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problem seriously and see what nonconsequentialist theories might offer by way of solution.

It seems to me that Christian philosophers or philosophers of religion who are interested in religious moral theory will have much to gain from consideration of Fried's book: the problems she raises are problems facing all of us in a modern society in which the problems of scarcity and risk imposition are central. It will not be open to most of us to accept aggregation full-stop as the solution to these problems, so we will need to think hard about how nonconsequentialism, including in Christian moral theory, can address them.

The God Who Trusts: A Relational Theology of Divine Faith, Hope, and Love, by Wm. Curtis Holtzen. InterVarsity Press, 2019. Pp. xv + 264. \$28.00 (paperback).

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In *The God Who Trusts*, Curtis Holtzen discusses God's essential attributes from the perspective of an open and relational theology and argues for including *trust* or *faith* as a divine attribute. He presents his thesis right at the beginning: "I would like to suggest that just as holiness, love, and relationality are great-making qualities, so too is faith . . . God trusts, hopes, believes" (1). Holtzen defends human libertarian free will with the essential power to choose between alternatives. He sees such freedom as a requirement for a genuine loving relationship between creator and creature and for the acceptance of God's grace (9–12). In accordance with *open theism*, he argues that human free will implies that God Himself faces an open future and thus is mutable and in some way in time (13–17). If God faces an open future, He cannot guarantee certain things to happen; therefore, creation involves risks.

The unquestionable strength of Holtzen's book is a clear definition of terms, which is not stipulative, but rooted in ordinary-language usage. After giving an overview of what faith means and entails (chapter 2), the book is structured around particular terms that are to be attributed to God: love (chapter 3), belief (chapter 4), trust (chapter 5), hope (chapter 6). In a final chapter entitled "Divine Faith and the Advent of Christ," Holtzen makes a quite novel excursus on Christology, on which I will specifically focus in this review.



The author is aware that there is no “univocal one-size-fits-all conceptualization” of terms like faith (31). He discusses propositional and non-propositional forms of belief and how they relate to each other (32–37), recognizing analytic discussions by Swinburne and Howard-Snyder. Holtzen puts attention on faith as trust: Trust is personal, risky, and volitional (38). What he calls “thick trust” furthermore has “moral implications and can rightly produce feelings of appreciation or disappointment” (40). The difference between belief and faith, for the author, is that faith is meritorious, while belief is involuntary (45). One issue in the chapter on faith to be disputed is the assertion that our “initial trust in God was most likely a willful act of reliance” (45); is it not the case that most people growing up in religious families have some kind of “original faith,” which is voluntarily accepted in hindsight or at some time rejected? A similar worry can be brought up regarding the author’s optimistic view that “hope is willful” because it is subject to moral scrutiny (49). Even libertarians should recognize that a great deal of human behavior, especially emotional reactions to situations, is not under direct voluntary control. Christian tradition perceives faith, love, and hope as virtues or “inclinations of the will”; this implies that we can willfully acquire or lose these virtues only in a very slow process—if at all. Holtzen concludes that faith is a relational term regarding the relationship between humans and God, which also involves God having faith in humans (59).

In the chapters on God’s love and God’s belief, Holtzen is refurbishing arguments and motives generally defended by kenoticists and open theists: Genuine love is incompatible with control, love involves self-restraint, love entails reciprocity and vulnerability (60–68). While elaborately discussing metaphors of love and faith (68–88), the author states that “[a]uthentic love means waiting, hoping, and trusting the other to freely respond” (74). When discussing the assertion that God believes certain propositions to be true or false, Holtzen shows that he has intensively studied the literature on the truth-value of future contingents (95–106). He himself favors a “non-bivalence approach” (105) combined with probabilistic predictions: God can believe things about future states of affairs when He knows that there is a high probability of these coming to pass. Later in the book, it is stated that God can even hope for things with a very low probability, although only if He knows that they are not impossible. As with faith, even more important is the non-propositional aspect of belief: believing *in* someone. This means, minimally, “I value what this or these persons can offer or become” (107). Compared to mere trust, believing in someone requires that “we know something about a person’s character or abilities” (108).

The biblical examples given for God’s belief in humans, however, may raise some concerns: narratives like the “binding of Isaac” are taken very literally by the author; he even asks whether it is possible that “God wrestled with the horror” of demanding Abraham to kill his son (111). Holtzen writes, “If God is a God of love, then such a horrific demand could only

be placed upon an individual that God believed had a character to likely rise to the occasion. God needed to know if Abraham was trustworthy, a person who feared God" (112). Does God really need to test someone's trustworthiness? Even an open theist should be able to assert that God can thoroughly evaluate everyone's character instantly. Moreover, a minor inconsistency in this chapter can be found when it is written that "God's belief in us began at creation" (119). If God is in time (cf. in detail 168–171) and if believing in someone requires that one knows something about the character of the other person, God cannot believe in anyone already at creation; God's faith and belief in us can grow or be diminished over time (120–127). But can God really evaluate the probability of free decisions? Holtzen writes that divine doubt occurs "when God knows the likelihood of some desired state is less than 50 percent" (121). One could argue that probabilities in behavior reflect the state of one's character that is already fixed or at least cannot be changed instantaneously. In such cases, however, God does not doubt, but *knows* that certain changes are not going to happen within a certain time. Moreover, Holtzen's disturbing assertion that God "now believes creation to be wicked and evil" (123) should be further explained in this context. Similarly striking is his thesis later in the book that "without hope God could only foresee wrath and destruction" (165).

In the chapter on trust, it is emphasized that God took a great but unavoidable risk in creation: "If God desires cooperation, then God cannot exist risk free" (133). In Holtzen's probabilistic framework, his discussion of a *divine covenant* is quite intriguing: if God perceives individuals or peoples with a high probability (or a lower risk, respectively) to enter into a loving relationship with Him and/or foster His salvific plan, He can choose to enter into a covenant (cf. 145), which "rests on the premise that trust is a living reality for each covenant partner" (146). The author offers better biblical interpretations than other open theists; for example, God's regretting making Saul king is interpreted as God realizing that "he could no longer trust Saul to rule Israel" (149). In summary, Holtzen argues that God aims at a relationship with His creatures which involves *mutual trust*; individuals and groups, however, must present themselves as *trustworthy* in order to be offered and enter a relationship or covenant with God. In the following chapter (162–190), it is clarified that a God who has faith must also hope, and a being who hopes must be a temporal being who successively experiences what occurs. Here, God's being "not illogical" is highlighted—God does not hope for what is logically impossible (175). It is in need of explanation that the author contrarily asserts that Christianity "has never been shy about paradox, and that is good" earlier in the book when discussing God's self-limitation (137) and similarly later concerning the cross of Christ (cf. 206). Altogether, the chapters on the divine attributes fortunately avoid paradoxical language; they are logical, well argued, and rich in practical and biblical examples.

Few open theists take the risk of discussing the implications of their model of God and their anthropology on Christological issues. In

chapter 7, the author draws some logical implications: If the relationship between God and Christ is a (perfect) relationship of faith, there must be mutual trust between God and Christ which necessarily involves ignorance and risk. The kenosis of the Logos is portrayed as an act of faith on God's side (194). It is remarkable that even Mary's and other persons' libertarian freedom is respected in Holtzen's view: "What kind of faith did it take for God to entrust Jesus to the care of a young Palestinian Jewish girl? What kind of faith did God display in having Jesus grow and develop in such an unstable time in Israel's history?" (195). According to him, God could not know at the time of the incarnation whether it would succeed: whether "humanity would respond to [Christ's] sacrificial death on its behalf" (195). On the other side, Christ's freedom in deciding whether to take up the cross is emphasized: "This free will on Jesus' part must have included the ability to not only succeed but possibly to fail in this sacrificial mission" (196). From an exegetical point of view, it is plausible to read biblical temptation narratives as "principal examples of the fuller life of Jesus" (200), possibly even as (what exegetes call) a *prolepsis* of Christ's final decision in Gethsemane (cf. 201–203; 207). The author raises very important theological questions; however, the answers given are not thoroughly convincing, or at least fall short of a detailed explanation: What Christological and trinitarian model can explain what it means to identify Christ's faith with God's faith (197)?

When confronted with the question of whether Christ could sin, Holtzen seems to reject libertarianism in favor of compatibilism in agreement with Thomas C. Oden—an inconsistent strategy most open theists adopt. Although Holtzen claims that "Jesus, like the rest of humanity, had the freedom to sin" (205), he does not understand freedom as the power to choose between opposites here: Stating that Jesus's sinlessness was "inevitable but not necessary," because Christ's freedom is identical to the freedom of the eternal Son (205), is a typical Alexandrian strategy combined with a compatibilist notion of God's freedom. This identification of "Jesus" and the "Son" of God is underlined when Holtzen uses the terms interchangeably (cf. 206). But how can an impeccable person be truly human? Suddenly, Holtzen breaks with the compatibilist strategy and seemingly returns to libertarianism: "Jesus could have cursed the Father at any point" (207). He also rejects any supernatural power of Christ (as most Antiochenes defend), because it would, according to Holtzen, eliminate both risk and faith, trust and trustworthiness (207).

The author's soteriology, outlined on pages 210 to 223, is a lot more comprehensible: Without a human response there is no reconciliation (211–212)! The cross alone does not make salvation a reality; it is only a necessary, but not a sufficient cause. What can be disputed, however, is the author's clear positioning in the theory of satisfaction: "While God has been wronged and is owed a great debt, God has, instead, chosen to forgive and justify" (212). Fortunately, by referring to the theology of open theist Clark Pinnock, the author rejects that God "requires sacrifice and

appeasement before being willing to love" (214). A striking implication of an open and relational theology is that God cannot guarantee salvation even after Jesus's death on the cross. The author remains somewhat unspecific here; I interpret the implications of his theory as such: The apostles could have run away for good. It was possible that no one cared about the gospel after Jesus's death. The existence of the church is rooted in but not necessitated by the cross, not even by the resurrection (217). God could only hope that the cross be effective (216) and a church be established (218–223). These are, in my opinion, necessary consequences of open theism—and necessary implications of a God who trusts—which need to be either acknowledged or at least actively disputed by those defending this model of God.

Holtzen's book is a very important addition to previous academic work on open theism. He fills two rather significant gaps that had been overlooked or avoided by most other authors: First, it is emphasized that a loving, risk-taking God must be a God who *believes in* and *trusts* His creatures, not only the other way. Second, the implications of a libertarian anthropology are extended to the freedom of Christ and the freedom of his early followers. As a consequence, in an open theology, God could neither guarantee that Christ would take up the cross nor that a church would be established. Possibly, and here more theological research must be done, God could not even guarantee that the requirements for an incarnation and thus for salvation would be met at a certain time in history. He could only hope for and—maybe—increase the probability of salvation and all its freedom-depending requirements to occur.

Approaching the Atonement: The Reconciling Work of Christ, by Oliver D. Crisp. InterVarsity Press, 2020. Pp. x + 198. \$22.00 (paperback).

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In this review of Oliver Crisp's *Approaching the Atonement: The Reconciling Work of Christ*, I first provide a summary of the most important goals of each chapter. I will utilize more space summarizing and engaging with elements of Crisp's discussion that set it apart from most other introductory books on the atonement. I will then explain why I believe Crisp's book to be an excellent introduction to the theology of atonement. I conclude by identifying some things that are absent from the book that those who are searching for an introduction to the atonement might have wanted to see included.

