

from a variety of Old Testament sources, how might we better grasp their Christology?

Another oversight appears to be a lack of discussion of Ezekiel 1 and the “movable temple” going into exile with God’s people. How might this imagery deepen a temple theology about moving out and mission? Perhaps Beale’s earlier work remedies the matter.

Aside from questions about minor points (does “be fruitful and multiply” really refer to mission?) and a missing caution not to read Christian mission back into Old Testament texts, one wonders how Beale and Kim understand the forming of the Old Testament. Which direction is the “reworking” of the temple motif going? Is Genesis shaping later reflections on the temple and God’s presence? Or is the temple shaping understandings of creation and Eden? Perhaps an answer to such a question is impossible.

An important concern about the overall thesis of the book is the assumption that God is not already in the “outer” places of our world. Early on in the book, a diagram illustrates the similarities Beale and Kim find between Eden and earthly temples (22). This diagram, if I understand it correctly, assumes that God is not already in the “outer world.” This is why God needs humanity to reach the world. And that God enters the world through sanctuaries (49). This is not only a theological problem, but also a missional problem. Is there a danger that what missionaries share when they show up is left unevaluated? No book can do everything, but is there a need for some caution here?

Personally, I could not help but think of the Sabbath as another way to approach this important theme identified by Beale and Kim as temple theology. The Sabbath as a “sanctuary in time” (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, first published 1951) provides a rich theology for experiencing the presence of God and therefore a powerful motivation for mission to those who do not yet know a God who longs to be with us.

All could agree with Beale and Kim on the importance of Bible study, prayer, and mission to the “ends of the earth.” All can embrace the promise spoken by Jesus that immediately follows Matthew’s “great commission”: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

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Gregory A. Boyd. *Benefit of the Doubt: Breaking the Idol of Certainty*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013. 269pp. Paperback, \$16.99.

Gregory Boyd (PhD, Princeton), theologian and pastor, has written an excellent book titled *Benefit of the Doubt: Breaking the Idol of Certainty*. In my review, the bracketed numbers are page numbers from his book. Frank Viola describes it as “one of the best books ever written” (see back cover). Rachael Evens praises it as “a profoundly theological look at the important role of doubt in Christian faith” (1). Bruxy Cavey comments on its “hugely helpful

insight” on “how to leverage doubt in deepening our trust in God” (2). For Roger Olson, besides the Bible, this is the one book that all conservative Christians should read (2).

The twelve chapters of the book are helpfully organized in three sections on “False Faith”—the idea that faith is free of doubt; “True Faith”—an exposition on biblical faith; and “Exercising Faith”—biblical and personal insights on a rational and flexible faith (18). While Boyd affirms that we can be confident concerning Jesus Christ (12), he proposes the thesis that “it is simply impossible for people to be concerned that their beliefs *are true* unless they’re genuinely open to the possibility that their current beliefs *are false*” (14); therefore, faith without doubt is not only false faith but it is harmful faith (15).

The way Boyd unpacks his provocative thesis makes for a fascinating read. In Section One, Chapter 1 (“Embracing the Pain”) describes how the certainty of Boyd’s early Christian faith was shattered by doubt when he was exposed to the scientific study of evolution. Chapter 2 (“Hooked on a Feeling”) is a masterful critique of the irrational, gullible, magical, sadistic, inflexible, dangerous, and dishonest arrogance of an unexamined faith that is afraid of progressively seeking and learning more truth. Chapter 3 (“The Idol of Certainty”) argues that true worship involves loving God and may be compromised by a false worship which involves the idolatry of faith in the certainty of our beliefs.

In Section Two, Chapter 4 (“Wrestling with God”) presents the biblical relations of faith and doubt as illustrated in the experiences of Jacob and Job who manifested authentic faith in God while they wrestled and argued with Him. Chapter 5 (“Screaming at the Sky”) uses the faith struggle of Christ to introduce Boyd’s struggle back to faith through passionately shouting his anger and frustration at God. Chapter 6 (“From Legal Deals to Binding Love”) teaches the nature of true faith as going beyond belief to trust, beyond a contractual deal with God to covenantal love, and beyond viewing the Bible as only a legal code book to the good news of a covenantal relationship with God. According to Chapter 7 (“Embodied Faith”), mental assent to beliefs should be transcended by actions toward others that are informed by a trust commitment which allows for wrestling with doubt without stepping outside of our covenant with God.

In Section Three, Chapter 8 (“A Solid Center”) proposes that a faith that can survive the challenges of contemporary doubt must be centered in a historically informed relationship with Christ that leads us into the proper appreciation for the inspiration of Scripture; rather than our understanding of the inspiration of Scripture being the primary ground for our faith in Christ. Chapter 9 (“The Center of Scripture”) suggests that the supreme revelation of God in Christ is the center and norm for interpreting the Bible, the early church ecumenical rule of faith, the doctrines of different denominations, and the opinions of Christians, such as “the open view of the future” which Boyd affirms in some of his other publications. Chapter 10 (“Substantial Hope”) interprets Bible texts which seem to prohibit doubt as texts that use

hyperbole—seeming to prohibit all doubt—while actually prohibiting only the doubt of God’s covenant promises. Chapter 11 (“Stumbling on the Promises of God”) points out the danger of overlooking the hyperbolic nature and specific contexts of “biblical” promises resulting in a crisis for faith when these promises seem to be unfulfilled in the “real” world. Chapter 12 (“The Promise of the Cross”) discusses the central covenant promise concerning the character of God in whom we trust when we take up our cross, as Christ did, and face death in hope of resurrection.

I find that Boyd’s basic message in the *Benefit of the Doubt* is not only correct but also very important for the maturing of Christian faith. At the same time, there are questions that arise from what he has written that deserve critical consideration. Of course, he has addressed some of these questions elsewhere and we should not blame him for not answering every question to our complete satisfaction in a single volume. Nevertheless, here are my questions: Is there not a sense in which belief is a prerequisite to trust since we cannot trust God without beliefs about His trustworthiness (54–72)? How is the historical usefulness of Scripture for facilitating faith in Christ related to the inspiration of Scripture (159–66)? Why would the supreme revelation of God in Christ imply that some parts of the inspired Scripture revelation are less authoritative (165, 168, 175–183)? Is it true that New Testament writers have little concern for the original intended meaning of the Old Testament writers (183)? What is the relationship between the ecumenical rule of faith grounded in early church history and the Protestant principle of Scripture as the rule of faith (167–73)? Should the theological interpretation of Scripture and the scientific interpretation of nature inform each other (28–31, 158)?

Boyd’s disciplined researches in this book and elsewhere indicate to me that he is comfortable engaging questions such as those mentioned above. However, in the context of *Benefit of the Doubt*, he is more concerned to testify about how he lives by faith—a subject he reiterates in a “Concluding Word.” Rather than manipulating himself into certainty concerning his beliefs, he exercises faith by imaginatively thinking of himself living *as if* God is trustworthy. At the same time, he confesses that he has not been able to consistently think and live this way. I resonate with his testimony that: “I feel the closer I grow to Christ, the more fine-tuned my awareness of my sin becomes. . . . [Yet] I know that I *am*, by the grace of God, a child of God. . . . Correction: I don’t actually *know* this, I can’t be certain. But I am confident enough to live *as if* it’s true, with the confident *hope* that it’s true, and with a profound *longing* for the glorious day when, I trust, it will be proved true” (257). I highly recommend the reading of Boyd’s book as a tool for facilitating a realistic and resilient faith that can benefit from our inevitable struggle with doubt.