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## Review: Virtue and the Voice of God: Towards Theology as Wisdom

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theology students is that Driscoll makes use of other doctrines without substantiation. To this I can only respond that pastoral theology is a complicated business and the book is best appreciated as an attempt to bring the atonement to bear on the realities of life. With this focus, peripheral theological issues can remain precisely that: peripheral.

I will conclude with two more significant critiques. First, one could critique the book for its Reformed perspective and accompanying overemphasis on penal substitution. The Reformed standpoint is evident in the selection of the aspects of the atonement and in the recommended reading in the appendix (the books listed are almost exclusively Reformed in nature). The overemphasis on penal substitution, a related issue, creates a tension in the book. In the preface, the authors speak of a many-faceted jewel, but in the introduction they specify the crown jewel as being a penal substitutionary account of the atonement. I would contend that penal substitution is indeed a facet of that jewel, which is itself the event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such a modification would justify the inclusion of every chapter in this book while opening the door more widely to the theological insights of those writing before the Reformation (which are scantily noted in this book) as well as some of the non-Reformed emphases currently under consideration. Given the tone established in the preface, this criticism amounts to a modest though significant alteration that the authors themselves could embrace without in any way undermining their laudable commitment to penal substitution.

Finally, I note with some dismay the final section of the appendix: "Unhelpful Books on the Cross." First, the list is so short as to be unhelpful. Second, while the criticisms levied in the brief annotations may in fact be valid, the more pressing concern is whether the authors demonstrate Christian charity by offering such harsh criticism without substantial engagement. Critique and even condemnation are certainly admissible, but these comments are so brief as to be one-sided and in all probability misleading. Without extensive engagement, the authors would have done better simply to offer a list of books with which they have substantial disagreement.

In sum, *Death by Love* is an excellent and vital project that the church must seek to develop and expand so as to bring the power of God's saving work in Jesus Christ to bear upon the sin and pain in people's lives. This vision alone makes the book worth reading, not to mention the excellent manner in which Driscoll and Breshears go about fulfilling their task. It offers a particularly salutary approach to complement the many academic books currently on the market.

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*Virtue and the Voice of God: Toward Theology as Wisdom.* By Daniel J. Treier. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, 278 pp., \$30.00 paper.

The title of this volume is most apt. Daniel Treier, associate professor of Theology at Wheaton College, has endeavored to more effectively bring together "virtue," classically speaking—or, better, *phronesis* (practical reason)—and the Word of God in the Bible, read and understood by the church as *Scripture*, whereby the whole of the church's theological task, within and without, may be properly regarded again as wisdom (*sapientia*) in our contemporary setting. To this end, Treier has engaged both metatheology and theology in the service of the many-sided practical-critical nature of theology as wisdom. He engages directly and in depth the contested issue of the nature of theology in relation to the academy in terms of "public" truth and in terms of the

ongoing debates about the nature, directions, and tasks of theological education; thus, the meaning of Christianity as *paideia* (enculturating transformation) in relation to the church, wherein and to which theology ought to be directed and related as wisdom and unto wisdom. Many, seemingly disparate, elements from classical and classical Christian notions of wisdom are studied afresh: *techne*, *scientia*, *paideia*, notably, too, *sophia* (in relation to Jesus as *Sophia*) and especially *phronesis*, are assessed and interpreted in relation to Christian formation and, to that end, the central role of Scripture and hermeneutics (specifically, theological interpretation of the voice of God in Scripture) in and for the church. All of this is consciously and emphatically set within a robust, dynamic trinitarian framework, especially the effective, directive, formative, unifying work of the person of the Holy Spirit past, present, and future. But while Treier acknowledges that while in one sense a few are called as leaders and teachers of doctrine specifically (and for theological studies more broadly, these often are critically engaged with "public" or academic settings), yet he is concerned to overcome the modern split between academic theological education of the few and the many of the church, regarding theology as an every member calling within the participative relation of all members to the Word of God and the God of the Word in Christ and by the Spirit. Truly, it is a major interest of Treier's to overcome or to heal the destructive dichotomies that have arisen, especially since the onset of modernity (e.g., public truth/Christian doctrine; *sapientia/scientia*; practical/theoretical). Indeed, the central Christian affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity and the perichoretic relations within God and economically outside of God, ground and finally unify all of these many critical elements.

Treier's argument develops through three major sections, each reflective of the three crucial terms in the title. Part One deals with the much debated nature of theological education and the often conflicted relations between the academy, the church, and the need for Christian formation. Here he aims to develop wisdom as a unifying concept in dialogical relation to current debates about the nature of theology led by Edward Farely, Charles Wood, David Kelsey, and Reinhard Hutter (often propelled by the influential, much debated work of George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*). Having thus "set the table," Treier beautifully embodies his later formative focus on theological interpretation of the Bible as *Scripture* by means of an extended theological interpretation of wisdom, concluding with an emphasis on theology as an every (Christian) person engagement in communicative praxis. From this Christian interpretation of wisdom, however, the natural question arises whether, in the context of modernity's notion of truth as "public" and universally shared, theology's status is as a "public" authority with truth status. Throughout the work Treier is emphatic that Christian theology is not something merely private and/or subjective. It has "public" substance and engages in such at scholarly levels. Yet, again, his clear aim is that Christian theology be what it is first and foremost, that is, knowledge of God in Christ and by the Spirit in and by Scripture. Treier will not let it become distorted into something else by playing the Enlightenment game by Enlightenment rules. For that reason, post-critical approaches to truth (as more holistic) become important to Treier's argument.

In Part Two, Treier develops the nature of theological interpretation as a varied movement and as a faithful approach to Christian truth in keeping with *fides quaerens intellectum* and as the crucial outcome of and means toward *sapientia*. Like Part One, this is carried out in dialogue with prominent voices, especially Stephen Fowl. Broadly, the hermeneutical-theological movement that espouses theological interpretation does not seek eradication of established interpretive-exegetical methods *per se*, though many of those methods developed from modernity's instrumentalist presuppositions. But the hermeneutical-theological movement is often critical of critical methods. Treier explains that this movement raises questions about how Christian *phronesis* (practical reason)

can cohere with academic commitments to purely public pursuit of truth, and so public sharing of truth claims. But then the emphasis is on how to fit the integrity of the Bible as *Scripture* (the authoritative, written Word of God) over and in formative relation to the church, and the dynamic, ever present, illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, who (as grounded in his past work of inspiration) now powerfully leads God's people in community to develop Christian virtues via those very Scriptures. In the following chapters, Treier wrestles (especially in relation to Fowl) with the obvious tension that ensues from an emphasis on the Christian reading of the Bible as *Scripture* (in community and so in terms of the *regula fidei*) and the (critical) use of critical biblical scholarship. In the process, Treier makes clear the integrity and the faithfulness of theological interpretation.

Part Three develops clearer connections. First, and so important for the argument, is Treier's connection of theological interpretation of the Bible as divinely authoritative Scripture (with the regulative role of the *regula fidei*) to a postcritical understanding of rationality, thus rightly arguing against modernity's outmoded, rationalistic form of objectivity and public truth in favor of that more whole-person/holistic, manifold notion of truth. Of course, in a pluralist context that opens up everything to (at best?) the many-sided/dialectical relations found within Western culture. Yet Treier carefully nuances and delineates this in a way whereby truth-as-truth is still truly meaningful. The last chapter brings relative finality to earlier preliminary processes of interpretation, effecting unitariness (unity in distinction) to the two major elements previously developed: (1) the nature of theology as wisdom, the integration of *techné*, *scientia*, *paideia*, and the like under the integrating, multisided notion of Christian *phronesis* (practical reason), centered in Jesus Christ as the true *sophia*; and (2) theological interpretation of the Bible as Scripture, all integrally related to, grounded in, and effected by the perichoretic relations in and redemptive effects of the triune God, from the Father, in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. Therein, theology is always both task and content, a "faith task" given to the church community, each and all, in relation to the world, while accounting, too, for theology's social locations in relation to (post)critical reason.

This is a theologically substantial, carefully and tightly argued book that is much needed. This is a work that ought to have wide readership, especially in seminaries and by all engaged in the varied (and, as a result of this work, more interrelated) theological disciplines. As such Daniel Treier's contributions to the church's theological task in *Virtue and the Voice of God* are numerous. Here are but a few. He helps to set the current theological task of the church more effectively within its historical developments, the debates surrounding such developments, and the church's responsibility therein (especially the effects of scholasticism and/or modernity in the separation of *scientia* from *sapientia*). I found the distillation of the current discussion regarding the nature of theology, especially the theological task in relation to the church as a whole and to vocational theological education, useful—and this is not an area that normally catches my attention. I was awakened more to the need to pursue such meta-theology.

Moreover, Treier is effective in clarifying and developing theology's active relation between theory and practice, each informing the other. Christian practices must hold together the *sophia* and *phronesis* dimensions of Christian teaching, for that teaching that "makes wise unto salvation" encompasses the whole of living by the power of the Spirit, leading us into the Jesus way of life. Performance, then, is at the heart of theology and central to theological interpretation of Scripture. So while we must decide how conceptual forms function in theology, theology is "not a discrete practice *per se*, but is performed within a host of Christian practices as people engage in communicative action (*praxis*) concerning God as people seek to live wisely" (p. 97). Yet this is not mere

activity versus truth content. Rather, theology is "meta-discourse," that is, because of its central reference to God, theology embraces and is thus formed within the variety of resulting communicative practices. Treier is also right on the mark in his analysis and criticisms of the Enlightenment's/modernity's narrow rationalism as it affected and distorted the church's view of theology, especially the assumptions foundational to historical-critical biblical interpretation and the church's claim to know God in Christ by the Spirit (in and by Scripture). I need to mention, too, how Treier won me over to his careful analysis, integration, and development of the various Greek senses of wisdom/reason/knowledge, and then (emphatically) the very biblical, Christian, Christ-centered, Spirit-engendering forms of these unitary, interrelated virtues of and for the Christian life. Treier has shown me why the replacement of (separated) *scientia* by an integrated *sapientia* or *phronesis* is not merely arbitrary and cultural but biblical and crucial to the church's holistic theological task in Christ to itself and the world.

I should mention also the fact that, contra an element of one of the endorsements on the back cover (Ellen Charry), Treier does not deny that Scripture reveals to us the truth(s) of God in Christ and by the Spirit. He has, I think, proper concerns with elements of Protestant scholasticism, but Treier clearly affirms the identity of Holy Scripture as the written Word of God. He is rather a chastened propositionalist.

Yet I do have some constructive concerns. The first may relate to the very tightly argued form of Treier's argumentation. It seemed often that I would come to the conclusion of a paragraph and it would not be readily apparent how that conclusion was fully drawn. It was as though a crucial transition sentence had been removed, or that there was "insider information" that I was not aware of because I had not read a particular source. Still, in the overall development most of these did become clear. Second, within discussions regarding modern notions of *scientia* and the problem of Enlightenment objectivity, Treier did not appear to properly distinguish modern, outmoded, Newtonian, absolutist notions of objectivism from post-Newtonian (e.g. Einsteinian) recognitions of proper objectivity and the need to know any object in the way it discloses itself to be. Indeed, as Thomas Torrance has shown, it is faithful objectivity by which we are to know God as he has given himself to be known in Christ by the Spirit. Thus objectivity *per se* seemed to be mishandled at times.

Third, it is not clear that Treier's formative use of post-critical rationality and its far greater openness to what could be considered true (in contrast to the narrow, more critical, empirical notions of rationality associated with modernity) is used because, in fact (excuse the expression), it is more true to the nature of this issue, or because its *ad hoc* usage usefully fits Treier's direction. I think perhaps the postcritical, more holistic approach/approaches do rather parallel the multisided nature of the biblical approach to wisdom, but this was not clear. Fourth, Treier's careful weaving together of the various necessary aspects of Christian wisdom (*paideia*, *sophia*, etc., especially the *sapientia/scientia* re-integration, all under the broad notion of *phronesis*) is likewise not fully clear. Is this unity-in-distinction relation under *phronesis* (and that as needfully linked with theological interpretation) a hypothesis or proposal, something clearly espoused in Scripture (theologically interpreted), an ideal for which we disciples of Christ are to aim together as the body of Christ, or a partial reality that needs clarification for more effective pursuit? Perhaps in a sense it is all of these.

I almost had a further concern, or more an encouragement to Daniel Treier, that he ought to ground and frame his proposal more emphatically, indeed systematically, in and from that central Christian doctrine, the Trinity, thus reflecting on the perichoretic relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Godhead, and economically to and for the world in creation-redemption, as that which, in Christ and by the Spirit, the communion of saints ought to mirror as we fulfill our theological task. But then, in the last chapter, Treier made all such quite explicit. I suspect the answers to even

these concerns are already at least implicitly (if not explicitly) present in this most excellent work. It is highly recommended to all engaged directly in our common theological task.

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*Conversing with Barth*. Edited by John C. McDowell and Mike Higton. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, ix + 234 pp., \$29.95 paper.

The fourth book in the *Barth Studies* series edited by John Webster, George Hunsinger, and Hans-Anton Drewes continues the series' commitment to exploring underappreciated aspects of Barth's theology. *Conversing with Barth* is a collection of eleven essays by various American and British scholars interested in harnessing Barth's theology as a resource for contemporary theological dialogue. The book thus has a two-fold aim. Negatively, the authors seek to vitiate the popular conception that Barth illegitimately isolates his theology from other forms of discourse and is, therefore, not a useful theological conversation partner. Positively, the book attempts to demonstrate Barth's value for contemporary dialogue by drawing on his theology as a resource for interacting with a variety of issues.

In the introductory chapter Higton and McDowell set the tone for the book by presenting a convincing argument for the conversational openness of Barth's theology. Rather than viewing Barth's theological commitments as precluding significant dialogical interaction, they contend that his commitment to identifying and articulating his own theological location actually enables a more vital and significant engagement with alternate views. This combination of theological particularity and conversational openness thus serves as the model upon which the other essays in the book operate. John Webster follows with an essay on Barth's often-overlooked interaction with historical theology. Focusing largely on Barth's *Protestant Theology*, Webster demonstrates Barth's serious commitment to careful, and often generous, conversation with prior theologians. That historical theme continues in two other essays that address Barth's theology in dialogue with Hegel and the possibility of a theologically located apologetics (Graham Ward), Calvin's understanding of justification and sanctification (George Hunsinger), and the use of figural imagination by Auerbach and Dante (Mike Higton). Most of the other essays focus on placing Barth in dialogue with modern theologians—theological parallels between Barth and von Balthasar (Ben Quash), Donald MacKinnon's notion of the tragic in relation to eschatology and hope (McDowell), Robert Jensen's theological methodology, and John Howard Yoder's pacifist criticisms of Barth's views on just war (David Clough). The final two essays take a more topical approach—Barth's view of culture (Timothy Gorringer) and the ever-troublesome question of the sufficiency of Barth's pneumatology (Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.). In a very brief afterword, David Ford expresses his appreciation for this volume and its demonstration of Barth's usefulness for contemporary conversational theology.

Although the essays in the book are uniformly well written and engaging, there is some level of unevenness. The two shortest chapters in the book, those by Gorringer and Ward, are also the weakest. Gorringer's chapter makes some interesting comments about Barth's early view of culture, but ultimately this contribution is too brief (by far the shortest chapter at only thirteen pages) to be more than merely suggestive. Ward's essay usefully points to a degree of cultural openness in Barth's theology and the possibilities this presents for Barth's theology, but it unaccountably presents Barth as