kotzker’s] that he has a task to carry out, an expectation to fulfill. The first has found expression in the Fall of man, his sinful nature, while the second has laid stress upon the mitzvah.⁴⁷

can be seen as Heschel’s equivalent to the turn of post-Holocaust theology in modern Jewish thought in the aftermath of the Six Day War.” Michael Marmor, *Abraham Joshua Heschel and the Sources of Wonder* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 105.

44 Heschel, “Teaching Religion to American Jews” in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, 148.

45 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 7.

46 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 240.

47 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 257.

Kierkegaard understands the human subject as stained with original sin. There is an “infinite qualitative difference between God” and humanity. The “prerequisite for Christian existence” is the anxiety over the human disengagement from God or the anxiety over the ultimate concern of God’s potential non-being.⁴⁸ The Protestant notion of the radical grace of God must then be Christianity’s primary focus to bridge the wide gap between God and man.⁴⁹ It is only through God’s grace that man can receive faith, and it is only through faith that man can make the movement from the particular to the absolute. Humanity has no access to the divine that is not divinely given. Our world is closed off from God, and only God can open the door.⁵⁰ Kierkegaard’s existential suffering begins with the understanding that humanity is inherently sinful.

The Kotzker, by contrast, conceived of humanity’s disengagement from God merely as a contingency, and not the essential human condition. Humanity is deeply involved with God and thus has agency in gaining access to the divine. God, to Heschel’s Kotzker, is knocking on the door between God and man, and it is man’s duty to open the door.

Kierkegaard stressed God’s absolute self-sufficiency. Judaism teaches that God needs man to carry out His acts through history, that man depends in his very being on God, and that, within the dimension of history, the relationship between God and man is a covenant, a reciprocity, in which the partners have obligations toward each other.⁵¹

The essential condition of man in Heschel’s radical depiction of Judaism as a whole is the feeling of indebtedness, a call towards action with constant reference toward the will of the divine. The proper response to this indebtedness, according to the Kotzker, was a rigorous pursuit of internal and external Truth. The Kotzker remained dedicated to the possibility of man’s goodness and spiritual holiness. The mitzvot, deeds commanded by the divine, revealed a world already infused with God’s grace. It is this very conviction in the potential of humanity that ultimately drove the Kotzker into spiritual isolation. So few humans occupied themselves with the ultimate concern of Truth in existence. The profound infusion of human life with falsehood left the Kotzker with anxiety over the impossible conditions of a world where Truth lies buried, and where humanity so often disregards the Truth beneath their feet.⁵²

48 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 250.

49 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 252.

50 Using Heschel’s metaphor: *A Passion for Truth*, 242.

51 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 243.

52 Heschel cites the following Midrash about how God buried Truth before the creation of humanity: “When the time came for the Holy Blessed One to make the first human being, the ministering angels made themselves into competing counsels. Some of them said, ‘don’t

The biographical differences between the Kotzker and Kierkegaard are eerily reflected in the lives of their intellectual inheritors, Heschel and Tillich. Heschel makes sure to note how the anxieties suffered by the Kotzker and Kierkegaard are reflected in their personal lives. For Kierkegaard, his ontological sense of human sinfulness seems to have created a disconnect between the religious nature of his writings and the alleged immorality of his personal conduct. Even as he praised asceticism and minimalism in his writing, he practiced a rather extravagant lifestyle.⁵³ The Kotzker, on the other hand, lived so intensely his religious ideal of answering the call of God that he cultivated a feeling of detachment and disdain for the mendacious conditions of his reality. As upright as he was in moral character, the Kotzker was every bit as harsh in his personal discipline and in his spiritual demands of his students. This intensity led him to socially isolate for around the last 20 years of his life to focus on refining his answer to his calling. Like Kierkegaard, Tillich was well known for immoral personal conduct. His open marriage and sexual pursuit of female students were common knowledge during his time as a professor. Meanwhile, Heschel was renowned for his moral integrity in regard to issues of social justice, but like the Kotzker, he too was gripped with anxiety at the mendacity of humanity in the face of God's call. However, Heschel responded differently to this anxiety. Instead of social isolation, he found fulfillment in social action. Towards the end of his life, Heschel's rhetoric became increasingly harsh as a result of his displeasure with the Vietnam war and his engagement with the Kotzker.

In addition to the biographical parallels, the theological differences Heschel highlights between the Kotzker and the Kierkegaard call to mind the difference between Tillich and Heschel himself. Heschel, like the Kotzker, was a dissenter in the lines of the Hasidic dynasties. Tillich, like Kierkegaard, was an existential philosopher and theologian determined to restore a sense of depth to Christianity. Heschel, like the Kotzker, spent his career struggling with the mendacity of humanity and the contradictions of an imminent encounter with a "more than real" God. Tillich, like Kierkegaard, found that human nature is

create humans,' and the others said, 'create them.' The angel of kindness said, 'create them, for they will do acts of loving kindness.' Then the angel of truth said, 'do not create them, for they will be full of lies.' The angel of righteousness said, 'create them, for they will establish justice.' The angel of peace said, 'do not create them, for they will be in constant strife!' What did the Holy Blessed one do, but grab up truth and hurl it to the earth. Whereupon the ministering angels said before the Holy Blessed One, 'Ruler of all worlds, what have You done? Why have You so chastised the chief of your court? Let truth arise again from the earth'" (Bereshit Rabba, 8:8). See Heschel, *Kotzk*, 12.

53 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 240.

essentially characterized by estrangement. Tillich went further than Kierkegaard to argue that our sinful existence is only atoned for through a God who is “the ground of being.” In *A Passion for Truth*, Heschel explicitly cites Tillich’s notion of estrangement to illustrate Kierkegaard’s conception of original sin.⁵⁴

Heschel’s disagreement with Tillich over his definitions of ultimate concern and anxiety deriving from an ontological God is also played out in the Kotzker’s struggle with Truth. Heschel’s ultimate concern of how to live in response to God is paralleled by the Kotzker’s ultimate concern of Truth. Yet, for Heschel and the Kotzker, the world appears to be filled with falsehood. The pursuit of Truth is consistently put off track through self-deception and a lack of awareness of the radical presence of God. The Truth the Kotzker seeks is at once knowing oneself and being with God. Truth in being is the ends of being, and God is beyond Truth. Tillich’s definition of God as the “ground-of-being” leaves no room for the ultimate concern of Truth that Heschel describes.

The nature of God beyond ontology is never reconciled within Heschel’s own corpus. An adequate account that might logically reconcile the paradox of a radically immanent and transcendent God is not found in his theological and philosophical works.⁵⁵ The contradictions between the demands of Heschel’s traditional theological upbringing and modern theological proclivity is deeply embedded within his theological system. The same is also true of Tillich. They are simultaneously open to critiques from the perspective of rational argumentation and theological doctrine. This open-ended quality of their thought is perhaps one reason that their theological language is still used today for various sorts of arguments in American public discourse.

Conclusion

Despite Heschel’s contradictions, his work exposes the intellectual fallibility of a purely ontological definition of God. On the one hand, the ontological definition limits the theological understanding of a God that is radically present in the lives of humans. An ontological God can command nothing from human beings; to be is sufficient to be transcendent. Heschel furthers his critique of Tillich from the experience of a “God above the ground” in his comparison of the Kotzker with Kierkegaard, and as I have argued in his comparison of him-

54 Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 258.

55 On Heschel’s contradictions, see for instance the Jon D. Levenson, “Religious Affirmation and Historical Criticism in Heschel’s Biblical Interpretation.” *American Jewish Studies Review* 25:1 (2001): 25-44, and Jon D. Levenson, “The Contradictions of A.J. Heschel.” *Commentary* (New York) 106 (1998): 34-38.

self with Tillich. Both thinkers appreciate the existential dimension of God's existence, but as I have shown, Heschel disagreed with Tillich over the reality of such existential confrontation. Heschel agreed that an encounter with the divine concerned an ontological element, but that the ontological element was in the human experience of Pathos. For Heschel, the ontological experience of Pathos pointed to something beyond the ontological reality of God. I have argued in this paper that Heschel began to theorize in his work on the Kotzker that what lay beyond being was Truth. Truth is the reality of a living being in harmony with the commandments of a living God. But Truth is not readily available to humanity, it must be uncovered. This understanding of Truth as the end of being continued and forwarded Heschel's engagement with the ontological proposal of Tillich.

In conclusion, I wish to also suggest that Heschel's struggle with Tillich's ontological definition was also a struggle with casting his project in an English theological idiom. Clearly, Heschel saw that he resonated theologically with Tillich on the level of depth. Tillich's thought was an open door for Heschel to walk through and engage with Christian theology and philosophy. But at the same time, he came to Tillich's theology deeply, ontologically, grounded in the theological language of Hebrew and Yiddish. Heschel's encounter with Tillich can, in one lens, be read as a struggle raising questions about the diasporic Jewish community in America. How does one live with God in the English language? How does one respond to God in an era and a language where even theologians begin to sound like they don't even believe in God? The inability of language to fully convey meaning was of central importance to the Kotzker's emphasis on the self-reflexive questioning of Truth. To what extent can Truth, once dug up, be conveyed from person to person? To what extent can the conception of Truth that Heschel found in the thought of the Kotzker be conveyed outside of the oral Yiddish tradition in which it was received? Heschel's response to these questions was both an attempt to convey the Kotzker to his English language audience through the mediation of Kierkegaard's philosophy, and also an attempt to preserve the Kotzker in his native Yiddish. In a way, Heschel resurrects the ghost of the Kotzker to come to his defense in his critique against the overly philosophical conception of God that he calls out in Tillich. The ontological discussion with Tillich is a foothold in which to bring the Kotzker as a relevant thinker into English.

The reliance on the Western philosophical tradition to convey religious meaning in English created a run-in with contemporary Christian theology. Heschel attempted to address this head-on in comparing the Kotzker to Ki-

erkegaard, and thus, as I have argued, himself with Tillich. In struggling with Tillich, Heschel opened new channels of communication between Jews and Christians at the level of theology, without failing to heavily critique the theology of his Christian contemporaries. Heschel never fully reconciled himself to Tillich's theology. From the perspective of the Jewish theologian, how could a Christian genuinely receive the faith experience of the Jew with such a limited understanding of basic categories in Jewish theology? Though the dialogue between them marked a shift in Jewish-Christian relations, Heschel's firm belief in the inadequate conception of God and humanity present in Tillich's work shows an American Jewish theology continually suspicious of theological exchange between the Jewish minority and Christian majority. Though Heschel readily engaged in interfaith dialogue, his work on the Kozzker shows his emphasis on the necessity of theological critique in the burgeoning exchange between Judaism and Christianity in America.

We also see the significance of Heschel's critique of Tillich's ontology for American Jewish theology in the lack of inheritors of the American Jewish theological tradition begun by Heschel and others during the middle of the twentieth century. Jewish writing after this period returned either to an emphasis on halakhic issues (Jewish legal matters of practical importance) or utilized the method of theology to presume Jewish religious commitment and avoid the problem of revelation.⁵⁶ Part of the decline in Jewish theology, I contend, is a result of the translational entanglements of an English-language Jewish theology that repeatedly collided with Christian theology in the context of American pluralism. The inability to express in a rational system the meaningful content of Judaism without resorting to Christian theological categories that might risk the liquidation of Jewish concepts proved to be too big a task for any single Jewish theologian. As a result, Jewish ideas about God moved away from systemic theological statements to what Michael Wyschogrod described as "Jewish thought," ideas contributing to the understanding of and within the divine body of Israel.⁵⁷

In critiquing the system of Tillich amidst the creation of an English vocabulary of faith for the American Jew, Heschel put forward a Jewish understanding of a theological vocabulary that remains popular among Jews and Christians today. Heschel's insistence on the dialogical relationship of humanity with God

56 See Arnold Jacob Wolf, "American Jewish Theology," *Judaism* 51 (2002): 484, and Arnold Eisen, "Jewish Theology in North America: Notes on Two Decades," in *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 91 (1991): 32.

57 Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 173-175.

and the ultimate concern of God's demand provides American Jewish thought with the vocabulary to articulate a Jewish conception of God in and against a mainline Protestant theology that tends to over-philosophize the divine. Heschel signaled a further lack of preparation on the part of Christian theology to grasp the Jewish faith experience in its entirety. Despite this, Heschel weathered the translational entanglements of bringing the Kotzker into English through Kierkegaard to provide an increasingly triumphalist American Jewry with a theology of radical Truth in the face of the "spiritual stagnation."⁵⁸ Heschel takes part simultaneously in the preservation, transferal, and creation of a new Jewish language particular to his American context, a language that might aid the modern American Jew to seek Truth and live with God.



58 "The Kotzker would call upon us to be uneasy about our situation, to feel ashamed of our peace of mind, of our spiritual stagnation. One's integrity must constantly be examined." Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, 320.

Reflections

The Tribe of the Beautiful Broken

My induction to the Tribe of the Beautiful Broken began six years ago—but like with most birth pains, one doesn't always recognize the signs right away. And, much like birth, the acute welcome to the Tribe came with discomfort, awe, blood, and brokenness.

Who is this Tribe? Its members are often quiet about it, but when they recognize a fellow traveler there is a deep, wordless knowing. Overlooked by the “yet to be broken,” they are not seen by a world that values perfection, achievement, and the next new thing. In a culture that holds achievers in high esteem, it's the Beautiful Broken who have recognized the deeper wisdom of broken dreams and broken expectations.

I am ashamed to admit that my simplistic view on life blinded me to the reality of my early birth pains. Several parts of my world no longer seemed to “just go my way,” and though I was bewildered, my plan was to wait for things to fall back into place. Fortunately, like the final stages of birth, life pushed me—hard—out of this middle stage, out of comfort. The final push usually is very painful, but it has the chance to produce beautiful brokenness.

This final push came right before Christmas last year, unceremoniously. In the name of fun, I made the decision to mattress-slide down a large staircase. I assured my friend that it would be more fun to do it together. Halfway down, I realized the depth of my bad judgment. Not only would this not end well, but I had put someone I cared for in danger, and something had to be done. Without thinking, I slammed my foot into the stairs to slow us down. Within a flash it was over—lightning pain shot through my whole body. Severe breaks to my leg, heel, and arch, a dislocated ankle, and a months-long battle with infection were the final birth pains that welcomed me into the Tribe of the Beautiful Broken.

The days following my accident were a blur, but I believed I'd quickly be back on the road to my normal life. Then days became weeks; weeks became months; months became a year—my season of silence. Life was slow and small. It took all that I had within me to make it through each day. At first, I thought I could will my way through it. The power of positive thinking had always gotten me through much. But I hadn't been able to positive-think my way out of my dad's Alzheimer's, and I wasn't going to positive-think my way out of this. When sheer determination failed, desperation and depression set in.

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”¹ In the past year, this has taken on a fresher, deeper meaning. I have shed so much of what I tried to achieve in my weary burdens from “unbroken” life: personal achievements, my children’s accomplishments, religious certainty, physical mastery. I have begun to embrace the wisdom of brokenness, and its beauty is becoming clear. Richard Rohr reflects it was on Moses’ second trip up the mountain to receive the Law, after smashing the first tablets, that he saw God’s glory, and Moses’ face shone. Perhaps each of us must shed the burdens of “unbroken” life that have ruled us to have our own encounter with the Almighty and to see God’s glory fully.

As I walk today amongst the Tribe of the Beautiful Broken, I see hard-fought wisdom hidden behind the loss of relationships. I see patience with those who are “other.” I see value in those who appear to be less than able but who themselves see life so clearly. I see gratitude for life no matter the circumstances. And I see faith in people whose “unbroken” life couldn’t possibly predict the abundance of life in the “broken” half. I am new to this tribe, but I am grateful to be in it. The certainty of an uncertain future doesn’t scare me the way it used to, but rather propels me to embrace what the Lord has for me in this moment and to trust that it is enough—that He is enough. I don’t wish anyone the painful journey that is required to be one of the Beautiful Broken, but I now find it quite freeing. Perhaps this is the kind of wisdom Jesus meant when he said, “for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”²

BETH BURGESS
Retired Teacher & Enneagram Coach
Washington



1 Matt. 11:28–29

2 Matt. 11:30

Peace Amidst Chaos

It's 3:00 a.m. in the cardiothoracic ICU. Four of us are engaging with the idea of our souls continuing after death. I'm the only woman and the youngest by at least a decade, but these are minor differences. Instead, we are more significantly separated by ideas of eternity: The anesthesiologist attending, surgical fellow and physician's assistant are convinced of their human abilities to bring themselves to heaven, to a similar post-life existence, or to cessation altogether.

The physician's assistant reveals his manifestation principle, a "put good into the universe, get good from the universe" kind of attitude. He trusts in his good deeds and believes those actions will be repaid eventually—that his soul will "earn the privilege of continuing." I ask if there is a threshold of good deeds necessary for such a privilege. He isn't sure. His entire premise for his soul's eternity is loosely understood, yet he is convinced his untestable benchmark is sufficient for his soul's continuation.

The surgical fellow states we cease to exist after our brains or hearts no longer function. He sheepishly contends that the moment we physically die, our spirits and souls terminate. I respond with a gentle follow up: Does he believe he would ever be joined with his deceased family members and friends? He pauses before muttering, "I try not to think about it." This man, who has dedicated his entire career to prolonging and improving life while often surrounded by death, is fearful of whatever comes after death. His reply reveals a sense of shame and sadness. He doesn't proclaim cessation from the mountaintops; instead, he timidly admits that his unbelief engenders undesirable emotions he attempts to avoid.

The anesthesiologist attending examines the phenomenon of molecular and cellular alignment, providing no other explanation other than that the world knows where things "ought" to be; things somehow work themselves into a particular location because it is where they "belong." "How did these particles know where they belong?" I ask him. He can't explain more than the simple answer, "They just know."

I believe in science. I believe in data, in trends, in objective information. These men also believe in what math can explain and their research examines, yet they are limited to beliefs in solely finite and examinable information. Any notion of faith is limited to materialism and their own intuition and motivation. These men would say their positions are rational, that yet-to-be answered questions about origin and destiny will confirm what they intuit. Hope is their

own desires and is left to chance, yearning for concrete verification with a moving target.

Our conversation was casual, free of convincing one another of wrong ideologies, yet it weighed on me heavily. These people are dear friends. I have worked with them on many occasions, know their personal anecdotes, and am secure enough in our conversations to warrant hearing their musings on existence after death. But at the end of the day, these intelligent, lovely, compassionate men, who often make life or death decisions, are without ultimate hope. Their human abilities are finite and bound, and their belief in their own salvation or denial of the existence of a “better place” is disheartening. While I’m not surprised, I am in awe of their commitment to themselves. They are constantly engaged in life and death scenarios, understand the complexity of the human body, and often interact with unexplainable results, yet they continue to convince themselves they are in control. Our friendship and professional relationship is wonderful, but I wrestle with the concept that an eternal relationship is offered to all but redeemed by only some. I desire for these men to have changed hearts, but can only be continual in prayer and engage these men in conversation.

I have witnessed tragic loss. I have placed beloved men and women in body bags. I have a job that continually teeters on the edge of life and death, and I have the privilege of meeting people in their most vulnerable physical and emotional states. As a believer, I have the privilege of taking care of earthly conditions in context of the knowledge that illness and pain do not continue in heaven. And still, it weighs on me, the responsibility of entering into life-shattering and life-altering scenarios—yet I continue to be present in and passionate about my career because of my hope in Jesus.

HALEIGH WILKINS
Registered Nurse
North Carolina



Dress for Action

I remember being in a Honduran immigrant's home in Houston. In pain, she related how her son was having a hard time fitting in with his new peers at the local public elementary school. "They beat him," she said. "But I know that things will change as we pray." I suggested martial arts training, but she resisted the proposal. I remember leaving frustrated. As somebody who was teased heavily in elementary and middle school, something felt off to me. Why would a mother send her son—defenseless—into a violent school setting and expect his young Christian faith to change anything? How will this child's identity be shaped throughout his adolescence as every week he comes home with a black eye to parents that tell him God loves him and that he just needs to persevere? How will his understanding of Christianity be marred by his experience? Will he think that the gospel is spiritually powerful, but unable to stand against physical resistance? I wondered why this boy wasn't getting taken by his father to the local boxing gym after school.

I often think about the betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane. One can imagine the scene like a scene from the Wild West. One fundamental religious posse against the radicals squared off to start hate. Peter makes the first move, and grabs his sword and cuts off a soldier's ear to defend his master. But then Jesus steps in and quickly stops the violence, saying "Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, "No Peter! Don't defend what you believe." Nor does he say, "Peter, your desire to protect me with strength is disgusting!" Neither of these condemnations flows from Jesus' mouth, as his command for Peter to stop is not one which censures strength or the notion of defending oneself. In fact, Jesus himself elsewhere tells his disciples to buy swords, and here Peter wears one to a prayer meeting on the mountain. As I consider this episode throughout my life, I wonder what speaks the peace of the gospel more—a young Christian boy getting beaten without the chance of defense or a Christian who, while being able to subdue any who would wish to hurt him, acts only ever in self defense.

Now, at 24 years old, I have the pleasure of serving in the military. I do my best to love the men around me, to share the good news of Jesus where it is often ignored and neglected despite being needed the most. Many of the men I'm around are not interested in the gospel, but no one tells me to stop listening, caring, and proclaiming Christ, as I excel through training, often ahead of my peers. In the runs, I finish in front. On the obstacle course, I post one of the

best times. I ask fighters in my group to teach me how to spar. My strength and abilities garner the respect of those around me, and this opens doors to share the gospel. Rather than hindering my witness, being healthily manly actually propels it.

On the world stage, views of others' strength matter even more. Terrorists target those they perceive as weak, and the helpless end up victimized. Global diplomatic relations, developing relationships for gospel advancement, and interactions with citizenry all take into account relative evaluations of power. The good guys aren't always on the best side of this. Simply, strong leaders don't want to listen to weak leaders.

I do disagree with brutal excesses of strength, with violence for the sake of violence and manliness for the sheer sake of bravado. But being meek and mild and remaining strong and powerful are not mutually exclusive. I want my gospel of peace to carry firepower but never use it. I want my decision to turn the other cheek to be a choice, not my only option.

NATHANAEL DUTY
US Military
California



Book Reviews

Smith, James K. A. *The Nicene Option: An Incarnational Phenomenology*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2021. pp. xi, 241. \$39.99 (hardcover). ISBN 978-1-4813-1372-8

About fifty years ago, there was a great resurgence of Christian philosophy within the analytic tradition. Philosophical heavyweights such as Alvin Plantinga and Eleonore Stump brought previously-scoffed-at questions about God and faith back into mainstream academic discussions and paved the way for a robust generation of Christian philosophers after them. In *The Nicene Option: An Incarnational Phenomenology*, James K.A. Smith calls for a similar Christian renaissance within the continental tradition. Central to this renaissance, claims Smith, should be a celebration of our embodied limits in the face of a tradition that often derides finitude. Smith's work is both provocative and thoughtful. He offers bold critiques of continental philosophy's current state, while at the same time dispensing sage advice for Christians just entering the field. Despite containing many loose threads that leave the reader with more questions than answers, *The Nicene Option* is a must-read for any person interested in the future of Christian thought within the realm of continental philosophy.

The Nicene Option is divided into two major parts. In part one, Smith offers some overarching critiques of both the continental tradition and the philosophy of religion as a whole. The first two critiques that Smith levels revolve around the importance of liturgy. In chapter one, Smith argues that philosophy of religion is too wrapped up in a Cartesian rationalism that ignores embodied practices. Philosophers, Smith claims, need to both engage more with liturgy as a topic of reflection and have increased awareness of how their understanding and imagination are shaped by liturgy. In the second chapter, Smith takes his argument one step further by claiming that religion essentially is liturgy. In this way, Smith makes the daring claim that all people (including atheists) are essentially religious insofar as they have practices that form their deepest values and understanding of life. The nature of these first two arguments will be unsurprising to anyone familiar with Smith's previous work, but they are well argued and provide solid pushback against modern assumptions about the nature of religion.

In his third chapter, Smith shifts focus to offer some technical advice for people hoping to enter the field of religious continental philosophy. Broadly speaking, Smith encourages these philosophers to be less insular and to adopt more rigorous standards of critique. Although Smith's advice is only directly helpful to a very specific niche of people, the chapter does provide some inter-

esting insights into the state and everyday practice of academic philosophy that anyone could appreciate.

In the fourth and final chapter of section one, Smith contrasts two competing understandings of finitude within the continental tradition. The first is what Smith calls a “logic of determination” which sees our finite existence as fundamentally impure and violent (70). Rejecting this outlook, Smith calls philosophers to embrace what he calls a “logic of incarnation” that celebrates our finitude and embodied existence as fundamentally good (75). This chapter is clearly the linchpin of the book and provides clearest insight into Smith’s vision for the future of a continental philosophy of religion. Smith does a great job of making this chapter both accessible and academic. While the specific content of the chapter focuses around debates within continental philosophy, the overarching message is easily grasped and could be beneficially applied to many different fields of study.

The second part of *The Nicene Option* consists of essays that apply Smith’s embrace of finitude to specific issues within continental philosophy. Chapters five through ten all examine or critique specific details of Jacques Derrida’s philosophy. Smith expertly exposes the flaws and contradictions within Derrida’s thinking on topics such as messianic religion, reason, hope and epistemology. Smith takes a brief interlude to defend some of Derrida’s earlier works on the nature of Platonism, before using Augustine to critique Derrida’s theory of deconstruction.

In his last two chapters, Smith shifts from critiquing the ideas of Derrida to those of Jean-Luc Marion. In chapter eleven he provides a very thoughtful critique of Marion’s contrast between idols and icons that points the reader to a more incarnational view of iconography. In his final chapter, Smith builds on the possibilities within Marion’s thought for a more positive view of intersubjectivity in contrast with violent imagery found in the work of Levinas. The specificity of the arguments within the second part of the book will inevitably leave the reader more interested in some of the chapters than others. Beyond illustrating Smith’s pro-finitude theme there’s nothing that really connects the chapters together, which can leave the reader feeling lost as to what the overall point is. That said, people with an interest in the topics that Smith examines will certainly find the chapters worth reading for their own sake.

The Nicene Option is by no means an easy read. The use of technical language, especially in the second part of the book, would make it hard for someone unfamiliar with continental philosophy to work through. The disparate nature of the chapters also can make the reading tough, as most of the chap-

ters do not build off the previous ones. One wonders if the book would have been better marketed as a collection of essays rather than a cohesive work of its own, especially considering that almost all of the chapters come from earlier published works. Despite this, the insights that Smith provides in *The Nicene Option* make it well worth the work. His deep understanding of Christian orthodoxy and the continental tradition allow him to illuminate a path forward in philosophy that remains faithful to both. If Smith's work is any indication of things to come, then there is much to look forward to within continental philosophy's study of religion!

REVIEWED BY BEN VAN HAITSMAN
Princeton Theological Seminary

Brock, Brian. *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2021. pp. xii, 180. \$21.99. ISBN 978-1-5409-6297-3

Disability is a difficult phenomenon to define. Most people, therefore, operate on a "know it when I see it" basis, but this is often a serious mistake. This modus operandi is not problematic only because many disabilities are not visible at all; it also causes us to begin our thinking of and interacting with disabled people with unchecked, harmful presumptions. The hurtful presuppositions people often carry about disability, in the Church and in secular life, are legion. Christians have their own problems in this regard; for instance, many persons with visible disabilities have uncomfortable stories about strangers praying over them, attempting a "drive-by" faith healing. Often, theology exacerbates problems like this rather than alleviate them. No one intends this; rather, it is a sin of omission and a failure to pay attention. Disabled theologians notice what others generally do not when those things elude received wisdom. They are, by their lives, uniquely primed to see them.

For those who have not been so primed, Brian Brock's *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body* provides the next best thing. Strictly speaking, it is not a work of disability theology. But Brock is no stranger to that field: he has written numerous publications about how disability impacts Christian reflection on practical theology, biomedical ethics, and Scriptural interpretation. In this book, he brings together the whole breadth of his knowledge to address pastors in a less academic, more practical register. Brock is concerned with the misconceptions Christians hold about disability, particularly as they often ap-

pear in pastoral ministry. He did not set out to write a manual of how to act around disabled persons or a penitential list of the Church's failures. Instead, he gracefully dispels misconceptions by inviting the reader into the point of view of disability theology and the disabled Christian experience, then calls them to think creatively about how churches need to adjust to match the true Church, into which Christ has called disabled people whom the earthly church neglects.

Each chapter is titled after a phrase or sentiment that Brock has often heard from pastors. For example, the first chapter is titled "Nobody with Disabilities in Our Church." This first section attempts to trouble the popular, pastoral assumptions about disability. Pastors, Brock says, are accustomed to view disabled members or visitors of their church as challenges. Brock, however, argues that disabled people are to be treated as people to be welcomed, not challenges to be overcome. He approaches this task on two fronts: first, Brock recounts a story about suffering a serious injury to his finger, encouraging the reader to sympathize with experience of becoming, in some sense, disabled; then, he provides the words and stories of disabled persons or their family members, along with statistics, all of which demonstrate the reality with which the reader is to sympathize also. All this sympathy is intended to pave over the view of disabled people as wholly "other" and to drive home that any calcified concept of what disability is becomes a mistaken and procrustean exercise.

The following chapters construct anew over what was demolished, drawing on Brock's deep engagement with disability theology, particularly regarding scriptural interpretation. Many of the insights on these pages seem obvious, but only in retrospect; for most, they would hardly be noticed. For instance, the reader learns that Jesus never heals anyone without their making their wishes known. This fact mantles a profound meaning for disabled readers, who often have their wishes assumed for them by family members, medical professionals, and even random strangers. This point flows into another: people in Jesus' setting are often less concerned with their bodies than they are with the cultural and religious attachments disability carried in Judea. Disability, among many things, made one ritually impure and barred from worship in the Temple. Some conditions had the potential to make others impure, which compounded society's physical and spiritual neglect of persons with social ostracization. Brock argues, then, that disabled people in the Gospels are not so much asking Jesus for bodily healing as they are asking for restoration as a member of the community; in other words, they ask for the welcome which churches today often fail to extend to those like them. There are many scriptural insights like this: Brock notes that Job is never said to have been healed of his skin condition at

the end, and in any case, Job's whole story spits in the face of the idea that such a state as his is a punishment for sin; Paul's blindness, far from being a sign of his irredeemability, is an occasion for his spiritual development, reversing cultural expectation. The grand array of scriptural interpretations, no matter their length, are some of the most engaging parts of the book.

The fifth and final chapter presents Brock's vision of what the church needs to do with this kind of insight. He does not, however, stoop to writing the kind of "manual" he protests against. He recommends against dedicated "special needs" ministries or any such programmatic approach. Instead, he insists that such approaches reduce disabled persons to objects to be ministered to, rather than subjects with whom God has worked, who are given the gifts of the spirit, and might even be ministers to their neighbors. His reigning symbol for how the church should be is the apostle Philip, who comes to the Ethiopian eunuch, spiritually neglected because of his bodily deprivation, enters his chariot, and speaks with him as an equal. Philip did not start with a "eunuch ministry" program that might or might not have fit the man but followed where God led him with full cognizance that God preceded him in his life. For Brock, a church community that separates itself from people because of their disabilities fails in its call as the body of Christ which already embraces them.

Brock thus leads the reader through a refreshing renewal of how they might think of disability in the Christian community: through a process like the mystic's way of purgation, illumination, and union, disabusing them of common illusions and inviting them to community with those with whom Jesus already communes. When the church clings to rarefied assumptions about disabled people and ignores what they truly need, it neglects persons made fully in the image of God. When a Christian uses someone's disability as a springboard to talk over them—or pray over them by surprise—they replace that person's dignity with their own prejudices. In all things, however, pastoral care is a ministry of listening, presence, and welcome. Disability clearly tells the pastor what that may mean for their ministry with disabled people in a generous and broad way and shows forth in writing the very same spiritual attitude it enjoins upon them. It is by far the most accessible of Brock's works, yet carries the same weight of thought which established him as a forceful voice in disability theology. In these pages, one witnesses the very basic grace that is listening to your neighbor, and hears the words of Jesus, saying, "stay and watch with me."

REVIEWED BY P.C. MCKINNEY
Princeton Theological Seminary

Ruden, Sarah. *The Gospels: A New Translation*. New York: Modern Library, 2021. pp. lxviii, 333. \$28.00 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0-3995-9294-2.

Sarah Ruden joins the growing ranks of Bible translators seeking to free the ancient text from theological accretions and linguistic mutations that later reshaped it into an abstruse tome of barely-readable English. Traduttore traditore (“the translator is a traitor”), as the saying goes, and Ruden claims that the story of Christianity’s origins has been so poorly ‘traditioned’ that much of its original meaning, vitality, and humor has been obscured. She works like an archeologist unearthing a mosaic, delicately brushing individual words with her classical training to excavate and restore them to their original brilliance. *The Gospels: A New Translation* is her attempt to recover the stylistic strangeness of the Gospel and reestablish the crucial “nexus of content and style” (xxxv). At the heart of her project is an appeal to Christians to consider well the world that their words create.

Ruden has already produced a spate of highly acclaimed classical translations, most notably Vergil’s *Aeneid* (2008) and Augustine’s *Confessions* (2017). The other Greek translations in her oeuvre—Homeric hymns, bawdy comedies, and philosophical dialogues—demonstrate her versatility in multiple genres and the range of considerations that inform her approach to the Gospels. She is steeped in antiquity’s ethos and thought patterns, and is keen to discern how a first-century audience would have heard the telling of this startling good news.

In a bold move that captures the mood and daring of her project, Ruden prefaces her Gospels with an excerpt from Virginia Woolf’s novel *To the Lighthouse*. The quote signals the goal of her eclectic translation—to “read in the littered pieces the clear words of truth”—and conditions the reader to enter Ruden’s work thinking about how the Gospels and secular literature interface and mutually inform one another (ix).

A substantial introduction chronicles her account of how things went wrong. Ruden rehearses a rather standard critical account of the Gospels, including their anonymous authorship, impossible harmony, jumbled linguistic pedigree (a Koinē Greek rendering of Aramaic dialogue that quotes a liberal Greek translation of a Hebrew text), and error-propagating transmission process. She addresses what she considers to be the authors’ fanciful appropriation of Hebrew “prophecy,” misunderstandings of idiom (e.g., Son of Man, Son of God), and ultimate baptism of the text into imperial Latin. When the text finally emerged in English in its long-influential, “authorized” form, it no longer breathed the freedom and freshness of the original. Ruden may have slightly

overplayed her hand here. At one point, she claims that the word theology “did not exist until many generations after the latest Gospel,” while in fact, Plato used the word 400 years before the earliest Gospel (xxxii).

The second part of the introduction outlines Ruden’s translation methodology and goals. She strives for a rendering of the text that is jarring and vivid. This is where Ruden excels. She produces an “estranging translation” as a defense against “anachronism, obfuscation, and lethargy, which drain communications of their primordial electricity” (xxxix-xl). One way she does this is by transliterating important proper names. So for instance, the Farisaioi and Saddoukaioi come from Hierosoluma; the holy family flees into Aiguptos to preserve Iēsous’ life from Hērōdēs. In addition, the translation attempts to convey the generic quality that certain words had in the minds of ordinary people by adopting a “lowercase understanding” of these words (xxxiii). It is unsettling to discover the ambiguities this approach brings to terms like “god.”

Another strategy Ruden employs is deconstructing stock theological terms into their basic sense, as suggested by ancient lexicons. A lengthy glossary spells out the rationale behind the more significant choices. In actual context, these choices become very effective in destabilizing familiarity. A few examples demonstrate this well. “At the inauguration was the true account, and this true account was with god, and god was the true account” (John 1:1). “If someone wants to come along behind me, he needs to renounce all claim to himself and lift up day by day the stake he’ll be hung on and follow me” (Luke 9:23). “Didn’t I choose the twelve of you myself? But among you, one is a slanderer” (John 6:70). These examples, in turn, baffle, horrify, and demythologize; they preclude inattentive reading that drowns with assumptions.

When it comes to a vivid reading experience, Ruden displays her genius as a translator and poet by constantly discovering felicitous ways to enliven the text. Instead of “disciples” and “scribes,” terms thick with religiosity, Ruden gives us “students” and “scholars.” Instead of the stuffy “wise and foolish virgins,” we read of the Austenian-sounding “silly and sensible girls.” Ruden follows the Greek text like a tango partner—closely but with her own artistic flourishes (in another book, she speaks of Koinē Greek’s “propensity for dance-ability”). In the bizarre story of the possessed hogs drowned in the sea, instead of a traditional rendering (“rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea,” NRSV), Ruden has, “barreled down the crag into the sea, and in the sea they drowned” (Mark 5:13). Here, there is no difference in meaning, but Ruden has replaced the flat report with a vivid, rhythmic line that is pure delight on the tongue. In the shorter ending of Mark, Ruden describes the women

“bolting out of the tomb, convulsed and out of their minds with shock” (16:8). There are plenty of colloquialisms, too. Throughout Luke (and only in Luke), the disciples frequently call Jesus “Boss.” In John, when Pilate presents Jesus to the crowd, instead of the dramatic “Behold the man,” Ruden gives us the mocking “Look at this guy.” Moves like this pervade her text.

The translation is complemented by an appropriate amount of short footnotes beneath the text. Ruden plays to her strengths here, and the effect is refreshing. The notes mainly elucidate linguistic features of the Greek, provide background on the Greco-Roman social world, and point out correspondences to classical literature.

Readers familiar with the sprawling array of Bible translations will detect similarities to other solo-translator projects. Ruden combines the informal style of J. B. Phillips, the classical training of Richmond Lattimore, and the destabilizing aim of David Bentley Hart. A comparison with Hart’s much-discussed translation reveals just how successful Ruden’s work is, especially since they share many of the same goals. The difference is that Hart is a theologian while Ruden is admittedly not, and this fact works out to her advantage here. It will be interesting to see how successful she is in the epistles, where narrative, parable, and dialogue give way to doctrine and theological vocabulary. If she completes the entire New Testament, it would be great fun to pair hers with Robert Alter’s literary translation of the Hebrew Bible (2018).

Ruden’s work will be helpful both to those seeking a contemporary literary translation and those who keep slipping into autopilot with an overfamiliar text. Readers will invariably come away with a richer sense of the Gospels’ strangeness, verve, and sheer delightfulness. They will be reminded that the first people to hear the “good news” did so with none of the Christian filters that we have adopted. Ruden underscores the text’s essentially anti-docetic quality—the real fleshliness of the text that is so quickly suppressed in the interest of dogma—and wants us to read it, enjoy it, and wrestle with it as it really is. Ruden would say, “This is the true account, *tolle lege*.”

REVIEWED BY KYLE BARTON
Princeton Theological Seminary

Bare, Daniel R. *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era*. New York: New York University Press, 2021. pp. 261. \$30.00 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-4798-0327-9

In an era of racial tension, racial division becomes heightened in social institutions. This is certainly the case in the church. Many congregations, denominations, and ministries are addressing issues of race in America and this challenge has led to instances of division and realignment. It is in this modern context that Daniel Bare's book *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era* strikes a relevant note for readers by examining how race has played a role in the development of the American church.

Today, controversies, such as the debate over Critical Race Theory, divide congregations, campuses, and other communities, while religious identity is increasingly understood through a racial lens. While this phenomenon is not new, this latest resurgence in racial tension has brought about a renewed interest in studying the racial dynamics of the church. Historically, the theological debate between conservatives and liberals in American Protestantism has been studied as a phenomenon of the "white church." This has been done both tacitly and explicitly.

Study has tacitly focused upon the white church by primarily studying the most prominent and visible figures at the front lines of the debates in the early twentieth century such as Harry Emerson Fosdick and J. Gresham Machen. Naturally, in an era of prevalent racial segregation, these figures constitute and represent what might be called the white church. More explicit study turns an eye toward pro-segregation positions espoused by theological conservatives such as William Bell Riley and J. Frank Norris. These figures more explicitly delineate themselves as members of the white church.

Because of this narrative, the theological diversity of the black community and the debates and varied identities within are often neglected. Furthermore, the phenomenon of Protestant "fundamentalism" has come to be identified as a specifically white phenomenon. In *Black Fundamentalists*, Bare seeks to move past this misconception and shed light upon the history of theological fundamentalism in the black community.

Bare's method for accomplishing this lies in his defining fundamentalism doctrinally rather than institutionally. To do this, he refers to the well-known series of essays published between 1910 and 1915 known as *The Fundamentals*, which are commonly thought to have given the movement its name. From there, he proposes four conditions for identifying fundamentalism: "(1) a su-

pernatural and biblicist worldview, including an attitude of continuity with historic Christian traditions, (2) a personal commitment to the central doctrinal essentials of the movement, consonant with *The Fundamentals*, (3) a readiness to explicitly criticize and overtly condemn modernist theology, and (4) the willingness to utilize expressly fundamentalist language and terminology in defining one's theological positions and religious identity" (18). Utilizing this definition, Bare maps out an account of black fundamentalism over the course of the five chapters which comprise the book.

Chapter one explores the "claims by commentators in the black press (on both sides of the theological divide) that fundamentalism was a widespread force within the black community" (20). This chapter provides primary evidence of fundamentalism as a phenomenon within the black church. Not only did many within the black church espouse fundamentalism, but they also exhibited key characteristics shared with white fundamentalists. Despite these similarities, however, Bare differentiates black fundamentalism from white fundamentalism: black fundamentalists were less willing "to engage in protracted and heated cultural battles against the perceived cultural changes that accompanied modernism" (54). He argues that the key political focus of the black church was necessarily a pursuit of increased social enfranchisement for black Americans rather than conservative social ends.

Chapter two centers doctrinal axioms known as the "five fundamentals," which consists of "biblical inspiration and inerrancy, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, and the physical resurrection and literal second coming of Christ" (60). Bare works through these fundamentals, sharing various historical sources exhibiting black espousal of their validity. Bare notes the congruence between black theology and white theology in this regard; however, he cautions against the notion that this indicates black theology was subject to white theology. He instead posits that these shared tenets indicate that both black and white fundamentalism inherited their teachings from the same historical theological traditions.

Chapter three focuses upon fundamentalism's tradition of overtly polemical anti-modernist preaching. Following the form of the preceding chapters, Bare offers evidence of a tradition of black fundamentalist preaching that closely mirrored the anti-modernist polemics of their white counterpoints. In conclusion, however, he once again points out a key difference in their application as members of the black church. Their polemics were applied toward tearing down social barriers to racial equality, an end neglected or even opposed by white fundamentalists.

Having studied the similarities and differences of white and black fundamentalism in their own respective contexts, chapter four examines in detail an instance of “confluence and cooperation across racial lines worth noting” (22). The chapter studies the establishment of the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee. A unique cooperative undertaking between the white Southern Baptist Convention and the black National Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Theological Seminary tells the story of how the differences in posture between white and black fundamentalists provoked challenges despite shared theological convictions.

Chapter five then shifts attention to friction between black fundamentalism and black modernists by examining the “contested relationship between fundamentalism and Americanism” (23). In this chapter, Bare sheds light on how black fundamentalists’ approach to racial advancement differed from black modernists regarding religious and national identity. Black fundamentalism tended toward a model of Christian nationalism such that they believed their fundamentalist beliefs were key to becoming equal citizens and participants in American society. This differed from the perspective of their detractors who held that fundamentalism itself was a barrier to an equitable society and ought to be rejected. This illustrates that black fundamentalism was a movement whose convictions created friction both with white fundamentalist and black modernists.

This book’s investigation into the neglected history of black fundamentalism is a most welcome addition to the fields of both fundamentalist history and black church history. The introduction provides a useful roadmap to the book’s five well-written core chapters, and the conclusion offers a thoughtful commentary on the book’s relevance in today’s world. The book also contains an excellent array of first-rate sources and is very readable. Overall, *Black Fundamentalists* provides a well-structured and interesting treatment of a timely and overlooked topic and is worthy of readers’ attention.

REVIEWED BY CHARLES GILLETT
Princeton Theological Seminary



Academic Call for Papers

Fall 2022 Theme: Time, Age, and Change

Time is the quiet page which existence traverses, the invisible, theoretical 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 think about God's relationship to creation. We often individually or corporately lament the past and fear the future, remaining cognizant that the present is neither. Yet, ironically, the very nature of time itself remains nebulous. Some classify time as a fourth dimension, while detractors prefer a mere sequence of events, still others a Kantian mental filter of reality. 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. It is unsurprising, then, that reflection on time—its nature, passage, effects, and meanings—occasions some of the deepest insights about humanity, the world, and God.

We invite undergraduate and graduate students, as well as early-career post-docs, to submit to *Theophron's* fall 2022 issue. Scholarship from all fields, particularly philosophy, theology, history, and biblical studies, is welcome. Possible topics include but are certainly not limited to:

Evolution of Post-Reformation Missional Efforts	Eternity, Eschatology, and the Afterlife
Roles of Memory and Aging in the Deuteronomistic History	Themes of Kairos and Appointed Seasons
Christian Perspectives on Identity Persistence	Ethical Implications of Limited Lifespans & the Great Commission
Philosophical Views of God's Relationship to Time	Growth of Innovation in Parachurch Ministries

Submissions should be between **4,000–6,000 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. **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 **August 29, 2022** will be considered for publication. Direct all questions to submissions@theophron.org.

Call for Poetry & Reflections

Fall 2022 Theme: Time, Age, and Change

The Christian life is uniquely situated in time. It begins and ends, hastens and lingers, marked by the coming of different seasons, all moving toward our great hope in eternity. Some seasons bring rest and relief, whereas others bear growth from hardship. Still, other seasons threaten death and loss. Yet, moments of grace accompany the arrival of each moment and period, offering glimpses into something which is perhaps beyond the flow of time. On a more complicated level, the Christian must also ask what it means for the everlasting God to somehow relate to time as we know it and for the very same God to enter time in Christ. It is this Christ who promises to return soon, although “soon” sometimes feels farther away than it should. And in yet another facet of life, time provides the space for tinkering and change, for sanctification and innovations in pursuing the kingdom globally. In the end, however we conceive of time, the Bible reminds us that, “for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

With this topic in mind, we invite lay Christians and those outside of the academic study of Christianity to submit a poem or personal reflection to *Theophron's* fall 2022 issue. Reflections need not be academic essays but instead journal-like grapplings with the theme above. Successful reflections will recount a personal experience, wrestle with a relevant idea, or relate insights from the author's spiritual life. 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:

Are you the same person now as you were in the past?

What does time look like in eternity? What is eternity?

Is a moment more important than a season?

What is a recent formational period you have experienced?

How does the brevity of life affect your understanding of the Great Commission?

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

Email **reflections of no more than 850 words and poems not exceeding one single-spaced page** directly to 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 **August 29, 2022** will be considered for publication. Direct all questions to submissions@theophron.org.

About Theophron

Theophron is a semi-annual academic journal dedicated to rigorous Christian scholarship in the humanities, particularly in the fields of philosophy, biblical studies, theology, and history. Through publishing articles and book reviews from scholars across programs and institutions, we leverage the marketplace of ideas to both galvanize academic growth and draw nearer to God through intellectual contemplation. We welcome submissions from any degree program (undergraduates included), as we maintain that outstanding scholarship is not contingent upon certain degree classifications. Our double-blind peer review process, however, evaluates all submissions with equally stringent guidelines. In doing so, we uphold a standard of excellence for all rising and existing scholars.

To bridge the gap between the academic ivory tower and non-academics, we additionally publish reflections and poetry from individuals outside of the academic study of religion and Christianity. Placing this material in conversation with the academic sections of the journal emphasizes the universality of intellectual pursuit—that knowing God is a journey involving all, regardless of occupation.

To learn more, visit *www.theophron.org*.