

(265). Further he argues that history is the object of study in which the findings of patterns is possible, but it is impossible to orchestrate them into a theory of history due to the fact that “history gives no boundaries to its subject” (271).

Finally, Bod’s history presents a more nuanced understanding of western history and the development of modernity. It was not primarily the “new scientists” such as Kepler, Galileo, or Bacon that torpedoed the Christian-Aristotelian worldview. It rather was the sum of all early modern scholarship, with philology as the most influential element. With the humanists and their manuscript hunting (144), the need for the analysis of the reliability of the sources became important, especially since many forgeries were produced. With Valla’s employment of his principles of consistency (chronological consistency, logical consistency, and linguistic consistency) the foundation for modern source criticism has been laid. The fruitfulness of this approach has led to the well-known denial of the genuineness of the *Donatio Constantini*. The use of textual criticism furthermore was utilized as a weapon against the Roman Catholic Church during the reformation time (148). Further development of the text-critical method (especially under Lachmann)—resembling to a great extent the Islamic *isnad* method (150) and earlier Chinese textual criticism—led to the rejection of Erasmus’ “textus receptus,” the reconstruction of Lucretius’ works, and the *Nibelungenlied*. Finally, philology undermined what has been accepted as biblical authority. The consequences of the philological work stimulated the development of the modern worldview even more than the new sciences. National governments until this very day use source criticism and philology in order to establish the reliability of documents.

Clearly, Bod’s *New History of the Humanities* should be read by every scholar whether he comes from or comes to the field of natural science or the humanities. I would not be surprised if this work becomes one of the epochal works of the early twenty-first century.

Andrews University

OLIVER GLANZ

Brown, Warren S., and Brad D. Strawn. *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xii + 178 pp. Paper, \$28.99.

What are the ecclesiological implications of a wholistic anthropology? Profound, according to Warren Brown, professor of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and his former student Brad Strawn, now of Southern Nazarene University. Their well-researched, succinct, and readable book offers a new perspective on Christian community. If human beings are both embodied in physical forms and embedded in the world around us, they argue—not only physically, but socially, culturally, and especially psychologically—then interpersonal connections are constitutive of our identity. When it comes to the Christian life, therefore, the church is not

separable from or secondary to personal religious experience; it is essential to it. The authors develop their thesis in three different stages.

Part I of the book sets the biblical teaching about human nature over against the dualism that became dominant in Christian thought through the influence of Augustine (who derived it from Plato) and Descartes. A dualistic anthropology mitigates against the achievement of genuine Christian community for several reasons. If the human soul is conceived along Gnostic lines as an immaterial reality distinct from the physical body, then it is natural to regard Christian spirituality as basically individual, inward, and private. On this view, the relationships Christians have with one another are only incidental to their spiritual identity. Connecting with other church members may be a part of one's spiritual life, but not essential to it. Participating with others in worship and service are matters of personal preference. If some find it helpful in their quest for personal spiritual fulfillment, well and good. If others do not, equally well and good. Within such a perspective, the authors argue, genuine Christian community is not merely elusive; it is impossible. A mere aggregate of individuals does not, and cannot, constitute the body of Christ. It can never become the sort of community envisioned in the New Testament. The church is not just a collection of people who subscribe to the same doctrines, adopt a common lifestyle, and follow more or less the same private religious activities.

To support an embodied view of the human, Brown and Strawn review the neurological evidence for localization, the fact that mental operations and emotions have their physical bases in the different parts of our brains—evidence presented earlier in such works as *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* coedited by Brown along with Nancey Murphy and H. Newton Maloney, and *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* by Nancey Murphy. Brown and Murphy are well-known advocates of “non-reductive physicalism,” according to which nothing human can exist apart from the body, yet a human being is more than a mere succession of events in the physical world.

In Part II the authors explain how embodiment accounts for the development of human persons. According to their description, the formative factors in personal development are almost exclusively interpersonal. We are what we are because we are not only embodied in physical forms but embedded in a physical world surrounded by other similarly embodied human beings. To explain how relationships shape us, the authors appeal to the theory of complex dynamical systems, which accounts for the way complex characteristics such as minds and personalities can emerge from myriad ongoing interactions involving millions of parts.

A “system,” they indicate, as distinct from a mere aggregate, consists of individual parts that function as a unit. A “dynamical” system is one that has the capacity to reorganize in response to changes in the environment, specifically in response to “catastrophes,” that is, mismatches between the system and its surroundings. And the various factors that enable a system to function *dynamically*, in the technical sense, are imitation, shared attention, attachment, and empathy, along with language and story. Physically embodied

and socially embedded in the world, the human self or person is subject to continual growth and transformation.

When Brown and Strawn bring these insights to bear on the nature and purpose of the church in the climactic section of the book (Part III), they offer some rather striking conclusions. When it comes to spiritual formation, they maintain, individual growth is a by-product of congregational growth. Since the processes of human formation in general are primarily social, spiritual growth is also social and interpersonal. An important element in spiritual growth is the development of “secure attachments,” and the necessary context for this to take place is small groups of people who spend significant time together and learn to trust one another. It cannot happen when groups are too large or when members meet together only sporadically. A mere collection of people who “swarm” at the same time and place will never become more than a loose association of the independently spiritual.

Furthermore, in a dynamical system, that is, one in which significant growth can take place, there is reciprocal interaction between the individuals and the group. A family is a good example of such a system. In a family, influence flows from the individual to the group, and from the group back to the individual. As a result of these interactions, the roles family members play will be flexible, and the group as a whole proves to be more than the sum of its individual parts. “Families and churches develop capacities that go well beyond the singular capacities of any of the individuals in the family or church” (129).

These observations have interesting implications for church size. From the study of primate communities, scientists have concluded that the size of the ideal group is related to the brain size of the species. The greater a species’ brain size, the larger the typical group its members forms. Accordingly, given the relative size of the human neocortex, the ideal number of persons who can form an effectively functioning human community is around 150, but this is too large a group for truly effective interaction. The size of an “optimally meshed network,” one in which there are at most two relational steps between each member, is fifty persons, and the size of a “totally meshed network,” one in which members have direct connections with each other, is about twelve people (137).

Brown and Strawn’s observations are both informative and provocative. They challenge a great deal of conventional thinking about the nature of Christian spirituality. If human beings are embodied and embedded, as extensive research indicates, there is something profoundly mistaken about the religious individualism that is so pervasive today. If interpersonal relationships are not incidental to our identity, but constitutive of it, then we can be fully human, and we can be fully spiritual, only in community. And if the church is to be a body in any significant sense, it will comprise relatively small communities whose members interconnect over time in profoundly personal ways.

Their observations also challenge a great deal of conventional thinking about the church, including such things as congregational size, the measure

of denominational success, and the purpose of the church's mission. If the essential purpose of the church is to cultivate significant interpersonal relationships, and this can only happen in relatively small groups, then the formation of such groups should be a high priority. In the case of large churches, those with hundreds or thousands of members, church can happen, so to speak, only with the formation of small groups, churches within the church.

Their conclusions also redirect the focus of attention when it comes to the church's mission. Some Christian traditions or organizations encourage a strong sense of global identity. They provide information about church members in various parts of the world, especially in places where the church is growing remarkably or where church members are facing serious challenges. And they emphasize the important role that official church leaders play in coordinating its various activities, clarifying its doctrines, and establishing uniform policies for the entire membership. What does not get much attention by comparison is just what these scholars maintain is vital to the church conceived as the body of Christ, namely, the development of strong relationships within local congregations. If Brown and Strawn are on the right track, something more is needed than the concept that the church is primarily a worldwide movement that is identified by a message that is conceived as a set of doctrinal convictions. A collection of individuals does not constitute the church if it is defined only by a unified organization, commonly held beliefs, and similar religious practices. Church truly exists, their observations indicate, only where there is genuine community, that is, only where there are groups of Christians who form close caring relationships.

Brown and Strawn do not provide a full-fledged ecclesiology, nor do they intend to. The interface between church and society, or between church and world, does not come up. Nor does the perplexing phenomenon of all the deeply felt and long-standing divisions within Christianity. We could go on. But what they offer as a very specific proposal, namely, that a biblically informed concept of the church must take into account the wholistic view that humans are physically embodied and socially embedded, is entirely successful.

Loma Linda University

RICHARD RICE

Clayton, Philip, and Steven Knapp. *The Predicament of Belief: Science, Philosophy and Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. x + 184 pp. Hardcover, \$32.95.

What is the appropriate relation between the relative strength of the evidence that supports a religious belief and the degree of confidence with which the belief is held? In *The Predicament of Belief* Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp develop a carefully formulated response to this persistent question. The predicament of which they speak applies to those who find the claims of Christianity problematic from the standpoint of scientific and historical