

OLD TREES, STARDUST, AND MOMENTS OF WONDER

AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS NATURALISM

Rex A. E. Hunt

Look up at the stars and not down at your feet.
Try to make sense of what you see,
and wonder about what makes the universe exist.
Be curious.

(Stephen Hawking, 1942–2018)

Stand under a big old tree and look up. Can you see the passing of time in its gnarled trunk? The network of bugs and insects burrowing into bark and foraging in leaves? Wildlife taking refuge in nests and leaf-lined hollows? Bacteria helping to nourish it with nitrogen?

Big old trees have always fascinated me. Right from the time as a young boy I learnt to climb some of their more juvenile and smaller offspring on our annual camping adventures to the Grampians in country Victoria. Now, big old trees are disappearing—fast. And their disappearance is threatening several endangered species such as the South Eastern Red-tailed Black cockatoo. Yet our very existence is rooted in the fundamental processes of trees and cockatoos and the universe itself.

...

Over the past two decades there has been a new “old” kid developing on the progressive religiosity/ethical block. It is a movement called *Religious Naturalism*. While it may be new to many, it has a long pedigree, stretching from Christian medieval times through to today where it has been preserved within the academy, within pockets of Unitarian Universalist spirituality, in sections of the reformulation of Christian theology congruent with current scientific cosmologies, and sometimes overlapping with aspects of Religious Humanism. Its pedigree reaches back many more centuries when we take into consideration indigenous peoples’ nature-centric songlines or Dreaming stories that celebrate the sacred earth as the *Kunapipi*, “Earth Mother.”

Some of today’s advocates—Jerome Stone, Loyal Rue,¹ Ursula Goodenough, Donald Crosby², to name just a few—

often describe Religious Naturalism (RN) as the “forgotten” religious alternative. Its resurgence has been helped by the establishment in 2014 of the over five-hundred-and-fifty-person online-only Religious Naturalist Association (with membership from twenty-nine countries) and the traction its resources and this communal connection offer. It has even made it on to the agenda of the Westar Institute’s Seminar on God and the Human Future.

As I begin let me declare a caveat or three.

- (i) I offer this introduction admitting I am a self-professed non-theist religious naturalist.
- (ii) My thoughts about RN and its future are cast within a so-called largely Christian society and perspective.
- (iii) When one surveys the broad scope of religious thought and practice, RN in its many varieties plays an established but small role, perhaps because “to date it has evolved as a fairly abstract intellectual program.”³

The “Lynn White” Challenge to Traditional Religion

In what has become a highly debated and frequently misunderstood lecture, professor of medieval history at Princeton University Lynn Townsend White Jr. delivered his lecture, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” in December 1966. It was published later in the journal *Science*, several months before Apollo 8 was orbiting the moon.

Citing the biblical Genesis creation story, White suggested that the Judeo-Christian theological attack on so-called pagan religion effectively stripped the natural world of any spiritual meaning. Indeed, Christianity replaced the belief that the sacred is in rivers and trees with the doctrine that the god G-o-d^a is a disembodied spirit whose true residence is in heaven, not on earth. White argued that (1) the Bible asserts humanity’s dominion over

a. Traditional theistic language about God can lead one to conclude such a supernatural entity is real, like a person, rather than a construction of human thought. Thus my usage of “the god G-o-d” is meant to alert readers: Beware! Assumptions are being challenged!

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nature and establishes a trend of anthropocentrism, and (2) Christianity makes a distinction between humanity (formed in God's image) and the rest of creation, which has no "soul" or "reason" and is thus inferior.

The impact of "orthodox" religious teaching tended to empty the biosphere of any sense of G-o-d's presence in natural things. By destroying pagan religions, White claimed, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.

In this sense the ecological crisis—global warming, irreversible ozone depletion, massive deforestation, higher than acceptable methane gas concentrations—is fundamentally a spiritual crisis, with White even indicating that Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt.

What is Religious Naturalism?

The term *Religious Naturalism* will strike some as an oxymoron because we have grown accustomed to associating *religious* with books and clericalism and big, cumbersome institutions, plus belief in *supernaturalism*, while *naturalism* often has an anti-religious, if not atheistic, perspective to it. Be that as it may, RN rests on a threefold foundation. The first is a commitment to understanding humans as enmeshed in nature. The second is a thoroughly naturalistic view of how things happen in the world—in which the natural world is all there is and nothing other than what is natural can cause events in the world—"a robust religious/spiritual life without recourse to the supernatural, whether deity, soul, or heaven."⁴ The third is an appreciation of religion with a view that nature can be a focus of religious attention.

(1) RN understands *humans* to be Earthlings made of the rarest material in the universe: stardust.

Tell me a creation story more wondrous than that of a living cell forged from the residue of exploding stars. Tell me a story of transformation more magical than that of a fish hauling out onto land and becoming amphibian, or a reptile taking to the air and becoming bird, or a mammal slipping back into the sea and becoming whale. Surely this science-based culture of all cultures can find meaning and cause for celebration in its very own cosmic creation story.⁵

The human story and the universe story are the same story. We are not encapsulated, separated, isolated beings. We are fully linked with our surroundings in time, space, matter/energy, and causality, and where the metaphor of "web" is used to describe this interrelatedness—we create the web and the web creates us. Within the relational web we are also self-creative and thereby transform the web, for better

or worse. As earth-creatures we do not live in straight lines; we truly do exist in a web, a network, a maze—from which there is no escape.

Whatever we are, the universe is. For just as the Milky Way is the universe in the form of a galaxy, and an orchid is the universe in the form of a flower,

we are the universe in the form of a human. And every time we are drawn to look up into the night sky and reflect on the awesome beauty of the universe, we are actually the universe reflecting on itself.⁶

(2) In RN's *naturalistic perspective*, the scientific "grand story" of nature, different from the biblical story and founded not on revelation but on carefully formulated theory, provides a framework for understanding what we accept as real. A central narrative, the Epic of Evolution, explains that everything in the cosmos shares a common heritage and that everything is interconnected, including us humans. We not only depend on nature and are a part of nature, we also profoundly influence the natural world of which we are a part.

What greater gift can there be than to be a species endowed with the capacity to perceive, comprehend, and align itself with the very forces that have governed our universe for more than thirteen billion years?

To wrap one's mind around the immensities of space and time is to feel awe, wonder, and humility. To see how a small planet adrift in space could have nurtured in its bosom the grand experiment that is life is to peek into Darwin's "mystery of mysteries." To test our eyes upon the landscapes of our lives and to understand how they have enabled the formation of creatures such as us is to sense a surging loyalty to the sustained vitality of these life-giving ecosystems. Evolution outlines the grand arc of cosmic events. It forms the incredible journey the world has undergone such that we improbable creatures could emerge. It informs us of the grounds of our ecological citizenship.⁷

(3) RN's *religious orientation* encompasses spiritual responses that include feelings of appreciation, gratitude, humility, reverence, and joy at the wonder of being alive. Such naturalistic wonder and awe counts as deeply spiritual.

Gathering up some characteristics of the movement as Religious Naturalism "engages the religious and moral urgencies of the present,"⁸ I would describe RN as:

- a humble religious path/movement that decentralises the human species within the infinitely broader metaphysical and aesthetic rhythms of the Universe;
- a way of knowing that reveres the wisdom of collective human experience and reason more highly than any single sacred book or tradition;

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- a quest for wisdom from wherever it may come: from the symbols, myths, and rituals of the world's diverse religious traditions, from literature and the arts, from the intricate splendours of indigenous knowledges to the mind-bending ways of the modern sciences.

For Religious Naturalism there is no "outside" of revelation; "the whole of the cosmos rings with it, from the subatomic to the interstellar, from the unicellular to the civilizational."⁹

Who is a Religious Naturalist?

The capacity of the natural world to inspire a religious response from humans has long been recognized even before the new level of stunning cinematographic visualisations as in David Attenborough's *The Blue Planet 1 & 2* and before that, Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*.^b

Thus there is no good reason to believe that taking nature to heart leaves a person with any fewer spiritual benefits than taking to heart the teachings of *supernaturalist* traditions. "If we can go to special places, built by humans, which are designated as sacred," writes Jerome Stone, surely we can go to special places, shaped naturally, which are recognized as sacred. . . . There is a strong monotheistic tradition of cutting down the sacred groves. What we need is to realise that to have a sense of sacred place is not tree worship . . . but is rather the acknowledgement of the awesome, and the overriding and the overwhelming."¹⁰

Some religious naturalists come to RN as refugees from traditional religious orientations. Others come as seekers "who are drawn by the promise of finding new layers of meaning in their experience of the natural world."¹¹ To describe religious naturalists I offer four points on the religious bit and five on the naturalist bit.

Religious naturalists:

- (i) explore more than one religious tradition;
- (ii) seek to discover the counterpoint between divergent themes within a religious tradition rather than glossing over them;
- (iii) acknowledge that such exploration needs to go beyond the official interpretations stated by any tradition, and to push, and where necessary, reconstruct boundaries;
- (iv) encourage an openness or dialogue in which both the self and the tradition is challenged to learn and to grow.

b. Sagan once predicted that a religion inspired by scientific knowledge of the universe would eventually emerge to rival the traditional faiths. Such a religion "might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths."

Religious naturalists:

- (i) hold a naturalist view of how things are in the world;
- (ii) see themselves as religious (or spiritual) in non-traditional ways, as they absorb the wonder of being alive and the order and beauty of the cosmos;
- (iii) ask "What is?" and "What matters?" questions, seeking wisdom from natural (rather than *supernatural*) sources, including science, art, literature, philosophy, and world religions;
- (iv) respect things that clearly matter, such as ecological stability and social justice;
- (v) seek to learn from and care about the natural world, including its human-kind.

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And in what might sound like the beginnings of an open definition, cell biologist Ursula Goodenough suggests that a religious naturalist

seeks to synthesise his/her interpretive, spiritual, and moral responses to the natural world into a coherent whole, a synthesis that functions as his/her version of religious naturalism, where the vocabulary, metaphors, and meanings that emerge from that search are not expected to conform to some external received credo.¹²

At-homeness in Nature

Nature and naturalism are for us today "the main game" for any progressive spirituality despite the continuing influence of old-stream "revealed" religion centred on Belief with a capital B.

If we think back over the past two centuries and recount the ways scientific knowledge has influenced our lives, what would top the list? I would suggest that that place go to the recognition that nature is constitutive of who and what we are as human beings. Given a chance, the cosmic evolution story is too compelling, too beautiful, too edifying, and too liberating to fail in captivating the imagination of a vast majority of humankind.

We are not encapsulated, separated, isolated beings. Whatever we are, the universe is.

The history of the universe is our history; we are all of us recycled stardust. . . . Our very existence is rooted in the fundamental processes of the universe itself. How can we not stand in awe before the fact of our emergence as a consequence of those same vast processes that created galaxies and suns and stars and planets?¹³

I return to the wisdom of Ursula Goodenough, who offers this powerful scenario of our at-homeness in nature.

That we possess as part of our genetic heritage an aesthetic for the natural is readily affirmed by taking a young

child for a walk in the woods or by the sea and witnessing her innate delight in all she beholds. The delight has little to do with sunsets or vistas, with order or pattern or purpose. The delight is with the particular: the ladybug crawling on the rock, the fuzzy moss, the tickly dune grass, the mucky mud by the river. Children connect with the immediate and become a part of it. The mud isn't messy, or rather, its messiness is what makes it wonderful. Children are inherently attuned to Nature.¹⁴

We need to learn to love, not just nature in general, but particular wetlands, outcrops of Bush Mahoganies, native grasses, granite mountain rocks, or red sand dunes. For me, discovering the sacred is paying careful attention to ordinary moments:

- the click-clack of two branches knocking together in the wind
- the realisation that rain is not a singular thing but made up of billions of individual drops of water, each with its own destination and timing
- the flares of a friend's passion to shape peace and justice with a new vision of "commonwealth"
- the whack of an acorn on a machinery shed roof, or the mating songs of the Green Grocer cicadas

RN and Progressive Christianity

How amenable is progressive Christianity to RN? Let me approach three subjects: (1) the god G-o-d, (2) the sage Yeshua/Jesus, and (3) ethics and morality.

(1) The god G-o-d

Twenty-first-century cosmology creates a huge "housing problem" for the god G-o-d. Challenging most G-o-d thought, past and present, religion professor Karl Peters suggests a G-o-d beyond an ever more rapidly expanding universe is no longer conceivable. But neither

is God within the universe—if God is conceived of as some kind of being, force, energy, or spiritual reality that exists alongside the physical world. The current scientific story of creation and its physicalism makes it impossible to locate God as a distinct reality within or separate from the world as known by today's science.¹⁵

The god G-o-d is not an identifiable thing "over there."

RN does not require a belief in the god G-o-d although it may include belief in G-o-d naturalistically conceived. For many religious naturalists the intellectual component of religious life takes the form of insight rather than specific beliefs. Allowing for the different meanings attached to language the "naturalism" represented by current advocates is diverse. Generally speaking they can be grouped as:

- (i) those who think of G-o-d as the totality of the universe considered religiously;
- (ii) those who conceive of G-o-d as the creative process within the universe;
- (iii) those who think of G-o-d as the sum of human ideals;
- (iv) those who see no need to use the concept or terminology of G-o-d yet can still be called religious.¹⁶

For much of the past fifty years my own progressive theological formation has been shaped by those who think of G-o-d as the ceaseless creativity within the universe. But a question niggles at me: if the word *G-o-d* adds little

to nothing to an understanding or appreciation of the creativity of the cosmos, then what is the point of using it? My response is tentative, which is why my preferred self-description is non-theist rather than atheist, the latter being associated in common "pub talk" with terrorists, murderers, and the anti-religious.

Whatever the differences among them, religious naturalists agree on the rejection of the concept of the god G-o-d who actively alters the course of natural events via episodic interventions, or acts as some kind of personal chaplain, reservations compatible with much contemporary progressive Christian thought! But the question of the existence of the god G-o-d is far from settled. "Whether or not we believe that there is something more," suggests Lutheran theologian Philip Hefner, "nature is so significant that all our beliefs must be reformulated so as to take nature into account."¹⁷

(ii) The sage Yeshua/Jesus

Judging from what little firm knowledge we have of Yeshua, he is remembered as undermining popular religious wisdom and cultural traditions, forcing his hearers to directly take a second look at what helped or hindered them make their way in the world. With an oral storyteller's imagination he was able to set people free from images and ideas and religious practices that bound them into fear and a false sense of separation from the spirit of all life.

Now none of that makes Yeshua *supematural*. Or divine. Or number 2 in a Trinity. Just human. Catholic feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson, noted for writing books that strain relations between the church hierarchy and Catholic theologians, writes,

Born of a woman . . . and the Hebrew gene pool, [he] was a creature of earth, a complex unit of minerals and fluids, an item in the carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen cycles, a moment in the biological evolution of this planet. Like all human beings, he carried within himself the signature of the supernovas and the geology and life history of the Earth.¹⁸

Whatever conclusion one might end up with about him, it must be a plausible Yeshua/Jesus and not an incredible one. And a plausible Jesus is a Palestinian Yeshua situated in his historical circumstances—in northwest Galilee, in the Roman Empire sometime between the years 26–36 CE—and “who did things and said things that a real person could have reasonably believed or done at that time.”¹⁹

(iii) Ethics and Morality

As I stated in the comments on the god G-o-d above, the moral concern of RN “is not derivative from or dependent upon *supernatural* commitments.” In the words of one contemporary religious naturalist, “human folly has created the conditions for global, systematic, immediate, and chronic threats to the integrity of natural and social systems,” and the “only adequate response to these threats is to wise up to a new means for global solidarity and cooperation.”²⁰

Rooted in the cosmological epic of evolution and eco-centric morality, RN provides a new intellectually relevant, socially plausible, and morally significant basis for global solidarity and cooperation in response to global moral challenges.

Where to Now for RN?

Because RN cuts against the grain of most Western religious traditions, it faces several challenging questions.

- Does RN seek to go down the track of becoming a new, separate religious institution?
- Is its future primarily for individual religious naturalists, gathering as an online association with little to no institutional embodiment at all?
- Could it become a subgroup grafted onto or within existing religious traditions without the baggage of the old institutions?
- Can RN sustain itself apart from religious organisations—that is, recruiting creative, largely compatible allies and secular RNs outside religious traditions for fellowship, collective enjoyment, and a stimulus to ethical/moral behaviour?

These are no idle questions, especially when one considers that many of today’s advocates have strong and meaningful backgrounds in traditional religions. RN is already in the air, but it is not yet a robust mythic tradition because the ancillary strategies are not in place.

To help shape some of those strategies, perhaps something of the spiritual vitality and expressiveness of progressive Christianity’s rituals and practices, combined with intellectual integrity,²¹ could become a template for future RN communal activities.^c Such activities would be less like worship and more like celebration.^d They would certainly not promote the passive interiority that has been cultivated

by dualistic New Age movements, detaching many from the world. Indeed, some argue that novel religious visions only become vital when grafted onto existing religious traditions with vibrant spiritual practices, ritualised enactments, and communal celebrations.²²

RN needs both the voice of the rational—to keep it from sloppy sentimentality—and the concern of the creative artist, the rich, deep, not entirely rational forms of expression shaped by metaphor, poetry, myth, and parable—to strike a chord and resonate within. Ideally the two should function “in stereo”—simultaneous but different. Any fully mature RN will have to exhibit robust expressions in each of those areas. “If RN ever hopes to be more than merely an intellectual exercise, it needs to define genuinely *religious* ways of living.”²³

Coupled with this is the ongoing challenge of publicity, or as some have said, evangelism. On the downside RN is not nearly as marketable as traditional Christianity since “one does not have the solace and comfort of a governing super mind”²⁴ who understands or intervenes on our behalf, promises perks like redemption or immortality, or pays bonuses in this life. On the upside, one does not have to fret over the doctrine of original sin ensconced “in bogus metaphysical terms,”²⁵ question why the god G-o-d allows bad things to happen to good people, or go through other intellectual gymnastics of traditional religions, especially the so-called conflicts between religion and science.

In the public sphere, debates continue between naturalism and spiritual or religious or dualistic worldviews. In a time of ecological vulnerability and dislocation of the social fabric, contemporary RN’s conceptions of and attitudes toward nature and religiosity have much to commend it, especially its willingness to entertain radically new approaches, and to explore trackless places and experiences as it engages with some of the most pressing religious and moral issues of our times. “The challenge of religious naturalism is to serve as a participant-collaborator working to enlarge our ways of thinking and living in religiously and morally responsible ways.”²⁶

RN is an emergent religious ethical orientation that engages this task and purpose in meaningful naturalistic ways.

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A loving “nana” to three grandchildren has been a volunteer teacher’s aide at the local public schools for nearly

c. As I have said in another place, “Ritual provides us with a tool to think logically, emotionally, and ecologically. During rituals we have the experience, unique in our culture, of neither *opposing* nature or *trying* to be in communion with nature; but of *finding* ourselves within nature, and that is the key to sustainable culture.” (Hunt, *Seasons and Self*, 18.)

d. Jennifer Berit Listug suggests, “What we need is the courage and context to come together, to fuse our core visions, and the insight to shed what we no longer need so that we might compost it into new life.” (Listug, “Order of the Sacred Earth,” 111.)

ten years. Reading, science, and maths are her helping specialties. But this day it is an outdoors activity: tree planting.

Down on her knees with the children, hands deep into the earth, one seven-year-old with tiny, dirty hands, looks up and says, “When I grow up I want to be a tree planter.”

Then pausing, her head cocked on one side, the seven-year-old asks,

“How do you be a tree planter?”

Before an answer could be given, the regular teacher calls, “Time! Everyone back in the classroom.”

As they walk across the oval towards the classroom and regular teaching, the nana helper says, “Well, I’m not sure how you’ll do it in the future, but today you *are* a tree planter. And you can consider yourself a tree planter for all your days on one condition.”

“What’s that?” asks the seven-year-old.

“You keep planting trees.”²⁷

In the spirit of some words from the poet W. S. Merwin:

On the last day of the world

I would want to plant a tree. **HR**

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Endnotes:

1. See Rue, “Taking Nature to Heart.”
2. See Crosby, “Religious Naturalism.”
3. Gulick, “Whither Religious Naturalism,” 318.
4. Stone, “Defining and Defending,” 7.
5. Quoted in Dowd, *Thank God*, 142.
6. Swimme & Tucker. *Journey of the Universe*, 2.
7. Braxton, “Religious Naturalism,” 332.
8. Hogue, *The Promise*, ix.
9. Hogue, “Religion Without God,” 3.

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10. Stone, "On Listening," 112.
11. Rue, "Naturalising Religion," 260.
12. Goodenough, et.al., "Bringing Religious Naturalists Together Online," 311.
13. Bumbaugh, "Vocabulary of Reverence," 8.
14. Goodenough, "Vertical and Horizontal Transcendence," 26.
15. Peters, "Christian Religious Naturalism," 238.
16. See Samuel, "Atheists Are Sometimes More Religious than Christians."
17. Hefner, "Forward," x.
18. Johnson, "Deep Incarnation."
19. Galston, *Embracing the Human Jesus*, 50.
20. Rue, *Everybody's Story*, 20–21.
21. As an example see my book *When Progressives Gather Together*.
22. Gulick, "Whither Religious Naturalism," p. 319; Rue, "Religious Naturalism," 415.

23. Steinhart, "Practices in Religious Naturalism," 341.
24. Stone, "Defining and Defending," 12.
25. Rue, "Naturalizing Religion," 264.
26. Hogue, *The Promise*, 223.
27. Story inspired by Trevien Stanger, "Tree Planter."



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Finding the Traces of Jesus *Continued from page 18*

with God and one another. The power of the symbol enables one to identify with the horizons of meaning that the stories and testimonies about Jesus disclose. In this imaginative encounter with the Bible, Christians encounter the spirit of Jesus.

Whether one interprets the living Jesus literally or symbolically is not so important as whether, in either interpretation, the living Jesus can become a model for facing the mysteries of life by encountering God's life-giving presence still active among those who trust Jesus' spirit. Christians encounter that spirit when in reverence they embrace the eternal presence of mystery; awaken to the ethos of compassion, justice, and love moving through the stories of Jesus' life and teachings; and labor together for a world that cares for all without barriers and boundaries.

In the very diversity of traces found in the New Testament, Christians can still appreciate, apprehend, and appropriate the spirit of Jesus. If they allow the texts to speak in their own unique voices and open themselves to the plurality of meanings disclosed in the different stories, Christians can encounter the rich symbolic tapestry of Jesus in the Bible and the world of meaning that the spirit of Jesus discloses. Once they recognize the plurality of stories about Jesus in the New Testament, they should be much more eager to listen to other ancient stories of Jesus that were ultimately excluded from the Christian canon. In addition, they will not simply dismiss out of hand stories from their peers who report that they "have seen Jesus" in one way or another. Finally, they should be inclined to listen sensitively to stories that are not about Jesus but are holy stories nevertheless. Oftentimes, Christians will be able to hear them as familiar to their own. Other times, they will hear them challenging Christians to listen to their stories of Jesus in different ways. In particular, Christians do their own story of Jesus an injustice if they cannot listen to their neighbors' stories that are shaped by Jewish, Muslim,

Buddhist, Hindu, Native American, and other sacred texts and traditions. **4R**

Endnotes

1. Frances J. Crosby, "Tell Me the Story of Jesus," originally published in *The Quiver of Sacred Song* by William Kirkpatrick and John Sweeney (John Hood, 1880).
2. For a thorough treatment of Paul's undisputed letters, see Arthur Dewey et al., *The Authentic Letters of Paul: A New Reading of Paul's Rhetoric and Meaning* (Polebridge, 2010), which also introduces the Scholars Version (SV) of Paul's undisputed letters to accompany the SV translation of the gospels.
3. For example, Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, eds., *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* (Westminster John Knox, 2001). This is not the place to go into a critical discussion of the authorship and provenance of the epistle. Suffice it to say for now that James has recently been the beneficiary of intentional scholarly retrieval from centuries of neglect caused by Augustinian and Protestant bias against it.
4. For a much more comprehensive discussion of how the meaning of Jesus' death has changed, including the points I make here, see Marcus Borg, "The Death of Jesus," in *Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power—And How They Can Be Restored* (HarperOne, 2007), 97–105. Borg analyzes twenty-two concepts from salvation, John 3:16, and heaven, to the Trinity, the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Prayer. Anyone wanting to see how evolving tradition influences biblical interpretation will find this book eminently helpful.
5. Peter Schmiechen in *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Eerdmans, 2005), 194–221, argues that Anselm's theory is actually not substitutionary but concedes that Anselm's work has generally and consistently been misread as such, beginning with Peter Abelard and persisting into the present, such as by Gustaf Aulén's magisterial articulation of three kinds of atonement theories in his influential *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Herbert (S.P.C.K., 1931).



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