

BOOK REVIEWS

Green, Joel B. *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible. Studies in Theological Interpretation. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 240. Paperback, \$19.99.*

Firing another salvo in the on-going monism-dualism debate, Joel B. Green in his new book *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, presents his ontological monism, a rebuttal against anthropological dualism in general and against the holistic dualism in *Body, Soul, and Everlasting Life* by John W. Cooper in particular. Green's anthropological monism, which "coheres well with Nancey Murphy's argument . . . and with Charles Gutenson's perspective" (179), merges biblical evidence with advances in neuroscience and views personhood in terms of biography rather than substance.

In a telling way, the title, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, mimics Cooper's *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*. Over the years Green and Cooper have been arguing over the merits of monism and dualism. In their well documented¹ clashes they accuse each other of misinterpreting Scripture and of misrepresenting the other's position, claims which are not unfounded. Their main point of contention is over the issue of the intermediate state, something Green denies and Cooper affirms. Green's new book continues their academic exchange.

Following a survey of Christian anthropology, Green builds his case for science and against philosophy, claiming that we already use science as a hermeneutical filter (21). Through this filter he finds that since the substantive view of the soul is not supported by scientific data, it must be the result of eisegesis: "situating our exegetical work in relations to the neurosciences has the potential to liberate us from certain predilections that might guide our work unawares and to allow questions to surface that might otherwise have remained buried" (28). Green's low view of philosophy and high view of science has brought him to a dangerous concession. Although he goes to great lengths to assure us that he is not letting

¹John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Joel B. Green, "Eschatology and the Nature of Humans: A Reconsideration of the Pertinent Biblical Evidence," *Science and Christian Belief* 14 (2002): 33; Joel B. Green, "Body and Soul, Mind and Brain: Critical Issues," in *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Joel B. Green and Stuart Palmer (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005); John W. Cooper, Response to "In Search of the Soul: 'I Don't Think It's Lost,'" paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers (Philadelphia, November, 2005); and John W. Cooper, "The Bible and Dualism Once Again," *Philosophia Christi* 9 no.2 (2007): 459-469.

the science control the hermeneutical agenda, the latter parts of the book undermine his claim.

Green explores the central anthropological issue of human identity in the second chapter. He challenges the dualistic mainstay of ‘parts’ and builds a case for how the soul cannot be the seat of personhood. He dismisses the claim that the soul is a distinct entity because neuroscience can demonstrate physiological characteristics typically associated with the soul. He concludes, then, that “if the capacities traditionally allocated to the ‘soul’ . . . have a neural basis, then the concept of ‘soul,’ as traditionally understood in theology as a person’s ‘authentic self,’ seems redundant” (45). Recognizing that the biblical evidence on this issue is somewhat ambiguous, Green correctly points out that the difficulty occurs because of the way we have to contend with different languages, different audiences, and different purposes of the Bible. He knows well that nowhere in Scripture does anyone set out a scientific description of the human constitution. Resting on this, he calls for academic integrity and warns against improper linguistics and dubious hermeneutic practices (59-60).

In chapter three Green argues against the typical challenges to neuroscience. He does this through an examination of neuroscientific findings in light of Peter’s, James’s, and Paul’s views of the affects of sin on humanity. He concludes that these biblical writers described human freedom in terms of service to God rather than freedom from service to sin. He also discusses challenges to theology from neuroscience. Through examples of scientific experiments, Green draws daring conclusions that challenge some commonly held beliefs, such as genes play only a marginal role in the development of personality (76-77) and conscious free will is an illusion (80). According to his research, free will is a function of the brain, which is constantly developing: “from birth, we are in the process of becoming, and this ‘becoming’ is encoded in our brains” (85). Because our brains are constantly changing, we cannot reduce personhood to a physical characteristic (87); therefore, personhood should be based on biography and relationship. From this, the New Testament scholar is led to deny the “traditional” doctrine of human free will: “it appears that the distance between evolutionary psychology and biblical faith on the question of free will is less than traditional views might have allowed. . . . This is because theological use of biblical texts has sometimes exaggerated the perspectives on freedom proposed by those texts” (103). The correct way, he claims, to view human capacity for choice is by reforming ourselves as the people of God, by returning to the biblical example of a Christian faith community, something facilitated by neurobiology.

Chapter four brings Green to the climax of his book and where he is most explicit in his critique of Cartesian dualism. He shifts the conversation from questioning the existence of the soul to questioning the necessity of embodiment. To do this, Green presents ‘embodied conversion’ as he finds it in Luke-Acts. He finds that “if the neurobiological systems that shape how we think, feel, believe, and behave are forever being sculpted in the context of our social experiences, then in a profound sense we must speak of personal (trans)formation in relational terms. Our autobiographical selves are formed within a nest of relationships, a community” (116). Here, Green’s view of biology informs his view of theology; therefore, he is led to challenge the orthodox understanding of conversion. Instead of an ontological change, Green proposes that conversion entails the rewriting of one’s autobiography. Personhood is not found in a detachable soul but in one’s relationships (129). When someone converts, his or her community changes, and the

relationship with the new community forms the basis of his or her conversion. Green reinforces our westernized soteriology of the individual with the Semitic emphasis on community. Seeing how personhood resides in the whole being and how conversion requires the whole community, Green concludes that conversion must necessitate embodiment (137).

Chapter five essentially is a rebuttal to Cooper's book and covers the difficult concepts of resurrection and continuity of personhood over time and across boundaries. The key premise in this chapter is how "personal identity with regard to both present life and life-after-death is narratively and relationally shaped and embodied" (144). Upon this he claims that life after death is not intrinsic to being human but is a gift from God, a belief which is consonant with traditional Christian teaching when read in terms of 'life' after death rather than 'existence' after death. At this point, Green directs our attention to Cooper's belief in an intermediate state. For Cooper, in order for personhood successfully to transcend this world, it must separate from the body at the point of death.² Green denies this claim because the biblical accounts of Sheol and *rephaim* do not allow for any speculation about the afterlife (157). When discussing the body, Green is careful not to equate 'materiality' with 'body.' He draws a clear distinction between Paul's concept of material body (dusty) and immaterial body (heavenly) (173-74) and thus is able to support his thesis of embodied personhood over time and from this realm to the next. In answering the question of how we maintain personal identity after death, Green concludes "that rationality and narrativity that constitute who I am are able to exist apart from neural correlates and embodiment only in so far as they are preserved in God's own being, in anticipation of new creation" (180). In this way, our relationship with God is what sustains us not only in this world and the next but through the transition from here to there.

The scope of Green's scholarly examination is uniformly commendable. His readers do not have to be experts in theology or the monism-dualism debate. His writing is clear and well documented, and he takes care to represent his research with academic integrity. At only one point does he misrepresent a position. A common misconception held among anthropological monists is the idea that dualism is based on the premise that we are made of parts and those parts are separable. While dualists ascribe to the idea that humans consist of parts, historically, many do not believe in the separability of those parts. An early example of this can be found in the writings of Irenaeus and Justin Martyr, who specifically state that their description of parts did not include separability.³ For these early thinkers, death occurs when the body and soul are rent asunder. The parts were not designed to come apart and survive. In more recent scholarship, Moreland and Rae provide an analogy of cutting off one's hand. The hand dies when it is severed, which does not indicate separability but breakability. The hand is no longer a hand after the amputation but merely a heap, which is obvious after necrosis has set in.⁴ Like so many monists, however, Green summarily

²Cooper, *Body and Soul*, 52-72 (71).

³Irenaeus, in *Adversus Haereses*, 5.12.2 affirms that the parts are always a part of the person. In Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, 6 he explains that the soul is separate from the body only at the point of death.

dismisses dualism on the grounds that it claims separability of parts, which is an inaccurate assessment of both dualism and dualists.

Green brings insight and scholarly expertise to his research. His use of biblical scholarship in the area of Christian anthropology includes pivotal findings, such as how the human “does not *have* a soul, but *is* a soul” (9).⁵ This Hebraic anthropological tenet is widely acknowledged by monists⁶ and advocates of dualist and unity views⁷ to equal effect. The emphasis is on how the soul is indistinguishable from the body, which seems to directly challenge dualism’s claim of distinguishable parts. Green also notes the difference between the material body and the immaterial body in Pauline literature (173-74), especially recognizable in 1 Cor. 15:44. In his parsing of the passage, he carefully differentiates the temporal, physical body from the eschatological, spiritual body: “whereas the *soma psychikon* is a body provided by God and well-suited for this age, the *soma pneumatikon*, also provided by God, is well-suited for the age to come” (173). Taking these two theological claims together, Green uses them to support his monism, but the argument is not conclusive. Claude Tresmontant, from the same information, concludes in favor of partition. We are not a body that contains a soul but a soul that expresses itself bodily: “This soul is visible to me because it is within the world, fed on the world’s elements which in turn cause it to be flesh.”⁸ In other words, he claims that the body is the manifestation of the soul in the world in which it finds itself. To use Paul’s language, we have a dusty body in this life and a heavenly body in the next. For Tresmontant, the soul and body are one, but this unity has no bearing on the other parts of the human constitution. The evidence that Green uses as supporting monism has been used against monism.

Green’s grasp of neuroscience and how it relates to the theological landscape is impressive. One of the values of this book grows out of his use of neuroscience to inform his arguments; however, this also may be one of its weaknesses. He seems to place too much value on the scientific findings, so runs the risk of falling into the trap of changing one biased perspective, philosophic, for another, scientific. By concluding that the traditional

⁴J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 68, 82.

⁵Green cites Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 199.

⁶See James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 134-35; Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, I-II (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 171; Doug McIntosh, *Deuteronomy*, Holman Old Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2002), 91.

⁷See Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, trans. Michael Francis Gibson (New York: Desclee, 1960), 94; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986; paperback edition, 1994), 206-07.

⁸Tresmontant, 94.

understanding of the soul is redundant because some of its capacities can be measured scientifically (45), he assumes an epiphenomenological model, which claims that physical events cause mental events, but mental events do not cause physical events. Therefore, by presupposing epiphenomenalism, he assumes that any measurable activity must originate exclusively in the brain because mind activity cannot have an impact on the brain activity. Therefore, any capacity that was traditionally held as mental activity but is scientifically measurable cannot be mental activity but must be exclusively physical activity. Measurable activity means brain function. Thus, he concludes, a need for a distinct soul becomes redundant (45). This serves as his neurological evidence for the denial of the dualistic view of parts. The problem with this is that when he assumes a monist model, epiphenomenalism, to prove his monist model, physicalism, he fallaciously begs the question.

According to his introduction, Green is trying to show how neuroscience is useful for theological investigation (28-29). He posits that the soul is not a distinct entity because neuroscience has not been able to measure its existence (45). According to the science, all functions attributed to the soul can be measured as functions of the brain through scientific experimentation (76-87). Therefore, he concludes that the biblical depiction of the soul is synecdoche (151) and not an indication of a partition view of the human constitution. On this point, however, he undermines his own presupposition. The failure of his filter (neuroscience) to recognize the soul reflects negatively on the filter rather than on the biblical precept. Just because we can scientifically measure brain activity that was thought to be soul activity does not mean the soul does not exist. It could just mean that science is inadequate to measure the soul. Outside of epiphenomenalism, Green's conclusions are untenable.

A central issue in the monism-dualism debate is the location of personhood. Green centers personhood not in the soul or body. To do so would suggest that we consist of parts, something he rigorously denies. For Green personhood is biographical and relational. The standard problems with defining personhood as biography have to do with beginning- and end-of-life boundaries. When does a fetus begin having his or her own biography? This is an important consideration in the abortion battle. Are comatose patients, the brain damaged, or the very, very senior adults nonpersons? This is important in the debate over euthanasia. Another issue of concern is the distinction between human and non-humans. Green reduces the gulf between us and them to the point where only biography separates. Some animals, however, seem to be able to communicate through highly intricate means, such as the pings and squeaks of a dolphin or the sign language of some trained primates.⁹ Some people believe their pets are people. Are they accorded personhood because they have narratives? I was surprised to find that Green does not speak to any of these traditional

⁹Sue Savage-Rumbaugh, et al, "Ape Consciousness-Human Consciousness: A Perspective Informed by Language and Culture," *American Zoologist* 40 no. 6 (Dec 2000): 913-17; cf. Mark Caldwell, "Polly Wanna PhD?" *Discover* 21, no. 1 (Jan 2000), 70-75; Candace Savage, "Reasoning Ravens," *Canadian Geographic* 120 no. 2 (Jan/Feb 2000): 22-24; Michael D. Lemonick, "Honor Among Beasts," *Time* 166 no. 2 (July 11, 2005), 54-56; Robert N. Wennberg, *God, Humans, and Animals: An Invitation to Enlarge Our Moral Universe* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 99-117.

concerns. By adding a discussion of these issues, he would improve the book and alleviate some of the concerns over his anthropology.

While Green's warning against dubious hermeneutical practices is an important consideration, the New Testament professor fails to recognize some questionable theological practices. An example of this is when Green unmistakably defines conversion as an ongoing process: "Conversion is a journey, not an instantaneous metamorphosis; even though points of decision-making can be traced in the Lukan narrative, these provide points of beginning and milestones along the way, rather than conclusion" (137). When read in terms of justification and sanctification, Green's depiction of conversion seems to support Catholic doctrine, which merges the two. Protestant theology, on the other hand, separates the two stating that we are justified instantly and sanctified over time. To understand them as the same drawn out process, we risk endorsing the Catholic dogma and re-crucifying Christ each time we sin, as the crucifix reflects.

Furthermore, Green's concluding claim that our personal identity is maintained by God as we cross the boundary from life to afterlife (180) is highly problematic. What Green is claiming is that our personhood resides in our life-stories that God remembers when we die, and in the eschaton he implants those stories in our eschatological bodies. First, for this to work, Green must divide the human being into parts, separating out the body from the rest. His conclusion forces him to admit that certain aspects "exist apart from" (180) other aspects at the point of crossover. Thus, he undermines much of his earlier and repeated insistence that we are not made of separable parts. Second, the claim that we are "preserved in God's own being" (180) sounds dangerously similar to pluralist eschatology, especially that of John Hick. Is Green suggesting that in salvation we merge with the Real?¹⁰ Third, what happens to those who pass away outside of the saving relationship with God through Christ? Only those who are saved will be given an eschatological body (175), but what happens to those who are not saved? Green gives these non-persons no explanation. Apparently, the lost do not merit an embodied eternity. According to Green the human is a unity, which must—by definition—include a body. So, if we die in a lost state and do not merit a spiritual body, do we cease to exist? Is Green siding with Clark Pinnock and suggesting that the lost are annihilated?¹¹ Like most claims of anthropological monism, Green's theory fails to present a convincing argument for the continuity of personal identity from this realm to the next.

For monists, especially ontological monists, non-reductive physicalists, and constitutionists, this book is a useful resource that sheds light on the recent developments in neuroscience that can be used to support the claim to anthropological monism. Green's presentation of the functioning of the brain challenges many assumptions about the

¹⁰John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life: What Happens After We Die?* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), throughout the book.

¹¹Clark Pinnock, "Fire, then Nothing." *Christianity Today*, 20 March 1987, 440; "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent." *Criswell Theological Review* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1990):246-53.

significance of the brain on personhood. These challenges will help drive the conversation forward.

For anthropological dualists, from radical dualists to holistic dualists, this book does little to address the traditional challenges to monism: where is the seat of personhood, and how do we maintain continuity of personhood over time and from this realm to the next. Despite this shortcoming, dualists will find Green's work worth reading. He presents a clear case for his ontological monism, merges science and theology well, and applies reliable hermeneutical practices to Scripture. Anyone interested in understanding more about the monism-dualism debate will find the book helpful. For this reason, its use in the classroom would work well alongside books espousing antithetical positions, particularly Cooper's *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*.

***The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith.* By Mark A. Noll. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009. Pp. 212. Hardcover, \$25.00.**

In his latest book, Mark Noll, the Francis McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, defends American mission efforts, especially but not exclusively evangelical mission efforts. In some circles American presence in the Majority World is looked upon with suspicion. Noll wants to dispel the myths and investigate the facts surrounding the supposed American model of Christianity that is exploding throughout the Majority World.

When Noll lays out his thesis, I had to take a day to think about the ramifications of what he was saying. At first glance, his argument was jarring: "American form rather than American influence has been the most important American contribution to the recent world history of Christianity" (15). Are not 'form' and 'influence' mutually inclusive? To use someone's methodological form suggests that the user is being influenced by that form, and to influence someone implies that the person has adopted or adapted that methodological form. Noll is careful to make a clear distinction between the two.

In the history of American Christianity, we can see a certain pattern in the way it develops. Europeans fled to America in order to worship freely. Therefore, the desire and the ability to develop unique expressions of Christianity were present in America. The way American Christianity developed, Noll argues, is the natural way that Christianity works when Christians have the freedom to worship as they choose. The pattern in which this expression develops is Christian, not American.

Since the nineteenth century, the Majority World has been experiencing the same pattern of development because they also are seeking to worship freely: "Social circumstances in many places of the world are being transformed in patterns that resemble in crucial ways what North American believers had earlier experienced in the history of the United States" (109). These peoples are not following an American form but are following a Christian pattern. The cadre of American missionaries is helping the Majority World as they progress along the path that historically the Americans have already traveled: "The way that

Christianity developed in the American environment helps explain the way Christianity is developed in many parts of the world. But correlation is not causation It means, instead, that understanding American patterns provides insight for what has been happening elsewhere in the world” (189).

Noll’s book builds a good case for his argument. I began reading with skepticism but once I understood what he was claiming, I could easily accept his point. One criticism, however, stems from the way he omits some helpful and, I dare suggest, essential background. Since he is arguing against equating American Missions to American Imperialism, he is obliged to survey these hegemonic practices present in the early missions movement. If he had done this, he would be in a much stronger position to explain how the mission practices have changed since the nineteenth century, when they moved away from colonialistic practices. The text of the book is a meager 200 pages, so he has the room for a more extensive treatment of the history of American missions. As the book stands, readers with limited expertise in this area might not fully grasp Noll’s point. Therefore, this book is best left for readers who already are familiar with the subject. Noll’s work falls in line with the works of Lamin Sanneh, Ogbu Kalu, and Philip Jenkins. Readers familiar with any of these authors will have the background necessary to fully grapple with the ideas expertly expressed in this book.

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D’Souza, Dinesh. *What’s So Great About Christianity*. Washington, D.C: Regnery Publishing, 2007. 348 pp.. Hardcover, \$27.95.

Dinesh D’Souza, a policy advisor during the Reagan Administration and former Robert and Karen Rishwain Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, is a leading conservative figure who has written eleven books, many articles, and has appeared on a variety of talk shows to discuss economic, religious, and public policy issues. His latest book, *What’s So Great About Christianity*, surveys various historical, philosophical, and moral themes from which a forceful case is made for the superiority of Christianity, and the reasonableness, individually and communally, of it as an ideological stance.

D’Souza begins by contending that the religious population, Christianity specifically, is growing and will continue to grow in number despite the globalization and modernization that many thought would lead to the end of belief in God. He believes that this is the case since religion is the primary means to securing a sense of purpose and contented disposition, and because both of these are significant impetuses for survival, atheism inevitably leads to extinction. Since the West, containing the largest concentration of atheists, is decreasing in population, religious people from third world and eastern countries are repopulating it, thus proportionally increasing the overall religiosity of the population.

D’Souza also attempts to prove that Christianity is the architect of Western civilization and is the founder of the values and institutions that make it great. Some of those that he mentions are the equality of human beings, the idea of limited government, and the

separation of church and state. He also notes how it was Christianity that was the means to the advent of modern science, with its emphasis on reason and an intelligibly ordered universe. He spends another section of the book arguing that the design in the universe is strong support for the veracity of Christianity. He emphasizes that the Big Bang is troubling to atheistic scientists because it implies a creation of the universe out of nothing. After spending a chapter explaining the anthropic principle, he insightfully notes how many scientific theories share a quality with religious doctrines that the subscribers to the former attribute to the latter, namely that they inhabit the realm of unverifiable metaphysical speculation. D'Souza points out that many scientists are promoting an anti-religious agenda, which is an acceptable abuse of metaphysical assumptions passed off as scientific fact.

Unfortunately, he makes the following comment regarding the intelligent design verses evolution debate, "it seems improbable that the small group of intelligent design advocates is right and the entire community of biologists is wrong" (146). He goes on by quoting who he names as Christian biologists who irrefutably acknowledge the veracity of evolution, and that man descended from other creatures. He believes that God must have designed the initial cells and created consciousness, since these are a mystery to the scientific community, but that man evolved from a single cell is a fact. I find it ironic that he is well known for vehemently chastising Catholic bishops in America for opposing military action in the 1980's when they had little to no knowledge of the multivariageted elements involved, and yet he is endorsing the anti-intelligent design movement with little evidence that he has more than a cursory understanding of the science involved.

D'Souza offers helpful insights into other topics. For one, he spends a section on the relationship between Christianity and philosophy, wisely explicating the distinction between methods of appropriating knowledge, and also the limited applicability of human reason to reality. Science and reason have limited spheres of accessibility and thus only illuminate a portion of the totality of ontology. He gives a brief summary of Hume's contribution to the problems of empirical verification and Popper's notion that scientific theories must be falsifiable and can never be proven absolutely.

D'Souza contends against those who say that religion, Christianity specifically, is an ideology of hate and violence, because their assertion is not only a gross misrepresentation, but also conceals the atrocities enacted by those who are nonreligious. Oddly, he believes that the solution to immorality is "not to embrace Christ and become a born-again believer. Rather it is to follow...conscience" (258-9). This is a surprising quote that not only seems a bit too politically correct and overly conciliatory toward a relativistic culture, but moreover a disingenuous solution – without regeneration is it even possible for the majority of the population to follow their conscious? The last section of the book, which aims to show how Christianity can save someone's life, is equally mollifying in that it exclusively highlights the intellectual and psychological desirability of becoming a Christian while neglecting to mention the reality and necessity of the corresponding cruciform living.

While D'Souza offers a helpful, concise book that summarizes lengthy, tortuous issues in simplified form, he perhaps tries to cover too much. Each section, which is roughly 3-5 short chapters, attempts to tackle significant and complicated issues. Each chapter could easily be turned into a 300-page book. However, D'Souza is not writing to contribute to scholarship, thus he offers little new insight into the issues, but he does submit the material

in consolidated form from a Christian perspective that the average reader could use as a helpful reference. The notable areas that Southern Baptists may take issue with is his belief that intelligent design is wrong, that to become a Christian is easy (hiding the fact that it is difficult to *be* one), that the solution for a fallen society is to follow the dictates of conscience, and that he tends to focus solely upon emphasizing the greatness of the religion of Christianity, as an institution and intellectual ideology, as opposed to that of Christ.

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Slatton, James H. *W. H. Whitsitt: The Man and the Controversy*. The Jim N. Griffith Series in Baptist Studies, ed. Walter B. Shurden. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009. pp. 348. \$40.00.

James Slatton wrote *W. H. Whitsitt* because of a member of the congregation where he served as pastor. In the preface, Slatton described how he visited an elderly lady in Richmond, Virginia who planned to join his church. Slatton learned that this individual was the granddaughter of William Heth Whitsitt, third president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and namesake of the late nineteenth-century controversy that resulted in his departure as seminary president. *W. H. Whitsitt* is a detailed biography of the man who, as Slatton wrote, “had a knack for landing in the middle of important events” (Preface). Whitsitt’s life story was covered in nineteen chapters.

The book begins in 1862 with Whitsitt as a twenty-year old during the Civil War. He volunteered as a private soldier and a chaplain with the Confederate Army two months after having been ordained and elected to the pastorate of Mill Creek Baptist Church in Tennessee. He served in a cavalry unit that was under the command of legendary general, Nathan Bedford Forrest. Whitsitt was eventually captured and held as a prisoner of war until he was released near the war’s end.

When the war ended, Whitsitt decided to further his education. He enrolled at the University of Virginia in order to supplement the Master of Arts degree that he earned prior to the Civil War from Union University, which was then located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. After a while, he met and was greatly influenced by John A. Broadus, formerly the pastor of Charlottesville Baptist Church and then a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina. Broadus convinced Whitsitt to pursue a theological education at Southern. Before completing his studies, he traveled to Germany where he advanced his education in Leipzig and Berlin. In 1872, he was elected to the faculty of Southern Seminary at an annual salary of \$1,500. He was the sixth professor to be hired in the brief history of the institution.

Whitsitt’s professorship proved to be hectic, yet interesting. He taught New Testament Greek, polemic theology, church history, and German while at Southern. He became close friends with Crawford Toy, the professor who eventually became the subject of his own controversy that resulted in his removal from Southern. During the summer of 1880 while conducting research at the British Museum, Whitsitt discovered the information

that would eventually lead to the tumultuous controversy bearing his name: documentary evidence that English Baptists first began practicing baptism by immersion in 1641. His findings would not be published under his name for another thirteen years.

In May 1895, William Whitsitt was unanimously elected as the third president of Southern Seminary. About a year later, the controversy began that would lead to his 1899 resignation. The Whitsitt controversy centered around Landmarkism's belief in Baptist successionism and the disagreement with Whitsitt's discovery concerning baptism by immersion. Landmarkism was strong during the nineteenth century and found some of its strongest supporters in the middle of the Old South. Baptists in the states along the Atlantic seaboard generally supported Whitsitt. Newspapers of the various Southern Baptist state conventions published details of the controversy as it raged. The controversy seemed to end upon his resignation. Whitsitt found employment as the chair of philosophy at Richmond College in Virginia where he remained for nine years.

The book is unique in several ways. First, one of the greatest aspects is a rich primary source of information that Slatton was able to consult. Whitsitt faithfully kept a diary and his granddaughter had possession of his personal writings that spanned a fourteen-year period, including the years of the controversy and his resignation as seminary president. Slatton's qualifications are another unique feature. Although he held pastorates in Texas and Virginia for over fifty years, Slatton earned a Th.D. in church history from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He indicated that he was "somewhat familiar" with the Whitsitt controversy prior to meeting Whitsitt's granddaughter. As a historian, he quickly became excited to have the opportunity to study the diaries and other information that would eventually be made available to him.

Slatton is involved with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. In concluding remarks on the passion for uniformity of opinion within the church, he made an interesting comment, "For those who experienced the moderate-fundamentalist controversy among twentieth-century Southern Baptists, the story of the Whitsitt controversy, told in detail, evokes a haunting sense of *déjà vu*" (323).

The book's advantages far outweigh any disadvantages. The author seems to give fair treatment to the story of Whitsitt's life. The text is written in a clear and concise manner. The accuracy of the index is of concern as some topics seem to be a few pages away from where their location is indicated. This book will be helpful for historians, pastors, theologians, and others who may wish to broaden their knowledge of the events surrounding the Whitsitt controversy.

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Oakman, Douglas E. *Jesus and the Peasants. Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context.* Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008. Pp. 336. Paperback, \$38.00.

Douglas Oakman offers a collection of essays applying various social-scientific or “cross-culturally informed” models to the question of Jesus’ economic situation, beliefs, and praxis in *Jesus and the Peasants*. As a collection from a lifetime of scholarship, these essays feature no central thesis—and even developing and changing perspectives—but do feature a shared intention of introducing readers to Jesus’ own political-economic milieu. Through the development of his understanding of the Gospels, Oakman has come to the conclusion that Jesus was primarily an agrarian peasant who reflected the political, economic, and social interests of this group but yet spoke hopefully about the ever-present kingdom of God that transformed these dire situations.

The book is divided into three sections: 1) “political economy and the peasant values of Jesus”; 2) “the Jesus traditions within peasant realities”; and 3) “the peasant aims of Jesus.” In chapters one and two, Oakman explores the social dynamics of debt in early Roman Palestine with the hopes of addressing the question “whether the ministry of Jesus formulated a response to widespread indebtedness in that environment” (11). Ideally debts were “horizontal” or reciprocal, but they were more often than not “vertical” in their orientation. One could hold debts to parents, family members, patrons, friends, and political powers that be. Debts in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman world were primarily agrarian problems, but the “biblical view of debt was the equality, with various qualifications, of each member of Israel before Yahweh” (15). In building a model for debt and social stratification in early Roman Palestine, Oakman concludes that when the model is applied to Jesus traditions (including parables and the Lord’s Prayer), “Jesus’ ministry takes an explicitly revolutionary aspect according to the canons of antiquity” in a way that it would have been perceived by those in power as an insurrectionist movement—even without weapons and war (32, cf. 39).

Oakman evaluates the value of the two *denarii* in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:35) in chapter three. He concludes that the two *denarii* was a substantial amount of money that would feed and shelter a wounded man for nearly a month. The Samaritan is also extremely generous in making additional provisions. What might have been most offensive for Jewish hearers was the idea that the Samaritan practiced “general reciprocity” while the Levite and the priest practiced “negative reciprocity,” which would have been perceived as a rather odious role reversal to the parable’s original hearers. In chapter four, Oakman evaluates Palestinian population density, the size of the crowd, and its implications for debts in Mark 6:34.

Chapter 5 is a survey of ancient economy studies in the New Testament, starting with Bruce Barton in the 1930s. Most important to this survey, however, is the work of Karl Polanyi, who noted that the economy was no separate institution in the ancient world as it was related to kinship and political associations (56). Industries as they are conceived of in modernity are no part of the ancient agrarian world, nor did money play the same role or have the same significance. Oakman argues that knowing these differences are of the utmost important for reading biblical texts in a different economic setting. In chapter 6, Oakman surveys the relationship between ancient economy and Revelation. He concludes that the

text takes profoundly negative approaches to the economic institutions of Rome, and that John envisions a renewed, domestic economy to take its place—a vision Oakman argues was difficult to accept in a post-Constantinian Christianity during the canonization process.

The parable of the mustard seed is the subject of chapter nine. Here Oakman argues that Jesus primarily identifies himself with the agrarian society and its concerns, not the urban context with its very different concerns. He suggests that the point of the parable is not about the growth of something great but rather the destructive power that small seed can have. The small seed of God's kingdom has a destructive, uprooting effect on the political, economic, and social institutions of Jesus' day—an effect lost in urban and theological readings. In chapter 10, Oakman makes a similar case for the Beelzebul pericope (Luke 11:14-26). He contends that the text is really about political exorcism and the usurpation of the Herodian dynasty and its replacement with the kingdom of God.

In chapter 11, Oakman employs a conflict approach to assessing the political situation of those living in the countryside in Luke-Acts. He makes a contrast between the competing interests of the elite in the city aiming to expand land holdings, gain political security, and ultimately control with the interests of peasantry aiming to achieve political independence through debt forgiveness and redistribution of the land.

Oakman argues in chapter 12 that Jesus was peasant with peasant values but nonetheless was hopeful that the Kingdom of God would bring transformation even to the often vilified government. He repeats here what he perceives as the hermeneutical uncertainty of reading parables in order to gain such data (180). Oakman turns to the Jesus' cursing fig trees narrative in chapter 13, and he suggests that these texts demand closer analysis in social-systemic approaches. The curses, he argues, apply primarily to the Palestinian social situation under Herod, and they indicate Jesus' critique of these structures. Again here Jesus offers the kingdom of God as an alternative to these institutions. The Lord's Prayer, according to Oakman's discussion in chapter 14, also has a primarily immediate concern—but not completely unrelated to eschatological hope—addressing very real and immediate social concerns for peasants and agrarians in his context. Dividing the passage in two tables, Oakman suggests that the first table reflects more basic theological beliefs about God's concern for the welfare of people, whereas the second table deals more specifically with the values and concerns of the Galilean Jesus movement.

The author outlines an integration of model of social interpretation to the social world of Jesus in chapter 15. He aims to implement abductive procedures with both theoretical models of social consciousness and historical data, because he believes that a “more sophisticated sociological imagination thus can inform social inquiry centered on the historical Jesus or Roman Galilee” (246). The model Oakman proposes combines macrocultural, macrosociological, and social-systems approaches in order to produce “an augmented understanding of politics as a key institutional and cultural variable and of struggles in the environment of Jesus” (253). The interdisciplinary engagement from this model and archeology results in understanding the Judean quality of Jesus' Galilean context. The Jesus seen at the end of this enterprise is not the philosopher or cynic decontextualized by Crossan and Mack but rather a Jewish Jesus in line with the tradition of Israel and who proclaimed a non-elitist message against the political institutions of his setting that would cost him his life.

Oakman paints the historical Jesus found in earlier Jesus traditions as symbol of tax subversion in the name of God's kingdom in chapter 16. In the final chapter, "Jesus, Q, and Ancient Literacy in Social Perspective," Oakman aims to distinguish between the Jesus of a predominantly oral culture (buried in the Q tradition) and the Jesus recorded in scribal traditions with respect to Jesus' own social and political interests. Contingent upon an understanding of a largely illiterate culture in Herodian Galilee, Oakman contends that passages demonstrating literary competency reflect scribal addendum, not the native Aramaic oral traditions. He concludes that Jesus attracted negative attention from the powerful and wealthy in his subversive messages about politics and economy with his idea that God's kingdom came with "tax shelters" of sorts—and it was this political-economic message that cost Jesus his life and perhaps even was the reason for the first scribes writing Jesus' sayings down. Oakman suggests that the message preserved in the Gospels more or less reflects the political and religious ideals of rabbinic Judaism and the Jesus movement, not those of the illiterate, Galilean peasant (308).

Oakman provides exemplar work in the application of social matrices to the biblical text in social-scientific exegesis, but evangelicals will often have serious disagreement with his conclusions. He argues that Jesus was conservative with regard to the tradition of Israel but revolutionary in regard to political and economic structures. Oakman concludes that "Jesus' historical activity was essentially about politics, and the restructuring of society, and not about religion or theology" (296). In his hermeneutic, Oakman rejects what he perceives as traditional "Jesus-idolatries" and "biblical tyranny" (6) as well as the purely reductionistic approaches to religion by the social sciences—but he can't find the happy medium he's looking for here.

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