

should one define theology? Should it include only those who have been professionally thought of as being “theologians”? Or should it also include those in the American tradition who had “a running polemic against established theologians and their theologies” (16)? Toulouse and Duke opted for the latter definition.

The word “makers” was equally problematic. After all, the concept is closely tied to influence. Whereas some thinkers influenced more people than others, their thought doesn’t make up the whole of American theology. What about the notable dissenters, outliers, and renegades from the established churches and the conventional modes of doing theology? As might be expected, the editors selected the more inclusive route.

Even the term “Christian” became a problem in the selection of candidates for inclusion in *Makers of Christian Theology in America*. Again, the editors followed the broad path. Thus the pragmatic Dewey is included along with many who have in previous time been seen as sectarian rather than Christian.

The authors are to be congratulated not only for their final roster (although one can always quibble over the value of one person’s inclusion over that of another) in terms of both breadth and balance, but also for the high-quality list of contributors to the volume. The essays themselves were generally well-written and informative.

This book will be a standard reference work for some time to come among those who have an interest in American historical theology.

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Webb, Stephen H. *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 234 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95.

What is the relationship between humans and animals? Does God’s salvation in Jesus Christ extend beyond humans to include the animal kingdom? Will our pets be in heaven? Webb tackles these types of questions and, as a result, makes an excellent contribution to the growing theological and philosophical debate concerning the relationship between humans and animals.

In Part 1, Webb outlines his own theological method, and then contrasts it to the main theological approaches that deal with the human-animal relationship. He examines the biblical approach of Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, the animal-rights philosophy of Andrew Linzey, and the ecological holism espoused by process theologians, environmentalists, and ecofeminists. Although Webb notes the strengths of each approach, he concludes that each strategy fails to adequately describe the place of animals in Christian theology.

In Part 2, Webb criticizes utilitarian and functional theories of pet-keeping, which perpetuate incorrect ideas about the order of nature and the relationship between humans and animals, and more significantly, prevent humans from seeing the “otherness” of animals. According to Webb, humans tend to treat animals, especially those animals we keep as pets, as extensions of ourselves or as beings of lesser value. Our refusal to see animals as beings with their own distinct identities allows humans to control, manipulate, and use animals for our own ends rather than the ends for which they were created.

In Part 3, Webb articulates a theology for animals. He replaces the anthropocentrism found in traditional theology with a view that values animals almost as much as humans. Armed with the idea that animals ought to be taken seriously in the theological reflection of the church, Webb sets out to redefine the meaning of Christian doctrinal theology for animals, which, of course, has interesting and profound ramifications for humans as well.

Webb acknowledges his debt to scholars such as John Cobb, Jr., Jay McDaniel, Stephen Clark, Gary Comstock, Andrew Linzey, and others who have explored the relationship between humans and animals before him. Although Webb uses these scholars extensively, he has produced a work that is "radical" in comparison, and therefore many of his fellow scholars may not always agree with him.

Webb's thesis begins with the bold assertion that the world of animals is a world of divine grace. God extends the gift of grace through Jesus Christ to the entire world, not just to humankind. Webb defines grace as "the inclusive and expansive power of God's love to create and sustain relationships of real mutuality and reciprocity" (4). Consequently, God's grace runs through all true and meaningful relationships. While classical theology has done a good job of contemplating the relationship of grace that exists between God and humans, Webb argues that a similar relationship exists between humans and animals, especially those animals we call pets. Pets and their human counterparts provide the best context in which to study the relationship of grace that exists between animals and humans precisely because pets have adapted to living in close proximity with the human world.

Using a "dialectical" methodology, Webb compares God's relationship to humans with the relationship of grace that exists between dogs and humans in order to show us that dogs act a lot like God. Like God, dogs love humans without conditions, and they give themselves to us freely. Sometimes dogs sacrifice their own lives on our behalf. Webb's point here is not to trivialize God, but to force humans to see that God's grace can be found in the oddest of relationships; and as a result, the dog-human relationship reveals clues as to how humans ought to view the world, our place in the world, and how to live in the world appropriately.

As an avid dog fan, I think Webb's argument leads us to think in the right direction about the human-animal relationship. His attempt to take animals seriously in theological reflection, making them a part of God's salvation and eschatological plan, is long overdue in Christian scholarship.

Although I appreciate Webb's emphasis on divine grace in the world and in relationships, he may be too "soft" on sin. He seems to ignore the fact that humans, even when we know better, find it extremely difficult to stop doing the wrong thing. For example, humans may know that a vegetarian diet is the most responsible form of eating among humans, but it is extremely difficult for humans to stop eating meat. Another problem I see with Webb's argument is that he comes down too hard against the rhetoric of animals' rights. As Andrew Linzey asserts in his foreword, it is difficult to secure the spiritual and moral status of animals without first using the rhetoric of rights language to establish the moral limits of human behavior toward animals (xi). The last criticism I have for Webb concerns his description of the dog-human relationship in which he tends to sentimentalize

the relationship between dogs and humans. Despite the fact that Webb devotes an entire chapter to try to avoid this criticism, he fails to take seriously the fact that dogs do not always act with grace toward humans. Sometimes dogs lash out at humans in violence without provocation. When put into the right situation, dogs can be more loyal to the pack than to humankind.

Despite some of these minor criticisms, I strongly recommend Webb's book to anyone who cares about the theological and ethical issues surrounding the human-animal relationship and to those interested in environmental studies in general.

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Witherington, Ben, III. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. 944 pp. Paper, \$50.00.

Ben Witherington, III, presents us with a massive commentary on what he perceives as one of the most puzzling, yet interesting, books of the NT. He suggests that this second volume of Luke raises as many questions as it answers. For this reason, he attempts "to bring to bear some of the fresh light that has been shed on this complex work by recent studies by scholars of ancient history, rhetoric, the classics, social developments, and other related matters, as well as dealing with various of the traditional exegetical matters" (2).

Although his purpose statement is broad and wide-ranging, the bulk of his presentation is narrowly focused. At every opportunity, Witherington attempts to demonstrate that Luke's work resembles Greek historiography in form and method, as well as in its general arrangement. It also has striking similarity to Hellenized-Jewish historiography in its overall apologetic aims and content. For Witherington, Acts is a "monographic, historical work" (18). Luke is a "serious, religious historian" (51). The purpose of Acts, therefore, is "to inform about the history of the movement, to enable Theophilus to take some pride in its course and leading figures" (379).

Witherington makes a strong case for Luke as a historian. But contrary to Witherington, I do not believe that history is what drives Luke. Luke is not primarily doing historical reflection; rather, theological considerations are the moving forces.

Again, this is not to deny historicity. For example, we may agree that the speeches in Acts have "considerable historical substance" (120) (though many will argue that the case has not been proven beyond reasonable doubt). Yet, the issues that are raised in this debate are much more easily solved if we view Luke as doing more theological redaction in a historical context.

The same is true in many other areas. I am convinced, for example, that reading Acts primarily as a theological document explains more adequately the difference between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Letters (see "Closer Look," 430-438). Luke's redaction is based on his theological focus. He is not historically driven. He uses history selectively to make his theological point.

One of my greatest concerns is that Witherington spends more time and space demonstrating that Luke was writing as a Hellenistic historian than he spends on rhetorical analysis. Since the work is subtitled "A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary,"