

Joshua Farris and Charles Taliaferro. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*. Ashgate Research Companions. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. xi + 384 pp. \$149.95 (hbk).¹

Kevin W. Wong
Wheaton College

Just as philosophy of mind has emerged as its own unique and specialized sub-discipline within metaphysics, something similar is occurring with theological anthropology within systematic theology. The topics of these sub-disciplines have traditionally been investigated in their larger parent disciplines, but now they receive specialized and intensified focus. Thus the arrival of *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology* is timely indeed.

This volume faithfully follows the convention of its genre. It is a large collection of new essays by a variety of contributors from various disciplines and varying levels of seniority. Seeing the contributors range from the usual suspects like Joel Green, John Cooper, Oliver Crisp, and William Hasker to newly established scholars like one of the editors himself, Joshua Farris, and to up-and-coming scholars like Omar Fakhri and Audra Jenson makes this volume feel simultaneously reliable yet unafraid of taking risks with new perspectives. The essays are grouped into selective areas of investigation: methodology, integration with the sciences and issues regarding the body, models of human ontology, models of the *Imago Dei*, human freedom, sin and salvation, and Christology. Of course, there is some overlap with these sections. Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn's model ("the complex emergent developmental linguistic relational neurophysiology"—quite the mouthful!) could have easily been transplanted from the third part ("Models for Theological Anthropology") to the second part of the *Research Companion* ("Theological Anthropology, the Brain, the Body, and the Sciences"). Likewise, many of the models of the *Imago Dei* section could have easily been included in the section on ontological models. Still, the variation of topics is diverse enough for the *Research Companion* to hold general interest.

In assessing the *Research Companion*, I will not comment on every individual essay, but will instead highlight certain features of the collection as a whole that I found to be noteworthy—an admittedly arbitrary and subjective standard. I will

¹ At the time that the reviewer had received a copy, this bibliographic information was accurate. Soon after, Ashgate Publishing was acquired by Routledge. This volume is now being listed as *The Routledge Companion to Theological Anthropology* on its new publisher's site and on other retail sites, though no alterations have yet been made to the cover.

highlight five praiseworthy aspects of the *Research Companion*, then I will present a few minor shortcomings.

First, the topics the editors chose is a good mix between the familiar and the novel. We are now quite familiar with various models of human ontology, but I would hazard a guess that we are less familiar with various models of the *Imago Dei* or the intersection of Christology and theological anthropology. Here is one volume that advances previous discussions while engaging in new debates, making it a unique but not irrelevant contribution.

Second, the attempt to integrate the various disciplines for a discussion that is emphatically theological was surprisingly well-executed. Reading the list of contributors, one can see that those who practiced science were also trained theologically or philosophically. And that cross-training is evident in those essays.

Third, the *Research Companion* achieves a delicate balance between accessibility and technicality. The essays are written at rigorous levels. Yet those who are unfamiliar will not be entirely alienated. Take, for example, the section that I was most intimidated by: the sciences section. With only the occasional pause to look up certain terms or concepts, I was able to follow the main lines of the arguments within each essay of this section. Further, those portions dealing with topics with which I am already familiar still provided fresh insight or expression. For instance, Bruno Niederbacher's chapter on anthropological hylomorphism is so clear and concise that I think it could serve as a superb introduction for students unfamiliar with this kind of ontology.

Fourth, though some of these topics may appear to be well-tread territory (e.g., do we need yet another essay on free will or substance dualism?), many actually find new life by being decidedly theological. One fine example is Kevin Timpe and Audra Jenson's essay exploring how libertarian and compatibilist concepts of free will are manifested in the different theological stages of human life: pre-fall innocence, post-fall corruption, and glorification. So while there is no end to books and articles contending for libertarianism or compatibilism, Timpe and Jenson offer a new angle by addressing issues that preoccupy both the Christian specialist and non-specialist alike. Examples of such issues include whether or not I am truly free in Heaven or at the Resurrection if the option to sin is closed off to me, or what sort of freedom I might now have given that I have been corrupted by my primordial parents' sin. Another example of a familiar view getting a refreshing update is Stewart Goetz's treatment of substance dualism. We are accustomed to the claim that substance dualism is the common-sense view for contemporary Westerners (so much so that it is pejoratively labeled as 'folk psychology' by detractors). Yet, Goetz gives a spirited argument that it was even the common-sense view for the authors of Scripture, objecting against a relatively unknown presentation by the venerable N. T. Wright. While I was not ultimately persuaded by Goetz's argument, I nonetheless found his treatment of substance dualism fresh and unique for a topic that has the high potential for being standard issue.

Fifth, I am very pleased that there was an entire section devoted to the intersection of Christology and theological anthropology. Too often one is conducted in the absence of the other—a poignant complaint by Marc Cortez in the very first essay of this book. As the Christian conviction is that Jesus Christ is fully human while

remaining fully God, one would imagine that Christ would play a prominent role in theological anthropology. But alas, this has rarely been the case. So I commend this volume for its attempt at remedying that neglect. On this topic, Glenn Andrew Peoples' essay on a physicalist account of the Incarnation is particularly welcomed. This is not because I am a physicalist (I am not), but rather because there is a noticeable dearth of Christological considerations in physicalist scholarship. To my knowledge, there is only a handful of scholars who have offered an explicit physicalist account of the Incarnation (e.g. Trenton Merricks, Joungbin Lim, Kevin W. Sharpe, and Oliver Crisp—who is a self-proclaimed dualist!), while others have only hinted at such an account (e.g. Kevin Corcoran, Lynne Rudder Baker, and Andrew Lincoln). So although Peoples' essay is modest, doing little more than leveling the area and erecting a few support beams for someone else to complete the building, it is a thought-provoking contribution.

The flaws of the *Research Companion* are few, and none of them are fatal. Of immediate note is the gerrymandering of Part II of the book, the section titled "Theological Anthropology, the Brain, the Body, and the Sciences." Reading the essays of this section felt like the Sesame Street game, "Which of These Things is not Like the Other?" We first encounter an essay on evolutionary biology, then one on the cognitive sciences, then another on brain sciences, and then the final one on feminism. So, science, science, science... and feminism? This odd grouping is made all the starker when reading the introduction to that section. Here one gets the impression there that the entirety of the section is devoted exclusively to science:

As of late, the theology of human beings has evolved to incorporate the insights of the physical/natural science and social sciences. These terms should be expected given the extraordinary success in the particular scientific disciplines. Chapters in this section involve theological anthropology in light of different scientific points of view (4).

No mention of gender at all. This is no commentary about the quality of that essay by Emilie Judge-Becker and Charles Taliaferro. In fact, it is an excellent essay! Perhaps it could have been placed in Part I, on methodology, since the essay argues for feminist concerns, such as inclusivity and equality, without jettisoning traditional theological language and concepts, such as the Anselmian conception of God which some feminists have considered to be too masculine. Had the essay been placed in that section, those three essays would have read this way: Christologically-guided theological anthropology, integration between Scripture and philosophy, and then a discussion of the balance between feminism and tradition. Thus construed, we have method, method, and more method. That proposed trio would have been far more harmonious than the current awkward quartet in Part II. Ultimately, however, the placement is inconsequential to the essay's content. (Consider a parallel: The book of Ruth is just as theologically informative whether placed after the book of Judges or after the Song of Songs).

Relatedly, I wonder why there was not a more substantial section on gender and sexuality. I admit it to be poor form to critique a book for what it does not include,

as that is more indicative of the reviewer than it is about the book. However, the introduction of the *Research Companion* itself claims that the second and third sections “address foundational terrain to be used in theology: science, gender, ontology” (3). Yet I do not think that gender and sexuality were given sufficient attention compared to science and ontology to warrant the claim of the introduction. This lack is especially disappointing given need for serious discussion about gender and sexuality in our present social setting.

Although I enjoyed all of the essays and found them to be of the highest caliber, there are two weaknesses that merit special attention. While I praised Goetz’s novelty above and applaud him for engaging with that little-known presentation by Wright, I think Goetz fails to grapple with the pertinent details of Wright’s wider scholarship. For example, Goetz depicts the cultural trends of the ancient day as being dualist, yet Wright himself points out the incredible complexity, even inconsistency, of the ancient world on this issue. Ancient people were known to dine with the dead, even sharing food and drink, and the dead are portrayed as engaging in blissful activities such as riding, gaming, and gymnastics.² Since physical activities seemingly require participants to have physicality, these all-too-physical, postmortem activities indicate that the ancients did not always think of the dead as immaterial. Further, Wright points out the pervasive belief that the person ceases to be altogether upon death as evidenced by epitaphs on tombstones bearing the familiar “I wasn’t, I was, I am not, I don’t care.”³ Again, this is clearly more compatible with physicalism than it is with dualism, as the departed are thought of as ceasing to exist with the death or destruction of the body. Perhaps there is a way to interpret Wright’s evidence as consonant with dualism, but at face value it seriously challenges Goetz’s argument for an ancient common-sense dualism. Still, I am sympathetic to Goetz’s project and his method of trying to argue for a common-sense dualism, though I think Goetz’s argument could use more nuance and refinement to account for the breadth of Wright’s evidence to the contrary.

Further, although I found Peoples’s essay to be stimulating, I was disappointed with his less-than-charitable reading of William Lane Craig. Peoples contends that despite Craig’s rehabilitation efforts, Craig’s model of the Incarnation is still Apollinarianism, and so entails that Christ has a deficient human nature since Christ lacks a human mind. Yet Craig himself insists against Apollinarius that the Logos did in fact have a human mind: It is the divine mind that qualifies as being human due to self-imposed restrictions.⁴ Craig is thus a functional kenotic Christologist—that is, he takes God the Son as retaining his divine attributes but does not exercise them in the Incarnation (as opposed to ontological kenotic Christology, which takes it that God the Son relinquishes the possession of attributes normally associated with divinity). Further, Peoples alleges that Craig’s view implies that humanity necessarily exists since God the Son is the ‘archetypal man’ (335-6). But a more careful reading of what

² N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 45, 61.

³ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 34.

⁴ J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 608-11.

Craig is arguing is that the Son is the 'archetypal man' by being a Person, endowed with all that distinguishes one from being a mere animal such as rationality, morality, relationality, self-conscious subjectivity, etc.⁵ Craig especially sees this in humanity's being made in the image of God. "God himself is personal," writes Craig, "and inasmuch as we are persons we resemble him."⁶ This hardly looks like the necessity of humanity's existence unless we conflate humanity with personhood simpliciter. I do not deny that Craig's Christology has significant challenges (e.g., how is his view not Eutychian, and must Craig admit that God the Son was tempted in his divinity given that the divine mind is functioning as the human mind?), but I think Peoples could have been more charitable in rebutting Craig.

Overall, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology* is an excellent volume. While the price tag for the hardcover will detract the merely interested, the involved scholar will find this a valuable and enjoyable investment. And I was recently informed by one of the editors that a paperback version will be available soon. Farris and Taliaferro are to be commended for orchestrating this fine ensemble of scholarly work.

⁵ Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 608-9.

⁶ Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 609.