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BOOK REVIEW

Garrett J. Deweese. *Doing Philosophy as a Christian*. Christian Worldview Integration Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011. 352 pp. Pbk. ISBN 0830828111.

As methodologically diverse philosophical-theological movements like “Analytic Theology” and “Radical Orthodoxy” continue to influence contemporary theology, there are many reservations from theologians concerning method and style. Indeed, in general, there is a widespread mutual suspicion between Christian theology and philosophy. This book is a part of the Christian Worldview Integration Series, which seeks interdisciplinary fields for Christians to develop proficient worldview analysis. Well prepared for the challenging task of integration, Garrett J. Deweese is both theologically and philosophically trained and is the current professor of the philosophy of religion and ethics at Talbot School of Theology. He brings fresh perspective to the issue by providing a way of philosophy that is biblically and holistically oriented to the task of formal philosophical analysis. He argues that Christian philosophy should be ultimately conducted for personal transformation to the image of Christ and to invite others into the Kingdom of God, and that reasoning should be within the bounds of the Christian worldview and governed “under the Lord Jesus and the Bible, the Word of God” (p. 67). The Christian worldview should determine “control beliefs”—as this is necessary in all worldviews—in areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and values. So the common disjunction between philosophy and theology is replaced with a model of interdependence, where the products of philosophy and theology cohere together in a Christian worldview. As such, Christian philosophy should be itself a means to spiritual transformation

under the Spirit.

The book is organized into four major parts. The first part (chapters 1 to 4) provides the foundations for a Christian first philosophy. The Christian worldview should govern philosophical reflection, and all reflection should be attuned for biblical wisdom, making Christ, the sage, paradigmatic. Throughout, Deweese defends the philosophical arguments that best cohere into the Christian worldview. As the title of the book suggests, Deweese *models* philosophical rigor by “doing” the work of formal analysis. He systematically introduces each subject and engages the contemporary debates within the subject. He then assesses both the philosophical merits of arguments and the theological merits for the Christian worldview with a direct engagement with Scripture. This is in itself of great value to the rapidly emerging discipline, especially with revival of popular apologetics, where method may not seem clear and is often disjointed.

The second part (chapters 5 to 8) is the engagement of major philosophical questions of metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics, testing their warrant in the Christian worldview through an assessment with Scripture. There is a first-rate introduction to the classical study of metaphysics and contemporary cosmological issues; he is, for example, skeptical of the viability of multi-verse theories. Likewise, the epistemological introduction covers important issues like methodological particularism over methodism (favoring the inductive building of the structure of justification with the inputs that are agreed to be knowledge, not initially beginning with the model of justification). He favors modest foundationalism with an emphasis on an internalist approach to justifying beliefs, which is in contrast to, though not entirely incompatible with, the popular externalism of Reformed epistemology. His approach renders an inquisitive natural theology that pervades the book, interested in refining sound, probable beliefs for the Christian worldview.

For issues of values in aesthetics and ethics, he asserts the importance of the objectivity of beauty as opposed to mere subjectivism. Character-based virtue ethics is prioritized over other classic models like deontological, utilitarian, and rule-

based priorities. The introductions and engagement in the chapters on metaphysics and epistemology are first-rate. As he humbly admits, he is out of his sphere in the chapter on aesthetics and ethics. They are not as well engaged with debates, but his pursuit represents the importance of a fully engaged worldview, answering all the important questions. This, too, represents an important challenge to the specialization effect in academia that needlessly narrows academic pursuits, and a sound approach for a fulfilled worldview requires a courageous generalist interest.

The third part (chapters 9 and 10) discusses second-order questions that assist different fields of study for an orientation of their nature and definitions. Focusing on the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of science, his selection is highly relevant to the thinking Christian. He defends substance dualism against other options like non-reductive physicalism. His approach to modern science is both sane and satisfying. The popular confusion between science and philosophy is perhaps the most embarrassing malaise of our time. Deweese offers much guidance, including a model of convergence for the debated relationship of science and religion. That is, one should understand that they ask similar and different questions and bring converging data concerning the same reality (opposed to other models like non-overlapping discourses). He offers an honest engagement with Intelligent Design, commenting on its philosophical, theological, and scientific aspects, concluding that it is, to a degree, science. He judiciously assesses alternative options like old-earth progressive creationism and theistic evolution, supporting an exegetically responsible approach to the former.

The final part (chapter 11) focuses on spiritual formation. Philosophical reflection should be seen as a means of making us biblically wise and forming better character. He opens up the discussion to include the aspects of human decisions, much in the tradition of Dallas Willard, seeing this as an opportunity to utilize philosophical clarity for a better understanding and application of the spiritual disciplines. This approach has great value, and will offer much for churches looking to understand the issues of sanctification.

Overall, Deweese's engagement is sensibly open-handed to different plausible Christian philosophical views, and generously converses with other positions. He can only be accused for his honesty in admitting his limited perspective and for being so open to other interpretations. The positions he sifts out from the live pool of options like non-cognitive approaches to ethics (i.e., emotivism and prescriptivism) are often sensible choices.

Though many theologians will find his conscientious disregard of Continental streams arrogant, he adopts an "Anglo-American" analytic style primarily to model an approach that "better equips us to get clear on our concepts and to converge on truth" (p. 42). And he does so critically, mentioning the contemporary scholarly neglect of wisdom or "living life skillfully." Analytic philosophy has been charged for its esotericism, losing its human face on important questions, and so leaving behind the public in an important activity. Deweese's biblically holistic approach is itself a response to this issue, but he has many professional and practical recommendations to re-embody this discipline. Christians interested in philosophy should conduct philosophical reflection in community, with serious attention to Christian tradition and establishing the study as a part of conscientious formation of virtue and the spiritual disciplines. His sanctified version of analytically styled philosophy adds much to the discussion and is highly recommended for anyone interested in serious philosophical engagement.

Similar to the contemporary stream of analytic theology, Deweese seeks the same methodological confines as systematic theology, appropriating from the substantive philosophical discourses like metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics with a concern for coherence to the overall Christian worldview. This is methodologically similar to classic positions in Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Reformed theologians like Calvin and Bavinck, as well as contemporary analytic theologians like Oliver Crisp, Michael Rea, and William J. Abraham

Other than a couple of minor typographical errors, the prose style is lucid, conversational and casual. He keeps a sense of humor throughout and is honest with his competency, while keeping judicious rigor. This creates a reading experience that

any Christian willing to think hard can enjoy. Above all, he is ultimately successful in the task of modeling philosophical thinking for cohering a sound Christian worldview, and it should be engaged for this merit by all thinking Christians. It is also ideal for those pursuing academic philosophy, and professors that are interested in enriching an overall pedagogy to the subject. This will make an excellent complementary text in a Christian theology/philosophy class.

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