



God and the Teaching of Theology: Divine Pedagogy in 1 Corinthians 1–4, Steven Edward Harris, University of Notre Dame Press, 2019 (ISBN 978-0-268-10521-1), x + 392 pp., hb \$65

‘God ordinarily teaches us about himself through other people’ (p. 1). So begins Steven Harris in this revised version of his Durham University thesis. This simple statement forms the foundation of the doctrine of divine pedagogy. This is the belief that the Triune God, in the divine economy, communicates the knowledge of himself to human beings in various ways throughout the history of salvation, but principally, this self-revelation occurs through the incarnation of the Son, who now after Pentecost teaches ‘invisibly through his Spirit and mediately through human teachers’ (p. 4). This doctrine has a pedigree stretching back to the late patristic era, yet the implications of divine pedagogy have largely been eclipsed in modern Protestant and Roman Catholic theological reflection. One scholar who began to bring divine pedagogy back into theological discourse was the late John Webster. Harris, following Webster’s cues, attempts a retrieval of this doctrine by examining the history of interpretation of 1 Corinthians 1–4, a scriptural unit which has traditionally been a rich mine for theological reflection on this issue. Harris has a further goal as well: to promote ecumenical dialogue between Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church by identifying the doctrine of divine pedagogy (and its implications for the teaching authority of the church) as a mutually held belief by exegetes in both traditions.

Harris begins with a lengthy introduction (twenty-four pages), which contains: first, a preliminary overview of features of the divine pedagogy; second, an evaluation of recent Protestant and Roman Catholic reflections on the doctrine; third, an overview of 1 Cor. 1–4 and the themes present therein; fourth, a discussion of methodology; and fifth, an introduction to the robust commentary tradition from which he draws (Harris uses fifty-six Greek and Latin commentators on 1 Cor. 1–4, beginning with Origen in the third century and ending with John Calvin in the sixteenth century).

In Chapter 1, Harris begins with the ultimate and authoritative source of theological instruction: the Triune God. Harris remarks, ‘All persons of the Trinity, in accordance with their own particular roles in the divine economy, reveal the wisdom of God to those he has made to find their destiny in him’ (p. 27). Reflecting the emphases of 1 Cor. 1–4, Harris underscores the rich reflection in the commentary tradition on the missions of the Son and the Spirit as divine teachers to bring the knowledge and wisdom of God to human beings.

In Chapter 2, Harris uses 1 Cor. 1:21 as a lens to focus on the divine methodology of instruction, tracing the various ways through which God the Teacher reveals his wisdom to human beings. ‘While a certain knowledge of God was possible through creation (to the Greeks) and

actual in the Law (to the Jews), it is the Incarnation, the center of God's redemptive works ... that forms the origin of the church's teaching office' (p. 68).

Chapter 3 analyzes the content and qualities of the divine pedagogy. With Paul in 1 Cor. 1–4, Harris finds the substance of God's saving wisdom in the 'foolish-looking cross of the incarnate Christ' (p. 70). This divine wisdom is the counterpoint to human wisdom, which is typically described in the commentary tradition as human philosophical endeavors or rhetorical skill. Interestingly, Harris finds three important nuances in the history of interpretation regarding the content of divine wisdom. First, some early Lutherans believed that all divine wisdom is exclusively contained in the cross. A second position (the majority Protestant view) held that 'while ... all Christian teaching [is] centered [*sic*] in the cross, ... other subjects [are] legitimate elaborations of this central teaching' (p. 89). The third view, predominantly held by patristic and medieval theologians as well as Reformation-era Roman Catholics, adopted a two-stage view of Christian teaching that reflected Christ's two natures (the less capable are taught truths about Christ's humanity, while the more mature are instructed regarding his divine nature).

Chapter 4 takes up the question of appropriate recipients (students) of the divine pedagogy. Harris summarizes the views of pre-modern commentators in five key statements. First, 'Students of the divine wisdom are those in whom the Spirit is at work revealing the things of God' (p. 106). Second, 'Those unable to understand God's revelation are ψυχικός or *animalis*' (p. 106). In other words, they are bound by a corrupt nature and thus are incapable of understanding the wisdom of God. Third, 'What is needed for theological study to properly begin, then, is conversion—new birth in the Spirit' (p. 107). Fourth, 'The believer thus is gifted by the Spirit with new cognitive powers of interpretation and discernment' (p. 107). Christians are now able to distinguish between truth and error. Fifth, the result of these new powers of discernment is that 'students even have a right to judge ... their teachers [regarding the truth]' (p. 107).

Chapter 5 deals with the position and authority of God's teachers. Harris recognizes that 'theologians are positioned as "assistants" of God's teaching, not its originators or masters' (p. 146). Rightly understood, this is a statement of privilege and honor, for while teachers of theology have no inherent authority they can claim, they have genuine, derivative authority through their participation in the 'prior divine teaching authority' (p. 147). These statements are fleshed out over the course of a long chapter (39 pages) that treats eight tightly related topics: (1) the office of teaching, (2) the gift of teaching, (3) the commissioning and empowerment of the teacher by God, (4) the authority of the Son and the Spirit as divine teachers, (5) the problem of schismatic

theological 'schools' within the church, (6) the purpose of human teachers within God's divine economy, (7) the need for verbal and heartfelt unity among the teachers of the church, and (8) the relation of human teaching (external and contingent) to divine teaching (internal and independent).

In Chapter 6, Harris addresses appropriate methods that teachers must use, as well as the criteria by which God will judge teachers 'faithful' or not. To put it simply, teachers must avoid rhetorical pomposity and instead use simple speech in order that the wisdom of God may shine through most clearly. At the same time, effective teachers require a divinely gifted knowledge of theology and a divinely gifted ability in communicating clearly so that students properly mature and grow. The need to gauge the results of teaching leads Harris to reflect on the criteria in 1 Cor. 3:13 by which God judges faithfulness. Harris argues that Paul's comments in 1 Cor. 3 probably refer to three categories of teachers: the good (those who build with precious materials), the deficient (those who build with flammable materials), and the bad (those who destroy the foundation). Harris also makes a distinction between the quality of the pedagogical act of teaching and the quality of the content being taught; both are important in order for one's teaching to be approved by God.

Rounding out the book is Chapter 7, which is a somewhat a loose assortment of topics addressing (1) the aim of teaching in the divine economy, (2) the devil's attempt to undermine the divine pedagogy, and (3) the character traits of the 'perfect' (mature) Christian. This chapter is followed by a short conclusion which not only summarizes the previous chapters but also provides some helpful suggestions for fostering ecumenical dialogue between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

This monograph is a masterful piece of scholarship in the vein of theological retrieval. The breadth of patristic, medieval, and Reformation-era literature that Harris draws upon, much of which has not been translated previously, is simply breathtaking. The value of this work is further accentuated by the clear structure that Harris employs. Although some chapters (e.g. Chapter 5) could have begun with a more explicit overview of the internal structure, the overall pattern of the chapters is logical and tight, employing remarkable consistency and refreshingly clear prose. Harris does a brilliant job of introducing a little-known doctrine to a broader audience, and his suggestions for ecumenical dialogue are all the more powerful due to his obvious command of the subject matter. Unfortunately, the publisher's decision to employ endnotes rather than footnotes obscures Harris's command of the literature in its original languages (Harris's original Durham thesis used footnotes). This inexplicable decision (especially for a scholarly monograph) was disappointing but does not negate the value of this

work, both as a model for theological retrieval and for further research on the doctrine of divine pedagogy.

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Science Without God? Rethinking the History of Scientific Naturalism, Peter Harrison and Jon H. Roberts, Oxford University Press, 2019 (ISBN 978-0-19-883458-8), xvi + 272 pp., hb £65

The contemporary consensus of the relation between science, naturalism, and progress is that there is an inherent link between those three concepts which compels the Western mind to adopt them as a given. This explanation was formulated during the Victorian Age, and it has now become the accepted narrative for understanding the basis for human progress. The argument can be stated as follows: 'modern science assumes no supernatural causes; modern science has been remarkably successful; hence, its working assumption must be correct and metaphysical naturalism is true' (p. 4). This argument represents the central idea being examined by this work since it is the basis for the legitimacy of modern science. Other related ideas are also addressed, such as 'the natural-supernatural distinction; the idea of the laws of nature; naturalist theories of the person; and the significance of naturalistic approaches in the historical and human sciences' (p. 6). The most prominent of those previous ideas is the natural-supernatural distinction. The history of science, according to this narrative, is understood as a Manichean conflict between natural and supernatural explanations – where natural explanations are good, positive, and constructive while supernatural explanations are inimical, contrary to, and undermining of human progress. The intent of this book is to counter this 'simplistic' narrative of science by providing a fuller historical account that resumes in Ancient Greece and ends with the Victorian Age and several modern social and natural sciences (p. 10). This work arrived at three general conclusions: 'First, while ideas about what is natural have changed over time, throughout Western history "natural" occurrences have more often been understood as requiring divine activity ... Second, it is not clear that science has been characterized by an ongoing competition between "supernaturalistic explanations" and "naturalistic explanations", with only the latter proving successful in the long run ... Third, and finally, these essays represent a challenge to the history of naturalism that in the nineteenth-century scientific naturalists invented for themselves,