



practice of racial discrimination make it a must-read, especially for white readers. While this book can certainly speak to a larger audience, Wong's *Disordered* is a compelling introductory book on theology of race for white Christian readers who might be in the process of making sense of the Christian religion's worship of 'white Jesus' and its role in sustaining the modern racial optic. As such, this book will engage and speak differently to different groups of readers. What would it mean for white bodies to follow Jesus' new way of 'seeing and being' in this racist society? What then would it mean for black, brown, Asian and indigenous bodies to follow Jesus in this racist society? These are two different questions that must be asked and considered critically as all Christians are called to participate in God's divine *oikonomia* in order to heal today's broken world.

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David Bentley Hart, *Tradition and Apocalypse: An Essay on the Future of Christian Belief*

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Edwin Chr. van Driel

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA, USA (evandriel@pts.edu)

Christian theology does not have a coherent concept of 'tradition', David Bentley Hart claims in this essay. That is, it does not have 'a concept of tradition that can simultaneously assure us of an essential immutability in Christian confession while also offering us a credible apologia for all the transformations through which that confession has manifestly gone over the centuries' (p. 5). It is not that Christian theologians have not tried to devise such concept, albeit relatively late, as the most prominent attempts – John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1878) and Maurice Blondel's *Histoire at Dogme* (1904) – stem from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These attempts, however, failed to deliver, Hart claims, because of a fundamental conceptual error: they root the unity and coherence of the Christian tradition in the past. In a long chapter Hart argues that this is not only historically factitious, but that the criteria used to identify this tradition are untenable (pp. 43–94).

Over against the notion that the Christian tradition is rooted in the past, Hart proposes that it is rooted in the future. The continuity of tradition and doctrine are 'the product of the sense shared among believers of a still fuller, more complete, more immediate knowledge of the truth yet to be achieved ... and it is the surd of the as yet unexpressed and inexpressible ... that is the life of tradition, is capacity for the future' (pp. 103–4). Rather than an unfolding of what is *in nuce* already present in the past, Christian tradition strives for what lies beyond the horizon of what is known, and the fact that a tradition is alive and not dead is exactly expressed in the ways in which it can constantly refashion, enlarge and alter its own understanding due to apocalypse: God's final and ultimate disruption of this historical reality as the eschaton is breaking in.

As an example of tradition developing in this way, Hart discusses the emergence of Nicene theology over against 'Arian' christology. With Rowan Williams (though without naming him), Hart characterises Arius as a profoundly and inflexibly conservative theologian, driven by a desire to preserve long-established patterns of trinitarian thinking, according to which the Father dwells in inaccessible light, to which the Son is subordinated. But motivated by an eschatological vision according to which the Son joins us to the Father in deification, such that the Son himself therefore has to be consubstantial to the Father, the Nicene party discovered a deeper logic in their tradition than previously adhered to.

Hart offers us a promising and stimulating proposal, not in the least for Protestants, who have a difficult relationship with the idea of tradition. Hart's proposal allows for the kind of renewal that is at the core of the Protestant experience; in fact, it aligns in interesting ways with major moments of the development of Protestantism which have been characterised as a recovery of the apocalyptic nature of the gospel (e.g. the work of Martin Luther and Karl Barth).

At the same time, it strikes me that in its present form Hart's proposal stays at the level of an intelligently expressed intuition that cries out for significant theological elaboration. I would cite two areas in particular where this is the case. First, is the Christian tradition drawn out by God's promised eschatological future, or by *our conceptualisation* of God's eschatological future? Hart seems to say the former; but in the key example that he offers (Arius versus the Nicene party), the latter seems a more accurate characterisation. After all, the notion of divinisation is just one among several ways in which Christian theology has imagined eschatological transformation to take shape. What if one holds to a different concept of the eschaton? Hart seems to want to say that while the origins of Christianity are irreducibly diverse (and therefore wrongly identified as starting point of a rational and coherent unfolding of Christian doctrine), our eschatological future is one; and it is this eschatological unity that provides for the rational coherence of the idea of a Christian theological tradition. While I heartily agree that our future is one, our conceptualisation of that future is not. How does this fact affect Hart's proposal?

Second, Christian theology does not just believe in the future coming of God's reign; it also believes that this future already has proleptically broken into our reality and has a name and a face. Hart acknowledges this apocalypse (see p. 135), but he does not further reflect on it. The name of Jesus is virtually absent from his book. But one reason why the Christian theological tradition has not just looked forward but also looked back is that the eschaton is not just in the future, but already has begun. Newman is not all wrong when he points back and not just forward. The Christian theological tradition is not only birthed by what is beyond the boundaries of history, but also by what has appeared in flesh and blood. What does this mean for our conceptualisation of tradition?

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