

Acquainted with Grief: Wang Mingdao's Stand for the Persecuted Church in China. By Thomas Alan Harvey. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002, 190 pages.

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire. By Thomas H. Reilly. Seattle and London: University of Washington, 2004, 235 pages.

Although these works describe events separated by a century, they are unique in providing theological reflection on major historical shifts in Christianity in China. Both represent substantial dialogues between academic sinology and theology. Harvey and Reilly move comfortably between narrative description and theological investigation; each is concerned with how a marginal or sectarian Christian community was influenced by its Chinese locale. Both works are also written with axes to grind against a prevailing wisdom. Reilly seeks to rehabilitate the Taiping as a form of Chinese Christianity against charges of syncretism and heresy. Harvey wants to defend the fundamentalist Wang Mingdao (1901-1991) as a martyr to Communism and its sympathetic liberal voices. Neither book wholly succeeds, but both point to an important shift in the study of Chinese Christianity.

Reilly's book describes the Taiping Rebellion, and the primary strength of the book is that it treats the religious intent of the Taiping more seriously, and also treats the Taiping within the history of Christianity. Reilly's thesis will be astonishing to many readers: the Taiping Rebellion—whose leader, Hong Xiuquan, claimed to be Jesus's younger brother—should be seen as a form of Chinese Christianity. Reilly writes:

While not the most orthodox formulation—he saw himself as the younger brother of Jesus—Hong's solution was a triumph of theological insight for which he receives no praise or even recognition. These works have failed to recognize and affirm that the Taiping religion was not 90 percent Anglo-American Protestant and 10 percent Chinese popular religion, or vice versa. Taiping religion was something new: fully Christian, albeit with Chinese popular religious elements; fully Chinese, albeit inspired by Anglo-American Protestantism. These elements all played a part in the creation of Taiping Christianity, but the creation transcended the sum total of the parts. (13)

This is indeed a remarkable claim. Reilly is correct that the religious genius of Hong has been little treated or largely psychologized rather than understood as a cohesive worldview, but to speak of the Taiping as “fully Christian” is, at the least, challenging. The Taiping themselves seem to have realized that their teachings transgressed classical formulations, and they proposed viewpoints that orthodox Christians could not accept. Reilly notes that the Taiping were fundamentally unitarian, but does not see this as detracting from his attempt to define them as Christian.

To support his claim, Reilly provides some important work. He offers an extensive study of the Catholic background in China (which actually takes up nearly a quarter of the short volume), and studies the Protestants who influenced Hong. He examines parallels to popular religion, that included an emphasis on heaven and hell and millennial visions. Reilly’s analysis of contemporary Protestant literature in Chinese is limited, and this often leads to unfair characterizations of contemporary figures, such as Liang Fa.

An interesting discussion deals with how Jesus should be described in Chinese. Should “messiah” be transliterated or should a local analogy be drawn? How does Hong’s proposal for a Kingdom of God mesh with or differ from other Christian understandings? Also helpful is Reilly’s analysis of how the Taiping drew on Protestant iconoclasm and Chinese indigenous traditions (for instance, Confucius appeared as a problematic figure in Hong’s visions).

If Reilly does a fair job of discussing Chinese religious tradition, his theological analysis is often weaker. For instance, Reilly compares the Taiping founder Hong’s emphasis on a realized eschatology—the kingdom here and now, being brought in by Hong—to contemporary liberation theologians’ focus on the kingdom of God. Of course, Hong’s theology is no closer to contemporary liberationists than would be David Koresh’s or many cult leaders. Similarly, Reilly criticizes the younger William Milne for transmitting the statement that blaspheming the Spirit is unpardonable; Reilly seems oblivious to the fact that this is actually a Biblical quote (Matt. 12.31). The charge that Reilly makes about which I am most ambivalent is the claim that Jesus’s title should have been translated better into Chinese by early Catholics and Protestants. He believes that this was

a central strength of the Taiping. In reality, Christians did use other titles for Jesus in Chinese (“savior,” “lord,” “son of God,” etc.), but Reilly’s argument that missionary theology tended to privilege Western traditions over Chinese is well taken.

In contrast to Reilly’s syncretic interests, Harvey presents an approach that focuses on a dualism. Harvey speaks of “two paths” that emerged in Chinese Christianity; one “modernist” and one “evangelical” (28). At both the start of his book he says that one need only know two people to understand contemporary Chinese Christianity: the Patriotic Church leader Bishop Ding and the fundamentalist independent leader Wang Mingdao.

As biography, Harvey’s book is absolutely compelling. It an easy read and is very instructive for theologians who wish to look beyond the West for questions about Christian witness and the State. Important sections treat the entrance of missionary/denominational Chinese leaders into the government-run Patriotic Church formed by the Communists in 1949; the creation of the “Christian Manifesto” supporting the Chinese Communist state in 1950; and sections on Wang’s own upbringing, imprisonment, confession and recantation, and eventual freedom. Throughout the book, Harvey’s dominant argument is that the liberal, missionary-educated leaders essentially aposticized to a modernist theological agenda that bowed before the State, where a fewer number of figures such as Wang were willing to suffer for their faith.

In retrospect, it is clear that the hundreds of thousands who signed on to the Christian Manifesto in 1950 were indeed part of a slippery slope that would soon lead to a total moratorium on the public practice of faith. Moreover, the story of Wang is instructive as a story of individual integrity and of Christian witness.

At the same time, and because of the current situation in China, the role of Patriotic Church leaders as well as house church prototypes in the style of Wang makes this topic especially sensitive. Harvey shows how a range of contemporaries responded to Wang. He helps the readers to see the pitfalls of Wang’s modernist Chinese adversaries (YT Wu), missionary historians who saw the Communist Revolution as divine judgment (David Paton), and even of those who defended Wang not on theological grounds but as a supposedly model anti-Communist (Leslie Lyall). In fact, says

Harvey, “Wang had no desire to see the government overthrown, and he would have chastised as idolatry those who see salvation in representative liberal democracy” (109).

Unfortunately, Harvey’s critique does not add up to a persuasive Christian social ethic. Harvey’s polemic against those who became the Christian mouth for the state, and even the poignant story of Wang himself, do not argue for a positive Christian theology. These examples can serve as cautionary tales, but is Wang’s congregational, authoritarian, and fundamentalist model really one that the church should emulate? Harvey compares Wang to both Bonhoeffer and Barth, and sees the Patriotic Church as paralleling Germany’s National Christians. But does Wang’s witness compare to the ecumenical witness of Barmen? And isn’t Wang’s pacifism different from Bonhoeffer’s?

I believe that Harvey chose Wang as a model because he fit the Hauerwasian, anti-Christendom, anti-liberal model that Harvey himself favors. However, Wang’s example is essentially quietistic and sectarian. It is often unclear that Wang is actually “anti-liberal,” so much as he is separatist or isolationist. Wang opposed the missionary churches and he opposed formal affiliation of any type with other Chinese churches. There is no sense from reading this book of what “the Church” actually is for Wang.

As a confessor (in the classical Christian sense of the word) Wang’s faithfulness deserves study and imitation; as a guide to how Christians in China today should live, his approach is less helpful. If one thing is clear it is this: there are more than two paths in contemporary Chinese Christianity. There are evangelical patriotic churches and liberal patriotic churches. There are sectarians, fundamentalists, and quietly faithful house church members. There are Catholics who are members of the Patriotic Church and of the underground Roman Catholic Church and even of both at the same time. There are “cultural Christians” (who sympathize with Christianity for its social utility) as well as all manner of academic, nominal, and other Christians.

Reilly and Harvey are part of a new scholarly tradition. They go beyond treating Christianity in China as missionary colonialism and appraise different indigenous appropriations. Both draw on contemporary sinological literature. Reilly’s book began as a dissertation at the University of Wash-

ington, and Harvey's dissertation was completed under Stanley Hauerwas at Duke but included substantial sinological research. As books revised from dissertations, both of these works seem short and could have benefited from better documentation and more extensive support. Nonetheless, they tackle fertile ground that has been badly in need of study. Despite the fact that the Taiping was the largest revolution ever at the time that it occurred, its theological arguments have been little studied. Similarly, the evangelical surge in the early twentieth century that produced Wang and his contemporaries has received comparatively little academic research.

Both of these works are helpful in asking, "how can or should Christianity in China look?" Reilly shows us how the Taiping religious synthesis was a unique creation, and arguably an indigenous form of Christianity. Harvey demonstrates the liabilities of a type of Christianity that eagerly invests itself in the state. However, if Christianity should be neither sectarian revolt nor the ideological sympathizers of totalitarianism, can it be something else? Between the poles of quietism and Christendom, how many forms can the Church take and retain its integrity? Both of these books move us a little further along in answering these questions.

—JONATHAN SEITZ

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Thinking About Christ With Schleiermacher. By Catherine L. Kelsey. Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, vii and 126 pages.

Typically, a volume dedicated to articulating the complex theological thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher assumes that the reader already possesses a fair degree of theological knowledge and expertise. The great value of this volume is Catherine Kelsey's clear and precise exposition of Schleiermacher's systematic theology and her intention of making his thought available to a much broader audience. On both counts the author has succeeded nicely. Kelsey insists that one need not be a biblical scholar or philosopher to benefit from a study of this great theologian. Thus, the tutorial style of the book's format, in which the reader is invited periodically to pause and to "explore Schleiermacher's conceptual portrait of Christ and think alongside the theologian" (5), encourages a lively en-

agement by even the most novice of theological students. At the same time, those who wish to delve more deeply into his thought are provided with the appropriate selections from Schleiermacher's magnum opus, *The Christian Faith*, where they can further investigate the ideas explored in this book. Kelsey does not assume that the reader needs to see eye-to-eye with all of Schleiermacher's theology to benefit from a reading of his work. Indeed, this book encourages even those who find themselves opposed to Schleiermacher's theological conclusions to think more clearly and creatively about their own theological convictions. In that sense Kelsey's work projects a refreshingly ecumenical tone, while at the same time providing the reader with a valuable entrée into Schleiermacher's reflection on the Christian faith.

Kelsey invites the reader to examine Schleiermacher's Christology as if it were a picture, an impressionist painting (20). Presupposing that a viewer interacts with art at many different levels, this first chapter begins with an overall conceptual picture of Schleiermacher's Christology before turning to more detailed examinations in the subsequent six chapters. Kelsey merges Schleiermacher's understanding of Christ's God-consciousness, the significance of redemption in his preaching, and the key propositional elements in his account of Christ to bring the reader to a better understanding of redemption in the community of the faithful. In redemption, the faithful are taken up into Christ's God-consciousness and in doing so become their "truest, most human selves" (18). Indeed, the faithful become that for which they were originally intended, "perfectly open to awareness arising from God" (18). The chapter then closes with an explanation of Schleiermacher's Christology and its relationship to the Chalcedonian definition, an issue much in question for many critics of Schleiermacher's theology.

The next several chapters engage in a more comprehensive assessment of the portrait that is Schleiermacher's Christology: beginning with its frame (Chapter Two), moving to its theme (Chapter Four), and finally examining its more complex details (Chapters Five and Six). Perhaps no theologian's work is more clearly formed by the experience of faith than is Schleiermacher's. Kelsey's "Frame" chapter does a fine job of detailing Schleiermacher's early life at Niesky, his matriculation at Halle, and finally

his subsequent move to Berlin, where he served as a chaplain at the Charity Hospital before turning to his duties at the newly established University of Berlin and as pastor at *Dreifaltigkeits-Kirche*. These biographical details give the reader necessary insight into Schleiermacher's positivist theological methodology, an approach that begins by observing "what is the case at this moment in history" rather than with universal principles (29). Thus it is no surprise when Kelsey concludes that the center of Schleiermacher's dogmatics, Christology, is an explanation of the inner coherence of the faith based on a *living* relationship with Christ, a "gift of grace in encounter with Christ" (35).

In chapter three Kelsey deals more specifically with Schleiermacher's Christology and its implications for redemption. Deftly handling the historical context in which Schleiermacher's thought emerged, she explains the great theologian's insistence on a new "starting point" for understanding redemption. Rejecting reason, ecclesiastical authority, the biblical text, and even the distinctive Christian claims of Christ's resurrection as legitimate starting points (the latter two rely on the early church's expression of faith), Schleiermacher opts for an explanation of redemption in terms of *Urbildlichkeit* ("ideality"), his word for that encounter with Christ that "opens up the possibility of intimate relationship with God" (52). Ultimately, this encounter with Christ leads the believer to reflect further on the hope this decisive encounter inspires, a hope that is already ours and yet always lies before us (55).

Chapters four and five further examine the implications of this outline by first concentrating on Schleiermacher's triple emphases of redemption, sin, and communication. Christ's sinless perfection is constituted in his intimate and unbroken consciousness of God, which is in turn communicated to us in his divinely effected overall life. That this communication takes place most particularly in the context of a community of faith is emphasized by Kelsey when she recounts Schleiermacher's insistence that scripture, apart from the context of community, is ineffective for the purpose of redemption (61), no doubt a conclusion bound to ruffle a few theological feathers. Yet Kelsey is right, I think, in concluding with Schleiermacher that the content of redemption is located in the communication

of Christ's intimate relationship with God, a relationship that is actualized in the dynamic of community.

This attention on redemption then leads to the question of what must indeed be true about Christ in order for this redemption to be real. Here Kelsey artfully reflects Schleiermacher's attempt to articulate a Christology that reflects both Chalcedonian orthodoxy and his own emphasis on redemption as encounter and relationship with Christ. It is on just this point that subsequent inheritors of the creedal tradition find Schleiermacher most unsatisfactory, and Kelsey offers little here to change that perspective. But again, this is not really the task of this book. That Christ's uniqueness is understood less as a product of a speculative notion of two natures and more in light of his unique apprehension of God's divine influence in every aspect of his life (70-74), does little to inhibit Kelsey's intention that the reader engage Schleiermacher's thought in their own reflection on the person and work of Christ.

In the final two chapters Kelsey delves into additional aspects of the "picture" and closes by posing a number of questions designed to assist the reader in forming his or her own views. Of particular note here is Kelsey's discussion of Schleiermacher's doctrine of the Trinity, especially as it relates to the Christian community's experience of redemption. While his interpretation of the doctrine may not satisfy all who read it, Kelsey finally makes it clear that Schleiermacher can no longer be regarded as unimportant in matters trinitarian. In the end, this book is a splendid resource both as a guide to teaching Schleiermacher in the classroom and as a point of entry into the difficult thought of this great prince of the Church.

—JEFFREY A. WILCOX
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Living on the Boundaries: Evangelical Women, Feminism and the Theological Academy. By Nicola Hoggard Creegan and Christine D. Pohl. InterVarsity Press, 2005, 203 pages.

It is indeed rare to find the labels "evangelical" and "feminist" claimed by one and the same person. Creegan and Pohl set out to determine whether it is, in fact, possible to be both evangelical and feminist. The basis for

their project is an extensive survey of evangelical women in the theological academy from which they gathered both statistical and narrative data. The subtitle is the key to understanding the perspective of this book. The women described here are women whose primary identity is evangelical. Feminism serves as a tool for sharpening their evangelicalism, but not vice versa.

There are two major parts to this project. In the first five chapters, the authors engage in a description of the current state of affairs for evangelical women/evangelical feminists in the theological academy. The issues and incidents that arise are ones that will resonate with women who are pursuing graduate work in theology, or teaching in theological institutions. The stories are compelling for their truth—sometimes comic, sometimes tragic. Here the authors rely heavily on the interviews they conducted in their survey.

The second section, in chapters six and seven, engages those theological issues which notably divide evangelical theologians from feminist theologians. Creegan and Pohl begin this section with the problematic claim that feminism deals with “horizontal space”—that is, relationships to others; and evangelicalism deals with “vertical space”—our relationship to God. Fortunately, they do not develop this point, and move on to address the doctrinal topics where there is disagreement. While the authors successfully name the core issues and the basic points of disagreement, this portion of their project is perhaps an overly ambitious one for a book of this length. They attempt to hit *all* the main issues: sin, evil, eschatology, ecclesiology, Christology, attributes of God, authority of Scripture, and postmodernity/pluralism. In each case, the authors provide only a very short, very general overview.

What is more compelling than the brief attempt at doctrinal construction is the interplay between two interesting themes. The subtle thesis of the book seems to be that gender issues, even while they are often disregarded, are actually central to evangelicalism. The shared history of evangelicalism and feminism also plays an important, albeit minor, role in the book.

Finally, a comment regarding the definition of terms. While Creegan and Pohl spend considerable effort on the term “evangelical,” raising ques-

tions as to what it entails and who gets to set the parameters for its definition, they do not do the same with the term “feminist.” Both “evangelicalism” and “feminism” carry with them a multiplicity of potential meanings; it would have been helpful had the authors provided at least a working definition of their terms. In addition to definitions, there are a few distinctions which seem to get muddled. Most importantly, the authors do not always make a clear distinction between “evangelical” and “fundamentalist.” In part this is due to the fact that their task is descriptive—in some cases they are working with definitions that academics of all types have assigned to themselves. This particular distinction, however, is an important difference to many who refer to themselves evangelical.

In the end, Creegan and Pohl determine that it is, indeed, possible to maintain evangelical commitments and to hold them together with feminist concerns. They conclude their project with a series of suggestions and questions, primarily focused on the practical implications of existing as evangelical women in the academic world. It is these more practical concerns which make this book a helpful tool for faculty members and administrators alike.

—ERIN KESTERSON BOWERS
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham. By D. G. Hart. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004, 224 pages.

In *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*, D. G. Hart makes a strong case for the emptiness of the term in discussions of American religion. As his subtitle deftly provides, evangelicalism as a movement is nothing more than an amalgam of conservative Protestantism operating around a bare-bones theology with little else to unify it than the pull of parachurch celebrities embodied in the figure of Billy Graham.

In the first of Hart’s two sections on the “making” and “unmaking” of evangelicals he spends three chapters discussing the way in which academic efforts have contributed to the myth of evangelicalism, and in the process, have helped perpetuate the category as a viable descriptor of a cer-

tain type of American religion. Historians are singled out first and taken to task over: 1) their propensity in the latter years of the twentieth century to claim that contemporary evangelicals are linked to a much longer and deeper tradition than actually exists, and 2) their use of the term “evangelical” as representative of any of a wide range of conservative Christian believers. A similar danger is engendered by social scientists, to whom Hart points in the following chapter as guilty of helping create the category of “evangelical” in scholarship and popular parlance. So, too, in the third chapter the work of pollsters attempting to measure the movement is understood as having helped tie down evangelicals as an intellectually graspable entity through a seemingly defined, though ultimately artificial, number of doctrinal positions.

Having thus claimed that the academy helped to construct and solidify the image of evangelicalism in the popular mind, Hart next examines the so-called evangelical world itself in an effort to deconstruct the grand myth. Focusing on the three general areas of creed, liturgy, and polity, he finds in each an evangelicalism woefully undeveloped and undefined as a recognizable ecclesiastical entity. Polity and organization amongst evangelicals are seen as rather weak, with the forces of celebrity and the various parachurch movements having much more force over the whole than the National Association of Evangelicals or denominational structures. Under the rubric of doctrine, the idea of Scriptural inerrancy is examined as a possible core around which evangelicals might rally. Yet as the author’s investigation shows, even this seemingly basic proposition was not without its challenges and nuances. He notes differences of opinion that belie assertions of common identity and also the lack of theological depth revealed by the supposed adherence to this creed above all others. No more positive is Hart’s take on evangelical liturgy, where the desire for constantly changing contemporary forms of worship has led to great divisiveness within the movement that has done little to stop its own splintering and deconstruction. In the end, Hart concludes quite simply that although the bogey of evangelicalism looms large in the contemporary world of scholarship and politics, it simply does not exist. Ultimately, he seems to prefer a moratorium of the use of the term—the potential effects of which he sees as generally negligible.

Clearly, the project Hart has begun with this book is a bold one. If for no other reason, the fact that pollsters, popular scholarship, and the faithful alike will likely remain attached to the category for the foreseeable future makes such a volume necessary. By building a strong case for the slippery nature of the evangelical label and the way in which it is an essentially indefinable term, Hart has raised important questions concerning the relevance of evangelicalism as a religious category. Though in his penultimate chapter the focus on worship forms does not seem to carry with it the same force of argument as the remainder of his work, the rest of the text does well to reveal the way in which a rather questionable façade has been propped up and perpetuated in the public mind for decades. Even so, one wonders whether the paucity of evidence for a robust definition of evangelicalism is enough to reject out of hand what has by all accounts become a powerful and popular symbol in contemporary America. Simply stated, it would seem that there *is* something out there, even if indefinable. While generally short on helpful answers to the larger situation and perhaps too pessimistic when imagining the future, his work is thought-provoking and is recommended reading for all students of American religious culture and history as well as the millions of self-identified evangelicals throughout America. If nothing else, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism* may help to begin new discussions that will blossom into further scholarship and debate.

—JOSHUA ZEIFLE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Islam and the Challenge of Democracy. Edited by Khaled Abou El Fadl, Joshua Cohen and Deborah Chasman. Princeton, 2004, 136 pages.

Khaled Abou El Fadl's *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* addresses a highly-charged question of intense topical significance: is Islam compatible with democracy? The book consists of a forty-two page title essay by El Fadl offering an affirmative answer to that question, followed by responses by eleven distinguished critics (four of them Muslim), itself followed by a twenty-page rejoinder by El Fadl. With one exception, earlier versions

of all the contributions first appeared in the April/May 2003 issue of the magazine *Boston Review*.

As El Fadl formulates the issue in his title essay for the book, the basic issue is “philosophical and doctrinal” (4). On the one hand, Islam holds that sovereignty, and with it law, comes from a God whose commands and law (in Arabic, *shari’ah*) are by definition unbounded by limitation of any kind. On the other hand, modern democratic theory insists, in the name of human autonomy, that government and law be strictly limited to certain clearly-delineated functions. How then do we reconcile these two apparently inconsistent conceptions of sovereignty to provide the normative basis of a practicable politics? In form, the answer is that divine law commands justice, and justice demands limited government. The difficulties arise in identifying the content of justice, and in tracing that content back to God’s law.

A preliminary difficulty is what El Fadl concedes to be the vagueness and indeterminacy of *shari’ah*. The Qur’an, the direct revelation of God’s will, commands us to do justice, but neither “defines the constituent elements of justice” (18-19) nor specifies “a particular form of government” as best (5). It commands us to establish “a nonautocratic, consultative method of governance” (5), but offers little guidance about what that means. Worse yet, our access to God’s will is weak and unreliable (9); every divine command requires interpretation, but every act of interpretation is also an occasion for *misinterpretation* (9).

This difficulty leaves the Muslim believer with a fairly severe dilemma. On the one hand, he or she is obliged to do God’s will; on the other hand, it’s unclear how to gain access to it. After canvassing a series of approaches to this dilemma, El Fadl arrives at last at the two most prominent attempts at resolving it within the orthodox Sunni tradition.

The first approach, known in Arabic as *mukhatti’ah*, asserts that that for any question we have about the content of God’s will, there is—whether we can access it or not—one uniquely correct answer waiting for discovery. The content of divine justice, then, is “there” to be found, and we are obliged not only to search sincerely and diligently to understand, but to do our best to discover it (31). This view implies that we can do our best to

know God but fail; God's mind is beyond our powers, and if we lack the resources to access his thoughts, we are in a certain way simply out of luck.

The second approach, known in Arabic as *mussawi'bah*, denies what its rival asserts. Contrary to *mukhatt'iah*, *mussawi'bah* denies that God wills unique answers to questions we might have about the content of justice; the content of justice is not "there" to be found, but is in a certain sense constructed by us. We are, on this view, required to interpret God's will in humanized terms, not to attempt to access it directly. Given the vagaries of human conceptions of justice, *mussawi'bah* precludes the possibility of there being one unique answer to the question, "What does God will?" Since there is no "right answer," sincere and diligent search is the most that can be demanded of us (32). "In sum, if a person honestly and sincerely believes that such and such is the law of God, then for that person it is in fact God's law" (33). This view implies that so long as we do our best to know God's will, we never can fail; on the other hand, the view implies paradoxically that two sincere believers can come to incompatible positions on God's will while both being "right."

El Fadl rejects the first approach, and in opting for the second, suggests that it provides the basis of Islamic democracy (33). We are, he claims, charged to interpret the divine law by regulating our interpretations of it by a humanistic conception of justice—in the full knowledge of the relative indeterminacy of God's law, and the unreliability of our access to it. Once we see this, we're free to surmise that "perhaps God does not seek to regulate all human affairs and instead leaves human beings considerable latitude in regulating their own. . ." (9).

By this strategy, El Fadl claims, we can problematize even the most putatively clear scriptural commandment, e.g., amputation for theft. To do so, we simply ask, repeatedly, whether the commandment in question coheres with our conception of justice and whether we can claim absolute certainty that we know what it asks of us (34-35). Our inevitable uncertainty about God's will precludes the possibility that Islamic governments can claim to implement divine law through statute or regulation, and thus creates a functional equivalent of a distinction between Mosque and State (36). Given what El Fadl takes to be the Qur'an's exaltation of the individual, its recognition of diversity, its emphasis on consultative government,

and its rejection of human despotism, we thus have in hand the potential for developing an authentically Islamic and democratic politics.

It is a remarkably ambitious argument, open to challenge at many places. Unfortunately it goes mostly unscrutinized in the fifty-some odd pages of misdescribed “responses” that follow it. Of the eleven respondents solicited to comment on El Fadl’s essay, only three make any genuine attempt to come to grips with its contents. The remaining eight ignore El Fadl’s claims to raise side-issues of their own, or to discuss questions of practical implementation that sidestep what El Fadl himself insists is the fundamental “philosophical and doctrinal” issue.

Of the three genuinely responsive essays—by Muqtedar Khan, Mohamad Fadel, and David Novak—Fadel’s is by far the most critical and most cogent, amounting in effect to a *mukhatt’iah*-based attack on El Fadl’s *mussawi’bah*-based interpretation of divine law (81-86). Meanwhile, Novak offers insights for El Fadl from the Jewish tradition that cohere with El Fadl’s claims about Islam, and Khan defends a radically populist approach to scriptural interpretation deliberately at odds with El Fadl’s. The reader can decide whether El Fadl’s impassioned responses to Fadel and Khan succeed as responses to them (112-125).

Though I lack the space to offer a full critique of El Fadl’s arguments, five obvious difficulties require comment.

First, while El Fadl candidly admits that God’s specifically political commands are vague and indeterminate, he never seems to grapple with the fact that this might pose a problem of its own. After all, if God’s commands are indeterminate, they lack content, and if so, seem to lack relevance. Much of El Fadl’s project seems to consist in grafting the findings of modern democratic theory onto a *shari’ah*-based template, but it is often unclear whether the motivation for the project as a whole derives from democratic theory or the from the distinctively Islamic imperatives of *shari’ah*.

Second, El Fadl insists rather hastily that the Qur’an offers the basis for inviolable individual rights (23). However, he doesn’t reflect on the obvious paradox that in every case where God unequivocally commands us in the Qur’an, his commands rest on a coercive ultimatum: either we are to

do his will on faith or we are to be damned to Hell for eternity. That doesn't sound much like "inviolability."

Third, El Fadl's *mussawi'bah*-based approach to scripture leads fairly quickly to some mind-numbing paradoxes. For one thing, *mussawi'bah* is supposed to contrast with the idea that there is one right answer to the question, "What is God's will?". But it's also supposed to *be* the right answer to that question. The combination of claims strikes me as incoherent. Similarly, El Fadl tells us that he adopts the *mussawi'bah* approach because (on his view), humans lack access to God's will. How then does he know that God wants us to adopt *mussawi'bah*? Having argued so vehemently that God's will is a mystery, he is hardly in a position to exclude the possibility that perhaps *mukhatti'ah* is precisely what God wills.

Fourth, El Fadl tells us on the one hand that according to *mussawi'bah*, "if a person honestly and sincerely believes that such and such is the law of God, then for that person it is in fact God's law" (33). It would seem to follow that if a legislator honestly and sincerely believes that such and such is God's law, it is. And yet El Fadl later tells us "if a legal opinion is adopted and enforced by the state, it cannot be said to be God's law" (34). Why not? If the legislator "honestly and sincerely believes" that it is God's law, what else could it be? Surely El Fadl cannot mean that God wills a distinct law for *each* "honest and sincere" person; that would simply be a subversion of law as such.

Finally, consider the claim with which El Fadl leaves us: we are, on the *mussawi'bah* interpretation, to inquire into God's will in the knowledge that we lack access to it, and that there is no uniquely correct answer to any question we ask about it. Despite that, we are, nonetheless, obliged to search sincerely and diligently (32-33). But how are we to do so? What are we trying to discover? What is the point of looking for something that is by definition undiscoverable? These questions, as old as Plato's *Euthyphro* and *Meno*, strike me as both crucial and unanswerable within El Fadl's framework, and his failure to deal with them threatens to transform the Islamic call for salvation (*falah*) into a romantic quest worthy of Don Quixote: we are, on his view, to strive for goals "unreachable by human effort" for reasons inaccessible to human cognition (23). This doesn't seem

to me a promising basis for any human endeavor, much less democratic politics.

El Fadl ends the book with a call for dialogue. But the book seems to suffer from a fatal deficiency in precisely this respect. El Fadl claims to be offering a version of Islam that reconciles it to “modernity.” But “modernity” is at least in part the product of a secular tradition that begins with Plato, runs through Picodella Mirandola, and eventually finds its way to the liberal democratic tradition we associate with Locke, Jefferson and Mill. What this book lacks is any contributor who is an explicit defender of this tradition, willing to stake its claims in so many words or offer anything resembling a fundamental challenge to El Fadl’s argument. The result, in my view, is a curiously anti-climactic discussion that raises many more questions than it answers—among them the question of Islam’s compatibility with democracy.

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A History of Polish Christianity. By Jerzy Kloczowski. Translated by Malgorzata Sady. Cambridge University Press, 2000, xxxviii and 385 pages.

Jerzy Kloczowski is Poland’s foremost expert on Polish Christianity, and one of Poland’s greatest living historians. Founder and director of the Institute of East-Central Europe in Lublin, Kloczowski has written extensively on Christianity in his native country. A soldier in the Home Army during World War II, he participated in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. He is formerly Professor of History at the Catholic University of Lublin, and has served as the Chairman of the Polish Committee for UNESCO.

Professor Kloczowski’s book provides a rich introduction to the complex history of Christianity in Europe, by focusing on the generally overlooked history of Christianity in Poland. His book begins its thousand-year story by examining the pagan beliefs of the pre-Christian Slavs, and it ends with the revolution of 1989. Whether discussing the first Polish baptisms, the impact of the Reformation, or the ideological shifts during the Enlightenment, Kloczowski begins each section with a discussion of events in Western Europe. Once having provided a familiar background, he then turns

to the particular characters and crises in Poland. Given the structure of this book, its title is somewhat misleading. Professor Kloczowski narrates the history of Christianity, the history of Poland, and the history of Polish Christianity, all at once. This approach not only leaves the text accessible to a wide range of readers, but it shows how linked Poland's cultural development has been to the rest of Europe.

Kloczowski, revealing his mastery of the subject matter, effortlessly weaves historiographical controversies into the tapestry of his text. His discussions of the special role of Catholicism in Polish culture, the religiosity of the masses, and the relations between church and state acquaint readers with the main debates in the field. Some of these arguments are left in need of further illumination. As Kloczowski states in the preface, however, one of the main objectives of his text is to raise interest with the hope of encouraging dialogue. The brevity with which so many central issues are addressed by the author may tease specialists. The wonderful bibliographical essay found at the end of the book will help those searching for more answers. Although mainly a guide through the main themes of Polish Christianity, the text serves as an excellent point of departure for specialized inquiry.

The book's primary goal is to reform the popular portrayal of Poland as monolithically Catholic, thus the interaction among Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish neighbors is repeatedly addressed. For many centuries the Polish Commonwealth was multinational and multi-confessional. Central to Poland's history have been its Statute of General Toleration, revolutionary for the sixteenth century, and its pervasive skepticism of all forms of absolutism, including Catholic. With the partitions of the 18th century ending Polish political sovereignty, a chauvinistic form of Polish Catholicism began to develop. Two world wars, and the subsequent shifts in both borders and demographics, left Poland overwhelmingly Polish and Catholic for the first time. The Catholic Church reached its zenith of influence and popular support during the decades of communist rule, but its strength grew alongside newly formed circles of Catholic intellectuals. Today, the Church in Poland is experiencing a growing divide between organized groups of progressives, most notably the intellectuals associated with *Znak*, and conservatives, the supporters of *Radio Maryja*. This divide

carries great political and cultural significance, and while it is alluded to in the postscript, it is not adequately acknowledged.

Anti-Semitism is a vital element of the debate, and while Professor Kloczowski does mention Polish anti-Semitism, particularly its reemergence during the inter-war period, his treatment of the subject is incomplete. The book fails to capture the size and importance of the Jewish communities in Poland before 1939. This is especially disappointing after both Christopher Brooke's foreword, and the book's abstract promise of a more thorough discussion of Polish-Jewish relations. Professor Kloczowski does admit to the shameful emergence of religious intolerance during the 19th and 20th centuries, but he does not adequately develop this phenomenon within his narrative. Given the recent scholarship revealing acts of unspeakable brutality by certain Poles upon Jews, and the rise of a highly conservative press and highly conservative politicians in contemporary Poland, the book's treatment of the subject appears rather meager. This is the book's lone, although significant, weakness.

As for the text's supplemental material, the fifteen maps found at the beginning of the book will fascinate those unfamiliar with Polish history, while simultaneously delighting specialists. The choice of quality illustrations is less consistent. The collection includes beautiful photos of both Wit Stwosz's altar in St. Mary's Church in Krakow, and the wooden synagogue at Smadowa. The dim photo of the Royal Chapel of the Holy Trinity in Lublin Castle, on the other hand, is poorly chosen. It fails to capture the mix of western and eastern artistic styles that makes the chapel so famous. It is also not clear why a photograph of the courtyard of the Collegium Maius in Krakow is included, while a reproduction of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa is so conspicuously absent.

Professor Kloczowski's *A History of Polish Christianity* is an important book for historians, as well as for those generally interested in the development of Christianity. The book rightfully centers Poland within a European context, and it dispels many misleading myths about the Polish nation. This translation will expose many in the English-speaking world to a master historian with an unparalleled command of his field.

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The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice. By Timothy P. Jackson. Princeton University Press, 2003, 222 pages.

In *The Priority of Love*, Timothy Jackson, professor of Christian ethics at Emory University, provides an impressive companion piece to his earlier work, *Love Disconsoled: Meditations on Christian Charity* (Cambridge, 1999). Jackson's earlier work was an attempt to uncouple Christian love from ends improper to love itself, such as the desire for reward and immortality. An object of love, in other words, is not to be "loved" for an end beyond itself, but as its own end—thus love is *disconsolated*, chastened of false comforts, desires, and ends. *The Priority of Love*, then, seeks to further the argument of *Love Disconsolated*, bolstering and extending Jackson's position of what he calls "strong *agape*" (10).

In his introductory remarks, Jackson claims that in modern western history, divine or agapic love has been eclipsed by other (albeit worthy) values, such as prudence, freedom, and justice. Jackson's objective is nothing less than "a critical defense of the priority of love, defined as *agape's* primacy among divine gifts and human goods" (8). Consequently, this sense of *strong agape* suggests that agapic love is a "metavalue," one that not only holds a "unique priority" over all other human values but "is the necessary condition to realizing and sustaining other human values in any adequate form" (10-11).

Jackson's thesis unfolds over the course of five chapters. Chapter One inquires as to the relationship between love and justice. Justice, unlike love, is not capable of bringing "individuals to fuller personhood" or "sustain the well-being of those [who are] no longer personal agents" (34). Instead, justice only attends to the *status* of a human being as a "person" or "agent" worthy of rights and so forth, while love attends to a human being regardless of his or her status before justice. Chapter Two deals with the relationship between love and justice for God. God freely binds himself to humanity as an expression of love, and therefore, is obligated to humanity as a matter of justice. The upshot is that we, too, are to bind ourselves to others out of love and thus recognize our obligation to them as a matter of justice.

Chapter Three asks how agape combats “unjustifiable forms of justice” and whether agape can ever support violence (94). Jackson concludes that, on the one hand, “Christian violence may, *in extremis*, be the content of political love,” seeking to defend the innocent and establish justice (122), and, on the other hand, “*agape* may embody nonviolence because this attitude can also, in turn, prick the consciences of the unjust, as well as summon potential victims to heroism” (128). This chapter closes with a case in point: an analysis of the events and aftermath of September 11, 2001. With chapter four, Jackson moves to the theme of forgiveness, and claims that forgiveness can be thought of as the “cessation of againstness, the resolve to continue to will the good for others rather than to despise them, in spite of any hostility and transgression” (144). As if coming full circle with his earlier work, *Love Disconsoled*, Jackson includes a brief section on the relationship between immortality and forgiveness. Forgiveness, as conformity to God’s will, is, Jackson contends, its own reward (161). Forgiveness cannot depend on future vindication.

Chapter Five is an extended treatment of abortion. The aim “is to spell out what a general ethic of care [agapic love], coupled with a robust commitment to justice, means for the opposing poles on abortion” (173). Jackson’s analysis of abortion is thorough, traversing medical, ethical, and theological ground, and is one of the finest discussions of the issue available. In regard to justice, Jackson contends that justice suggests that the fetus as a “potential...person may...ground a prima facie right to life,” even against the woman carrying the fetus (189). But Jackson does not rule out the possibility of abortion, for agapic love requires that we “become more attentive to our fellows’ vulnerabilities, both mothers’ and fetuses’, rather than less,” and this may point to the sort of care for the woman that would allow (early-term) abortion (210).

With *The Priority of Love*, there can be no doubt that Jackson is one of the premiere Christian ethicists working today. Jackson’s volume is a learned and incisive analysis of Christian agape and the role it can play in our public discourse and is highly recommended to all those interested in theology, ethics, and public theology.

—TODD V. CIOFFI
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of "The Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion." By Peter C. Hodgson. Oxford University Press, 2005, 308 pages.

The recent explosion of interest in Thomas Aquinas was sparked, at least in part, by the growing recognition that Thomas is both more Aristotelian and more Augustinian than previous generations had appreciated. Something parallel seems to be developing with respect to Hegel: Robert Pippin and friends have been busy convincing us that Hegel is more Kantian than conventional interpretations realized, while Peter Hodgson has maintained that he is more Augustinian. The present volume represents the culmination of Hodgson's efforts.

In his *Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel is concerned with completing Kant's anti-metaphysical revolution, over against would-be post- and anti-metaphysicians (including Kant) who continue to conjure metaphysical "Gods" by projecting finite categories into infinity. Their "Gods" thereby remain all-too-finite, locked on the other side of an unbridgeable ontological chasm; residual metaphysics thus underlies their assumptions about, for instance, God's unknowability. By contrast, Hegel insists that the appropriate response to the demise of metaphysics is *not* to turn one's attention to "the subject," but to recover a properly non-metaphysical understanding of God's relation to the world—to recover, that is, a robust sense of God's trinity.

Hodgson writes that Hegel claims that the *infinity* proper to God is *Trinity*: God-in-Godself is the eternal dynamic of being (or "pure thought"), being-other (or "representation"), and the sublation of this being-other (or "self-consciousness"). As Trinity, God is not imprisoned by God's infinity; the triune God can be Godself in creating, making Godself known, reconciling fallen creatures to Godself, and redeeming creation. For instance, being-other is internal to God's being, and this internal othering is the basis for God's creativity *ad extra*—and God's being is characterized by the sublation of being-other, such that God's creation, while really other, does not stand "outside" of God's infinitude. Similarly, humans can know God-in-Godself: God eternally represents Godself, and God sets this representation forth in the world; God is eternally self-conscious, and God draws

us into this self-consciousness. We humans aren't just ignorant, however; we're also fallen. The God who eternally posits Godself as other thus takes our radical otherness—sinful alienation from God—upon Godself; and the God who eternally sublates otherness reconciles even this sinful alienation to God. We are thereby taken up into God's infinite intersubjectivity, an intersubjectivity which is mirrored in the neighbor-love of Christian community. In creation, revelation, reconciliation, and redemption, therefore, Hegel insists that "the Trinity is the truth not only about God but about the whole of reality in all its determinacy and particularity" (140).

We might be surprised to hear that Hegel develops a robustly trinitarian theology, though not, perhaps, if we've read the relevant texts. More startling is a claim that Hodgson doesn't call much attention to: the claim that this same trinitarianism underlies Hegel's entire system, from the *Phenomenology* to the *Encyclopedia* (263). For Hegel, everything from logic to mutual recognition is a vestige of the Trinity. If Hodgson is right about this, there's a sense in which Hegel's completion of the Kantian turn depends upon his Augustinianism—which would mean that Pippin and Hodgson must be read together.

—KEVIN W. HECTOR
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Changing Tides: Latin America and World Mission Today. By Samuel Escobar. Orbis, 2002, 206 pages.

In the preface, Escobar describes Latin America as "a kind of laboratory of experiences and thinking" (xiii). His inference is twofold: first—retrospectively—the manifold complex social, political, ecclesiological movements experienced in Latin America during the twentieth century concretized key questions about the church's mission. These questions include, for example, mission's liaison with empire, the presence of the poor, an institutionalized clergy, the consequences of foreign missionaries, etc. Escobar's historical examination addresses the answers developed by the mainline Protestant and Catholic churches, and perceives in the advance of the grassroots Pentecostal churches an initial indigenous response.

Escobar implies that the Latin American context is such that it has forced the church into constructing, at least elements of, a missiology which will emerge as significant for Christianity's changed situation in the world. These missionary activities are already occurring to some degree in Latin America, and by biblical reflection, historical investigation, and learning from the social sciences one can develop a composite picture of this emerging missiology. He focuses particularly on structures that will nurture the missionary imperative. Historical forms of the church and the living consequences of these forms allow Escobar to work backwards to core theological questions—the priesthood of all believers or professional educated clergy, a docetic or Gnostic Christology, and pneumatology. Developing creative ecclesiological structures is part of Christian obedience because, as the gospel is missionary, so ecclesiological structures which better stimulate missionary behavior are closer to the gospel.

Second—proactively—since “the church is its mission,” an examination of the Latin American experience assists the development of a missiological framework which will promote that mission. This framework will have a global vision both because of the physical missionary movement from Latin America to the world, and because “Christianity's shift southward” means that the current questions raised by Latin America are soon to become the global theological questions of the post-Christendom world.

On the whole Escobar's work is well researched and provides a solid introduction to the currents present in Latin American missiology. He is a sympathetic reader of all the traditions—and I personally lack sufficient independent knowledge to address Escobar on the particulars. The only question I have relates to his demployment of sociology and theology, and thus the normative assertions he makes concerning issues like “translation” and “Constantinian Christianity”.

Escobar advocates using the social sciences, but only within a tempering framework of evangelical or missiological theology. On the one hand, Escobar fears a manipulative missiology which uses managerial techniques and marketing strategies to promote the gospel. On the other hand, he fears a reductionist approach which conceives of mission simply as part of the socio-economic process at the service of western civilization. But a further problem, which remains implicit, is the way Escobar relates visible

and identifiable historical processes and hidden theological imperatives. For example, Escobar rejects an interpretation of the popular churches which view them as “a simple reflection of the social and economic conditions in which they emerge and spread” (103). And he criticizes sociologists for the limitation of using only external criteria in their analyses “because there is no consideration of the possibility that these churches might have their own spiritual dynamic and a spiritual message that explains their expansionary and transforming power” (103). This raises the question of criteria, which I think Escobar needs to address more carefully. He cannot expect sociologists to use the same criteria as theologians, so the question for sociologists becomes “in what way is a spiritual dynamic visible so that it can be apprehended according to sociological methodology?” Escobar advocates a “missiological perspective” orientated toward the work of the Holy Spirit. This is fine, but it fails to establish any criteria for visibly discerning this work. What criteria do we have for judging whether one church is more missionary than another? It cannot simply be the reception or sending of foreign missionaries, since Escobar concluded that the influx of Catholic missionaries after their expulsion from China reinforced the distinction of the clergy from the laity and so retarded the structural development of the priesthood of all believers—thus this influx was, in a sense, anti-missionary. Escobar also rejects using the criterion of numerical growth to discern the Spirit’s work as this is complicit with a “managerial technique” approach.

His own focus seems to fall on the quality of the subjective experience of the adherents, but this is simply to focus on the “benefits of Christ.” We can further problematize the question by looking at Escobar’s use of sociology to demonstrate how religious experience leads to upward social mobility. Pentecostal prohibitions against alcohol and tobacco liberate the “urban poor and lower-middle classes” from “bad-habits”. Escobar adds to this the joyful experience of Christian worship so that “self-discipline is here accompanied by joy and celebration” (139). This “change of life” is considered “evidence of Christ’s redeeming power.” The identification of joy lifts Escobar’s use of sociology out of the reductionisms of a purely material approach. One can imagine sociologists accepting this if “Christ” is used as a cipher for the constitution of a supportive community around

the metaphors, images and language of a sacred text and performed in liturgy and ritual which engenders ethical demands and obedience. But Escobar expects something more: he claims that subjective spiritual experience which results in missionary impulse is the visible indication of the presence of the risen Jesus in the power of the Spirit, and that this can be promoted by creative ecclesiological structures sensitive to the demands of culture and context. I do not agree, not because I think Escobar is necessarily theologically wrong, but because he himself has reduced “spirituality” to a structural contingency, i.e., people are leaving the Catholic church for the local Pentecostal church because, in the Catholic church, a professional clergy mediates the experience of Christ, while in the Pentecostal church, the experience of Christ is immediate.

Escobar claims that the Holy Spirit is the stimulator of mission and is linked to “a spiritual experience that revitalized faith and devotion to Jesus Christ. ... Along with this drive came creativity in methods for announcing the gospel that were appropriate to the new social and cultural settings” (106). Thus spiritual experience is by definition one which results in missionary obedience. The problem is that Escobar portrays this evangelical thrust as “a unique characteristic” of evangelical theology and claims that this emphasis “makes evangelical theologizing different from the forms of Protestant theology that stem from Churches that are not concerned with evangelization” (121). This emphasis on the part of evangelical churches is compared to the focus of other churches on the correction of abuses, contextual identity, or relevance in the sociopolitical issues of the day, and to the Catholic Church’s emphasis on the sacraments which mediate salvation and its assumption of an already existing Christian nation. Again Escobar binds the Holy Spirit to a specific ecclesiological form.

This quasi-sociological/theological position, which remains implicit while driving his analysis, is perhaps a consequence of Escobar’s negative attitude toward western academic theology with its implied claims to normativity. This attitude appears to have left Escobar without the necessary theological tools to address the excesses of his own system. This shortfall plainly derives from his support of the translation theory which produces a substantive and normative theological position from historical investigation, a position which is then given scriptural support; in short, a type of

'neutral' theological position because it is writ large in history and so open to sociological investigation. And because it is not 'theology,' it is not open to theological critique. In fact, for Escobar, theology contradicts the missionary mandate because it is "concerned with tracing carefully the borders of orthodoxy, maintaining the limits of an acceptable expression of the faith that has been defined in a particular context." He continues that the missionary "embarks on the task of crossing borders and frontiers of all kinds, challenged many times to stretch to new limits the understanding of truth..." (131-2). This position has a great deal of truth to it, but is an abstraction—one that Escobar himself does not hold to! For example, he embarks on a long examination of docetic Christology (115-126), and its negative consequences for missionary interaction. Docetism is, of course, a heresy which theology addressed by "tracing the borders of orthodoxy", and which became *ecumenically* posited at Chalcedon. However, in Chalcedon Escobar sees precisely the problem of Constantinian theology and western hegemony. He employs these categories as missiologically necessary but rejects their historical development. This leaves one in the curious position of accepting what serves the indigenous cause (Nestorianism is popular in this regard due to the way it permits cultic continuity) and rejecting whatever retards the missionary drive (docetism in this case). Here Escobar is in need of more nuance.

This all leads to the great Satan a.k.a. a "Eurocentric theology" which indulged in "reductionist theology", i.e., it gave a gospel without the kingdom. (See 144. This, of course, is not true—the problem especially at mid to late 19th century and early 20th century was that industrial and social progress led to identifying the "kingdom" with western civilization so that western civilization accompanying the gospel was the kingdom.) Lopsided political involvement has derived from "a western worldview that has deprived them of a holistic understanding of human beings and the world" (144). The missionary drive is retarded because "the universality of Jesus Christ has been for too long conveyed in the philosophical categories of western culture" (165). Indeed "the idea that only rich and large churches are able to take part in the global mission is the result of the Constantinian paradigm in which mission is carried out from the top down, from the center of economic and political power" (153). No doubt there is much

truth in these caricatures, but they have a “pick and choose” feel to them. For example, first, while Catholic churches undertook mission, Protestant churches tended to invest missionary responsibility in societies. This is clearly seen in the constitution of the Edinburgh 1910 conference to which Escobar devotes some space. Second, though mission came from the center of economic and political power, missions did not invest theological significance in this position—indeed as societies, they had no authority to make theological statements. Third, the notion that the church is missionary by its very nature, a key predicate in Escobar’s program, emerged within the context of a western church struggling with its post-Christendom situation. Escobar’s own agenda, in other words, derives from a most western and the most systematic of theology, and his simple recourse to the terms “evangelical” and “biblical” prove insufficient to disguise these roots.

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