REVIEWS

David J. Kettle, *Western Culture in Gospel Context: Towards the Conversion of the West: Theological Bearings for Mission and Spirituality*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011. Pp. xvi + 380. ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-184-3. $44.00 pb.

The author's *magnum opus Western Culture* brims with theses and discussions, apparently the fruit of a thoughtful, caring, lifelong Anglican parish ministry shaped with a view to global mission and cultural engagement.[1] As its title suggests, this book articulates a Christian theology of mission and spirituality. It offers a rich way of seeing and engaging the world, beckoning the reader to a lifetime of processing. Indeed, the book offers a lengthy course of study, if not an entire philosophy of ministry, for a church. It could well be repackaged as one smallish book and 10 pamphlets.

The book is dense and lengthy. It has taken me some effort to understand its key claims. But the main reason that most churches might not be inclined to tackle the book is the very reason Kettle writes it. Kettle argues that Western culture has domesticated the Gospel of Christ, and that this domestication has resulted from its having imbibed, along with culture at large, the defective epistemological vision of the Enlightenment's theoretical paradigm. It is a dark time in the history of Christianity, says Kettle.

Conversion to Christ—the Christian Gospel—thus is sorely misunderstood. Even for the convert, the experience is soon betrayed. The Gospel's dynamic potential for engaging and reshaping culture has been damagingly sidelined. Kettle, therefore, writes to offer a fresh account of the Gospel that intertwines integrally with a fresh epistemology—intertwines in such a way that the Gospel (knowing and being known by God) shapes epistemology (all knowing), rather than the logical inversion of epistemology shaping the Gospel.

People conversant with Polanyi's subsidiary-focal integration have therein been partially prepared to comprehend Kettle's account of the gospel.[2] In subsidiary-focal integration, the core dynamic of human knowing, the knower subsidiarily relies on clues to apprehend a focal pattern that transformatively reinterprets the clues as it binds them together in a superseding vision of reality. Coming to know the not-yet-known requires a risky, hope-born, responsible commitment; in this way knowing is supremely active. But integration turns the tables, and active becomes passive, as the knower submits to reality.

Since my first reading of Polanyi, I have felt that his account made profound sense of Christian conversion. To know God is to be known transformatively by Him. It takes risk and commitment, and it rightly involves an experience of what I call sweet terror. The Polanyian account indicates that a profound integration can radically change the significance and meaning of everything in your life. You find yourself in the same place you were, but your surroundings and your person are transformed. Kettle's proposals accord with my perception.

Kettle creatively defines the Gospel of Christ as "the approach of God as our ultimate context." *Context* might better be understood as *world*, in the Heideggerean sense. We should also connect it with the Polanyian integrative pattern. It is the reality that makes transformative sense of the clues, including me. God's reality changes—ought to change—everything. To know God, Kettle says, is to know Him knowing ourselves and our world. The from-to of subsidiary-focal integration, for Kettle, proves to be a lively two-way street. We may locate ourselves at the creaturely, proximal, pole; in grace, however, God invites us to locate ourselves at the distal pole, so to speak, to take

his world as ours (which it is most deeply): to position ourselves in his context or integration and engage the world from it. This bears on cultural engagement and mission. But do not mistakenly think this involves some dominating, tyrannizing view point. Knowing God cannot be a matter of impersonal knowledge, says Kettle. Knowing and being known by God involves us in radical submission and trust, immersion in mystery; for Jesus Christ, radical submission entailed horrific sacrifice.

Here are a couple other key motifs central to Kettle's account. First, *hospitality*. The approach of God as our ultimate context is definitively hospitable. He has welcomed and continues to welcome us, to be at home in his world. The approach of God is not a hostile takeover but an invitation to a feast—to communion. It is not oppressive; it is profoundly freeing. In this hospitable space we may become most fully ourselves and most fruitfully engaged with Him in the world and with others. But of course, to enter God's hospitable space is to find home, truly, but differently from what you might have been imagining.

Another: *breaking open*. When God approaches our context—our world, it isn't in order to fit into it, and it isn't in order to replace it. It is inevitably to break it open. Think here again of the transformative effect that an integration has on its clues, imbuing them with fresh meaning. Breaking open means transforming, taking what is there and making it more wonderfully itself. Kettle is careful to repeat that breaking open both preserves the receiving context and transforms it.[3]

Third: *signs*. The place in which God the host encounters us is the place which he breaks open. In this place we meet him, finding that this place is his and we are, and are in, his reality. That place is therein broken open. Any such "place"—whether the Eucharist, the earthly actions of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, the chemistry lab, a good book, the Holy Scriptures, a great friendship—any corner of the world or culture—has been or may prove to be such a place or sign. Experiences of beauty and goodness,

Kettle says, involve this; I would add that apprehension of truth does as well.

The Christian's life ought to be one of continual conversion in this sense, says Kettle. And like the hidden, slow, but inexorable progress of yeast leavening bread dough (here I use Jesus' picture of the kingdom), Christian conversion is ever breaking reality and culture open, graciously and hospitably.

Fourth, Kettle loves and suggests the metaphor of *sailing close-hauled*. To do this, I gather, is to point your sailboat into the wind, but slightly to the left or right of it. When you catch it, you know you have engaged reality, because you take off and skim across the water. It is an invigorating, satisfying feeling. Following Polanyi, engaging the real involves vectorial orienting; it is directional. In the ever-renewed coming of the Lord, we reorient—make continual course adjustments. We take *new bearings*—and fruitfully engage the real.

Fifth, *radical attentiveness*. This is the posture appropriate to apprehending God, or having been apprehended graciously by him. It involves ongoing, riskily trusting, openness to God. Kettle defines sin, by contrast, as *evasion* in either presumption or despair. Jesus, in his work on the cross, exhibited the ultimate refusal of evasion, underwent evasion's most horrific consequences, remaining radically open and attentive to God—and invited the most transformative breaking open of reality in his resurrection from death.

Radical attentiveness is thus humans' proper epistemic posture. But the Enlightenment's theoretical paradigm, as Kettle terms it, including its pretension to or rejection of "a God's-eye view," has entirely occluded any possibility of such a lively, personal engagement of and participation in the real. (It itself thus exhibits presumptive evasion of the approach of God.) If lived out consistently, not only God is left on the doorstep, but for everyone, reality is as well. As Polanyi said, on the theoretical paradigm, no scientific discovery could ever happen. But scientific discoveries do happen. (*Ergo*.) And to the point of the book, the

main key to redeeming the church of Christ from its domestication, to unleashing the Gospel to break open culture to the end of shalom, is fixing our epistemology to make the Gospel itself the epistemic paradigm.

This is Part I of the book, only a quarter of the book's length. Part II develops ten cultural orientations that intertwine with the West's defective epistemic vision. Once we have addressed the hermeneutical key of epistemology, says Kettle, these others offer points of entry through which the ever-renewing Gospel may hospitably break open human cultural and social contexts. The list indicates what Kettle is up to. My arrow may be read as "conversion to":

Sacred/secular →creation and new creation by God (Christian *saeculum*, a provisional, hospitable context for the secular);

Individualism/totalitarianism → community under God;

Enquiry (objective/subjective?) →attentiveness towards God;

Demonization and polarization (left/right) → divine bearings;

Consumerism → the abundance of God;

Tragic sense of life → the gospel of hope;

Personal fulfillment and spirituality → eternal life;

Rights and political correctness → God-given dignity;

Neoliberal capitalist ideology → commonweal of God;

Public facts/private values → sovereignty of God (the church is to host hospitable public space for the provisional secular domain in the name of Christ).

Each of these contains an extensive discussion and cultural engagement, meriting extended study. One need not agree wholesale with Kettle's specific stance on them to benefit from reorienting to his strategy, emulating his vision, and starting to sail close-hauled. If Kettle is right, the situation is dire, but the hope is real. As churches hear and respond, the dead may yet speak.

Esther L. Meek
longingtoknow@gmail.com

[1]In the tiny window of time between final manuscript submission and this book's publication, its author passed away. David Kettle did earlier write for *TAD* (21: 3, 27: 1, and 28:2)--we lament his passing. Additionally, he contributed to the Murray Rae collection, *Critical Conversations: Michael Polanyi and Christian Theology*.

[2]Kettle so presumes a Polanyian outlook that there are precious few actual references to Polanyi's texts. But obvious allusions to Polanyi's work include: from-to (dynamic, integrally held together; i.e., signs, involvement in mystery) (*passim*); clues (56); deeply personal dimensions of knowledge (responsiveness to God) (82); indwelling; integration; pattern (the context); (conversion as) an act of responsibility with universal intent (19); tacit commitments (of "deep culture," our orientation, our social imagination) (21); realism (the Christian faith sponsors the renewal of loving, demanding, pursuit of the real) (32, 81).

[3] Here is an example of my own to make the point. Pretend you are a piece of a1000-piece jigsaw puzzle. Perhaps you are a lovely, muted, olive green. The approach of the puzzle doer sets you in her larger context, in which who you are is broken open transformatively: you are the reflection of holly in a burnished, candlelit, ancient pewter plate, an integral part of a festive Christmas grouping.

Anik Waldow, *David Hume and the Problem of Other Minds*. London/New York: Continuum, 2009. Pp. x+206. ISBN 0-8264-3304-9. $44.95 pb.

In her book *David Hume and the Problem of Other Minds*, Anik Waldow argues that despite Hume's apparent skepticism he is capable of justifying a belief in other minds. She does this by demonstrating that, for Hume, our belief in other minds is a *natural belief* which never occasions mental irritation, and as such does not require correction through reason.

In order to establish this, Waldow begins, in chapter one, by explaining the role Hume's skepticism plays within a naturalistic project that seeks to contribute to the "advancement of knowledge" (7). At first glance Hume seems to hold that reason leads to

a skeptical destruction of our common sense beliefs (such as the existence of external objects), and undermines the possibility of knowledge. Yet, according to Waldow, Hume's purpose is instead to demonstrate the proper place of reason within inquiry. Waldow explains that, for Hume, reason is "indebted to our intuitions and natural beliefs" (37), in which the term "natural belief" is used to refer to those beliefs which cannot be established by reason but are nevertheless irresistible to the human mind (33-34). For instance, the "vulgar" espouse the natural belief, produced by the senses, that our perceptions are identical to unified external objects. On the other hand, Hume argues that reason clearly shows our perceptions to be interrupted and discontinuous, which demonstrates that they cannot be identical to a unified external object. Yet the philosophers' criticism of the naïve view of the vulgar is parasitic upon the very conception it criticizes. As Waldow points out, "it is the vulgar view that establishes sense perceptions as real objects. If we scrutinize this belief by an act of causal reasoning, we already need to have accepted the vulgar belief. Otherwise there would be nothing that reason could put to the test" (153). Thus it is the natural beliefs that provide the foundation for philosophical inquiry, and the role of skepticism is not to undermine knowledge but to "oppose speculation" (54). Waldow shows that, for Hume, the fact that a natural belief is not recommended by reason is not sufficient to show that belief is unjustified.

After discussing natural beliefs in general, Waldow moves to address our belief in other minds. She first answers how it is within a Humean framework that we can form such a belief (chapter two). Hume's "bundle" theory of mind would seem to preclude the possibility of having an idea of other minds insofar as we cannot have direct perception of another's mind (65). Yet, Waldow argues that Hume circumvents this issue with his notion of *sympathy*. This is the capacity we have to observe the behavior of another, form an idea of mental contents causing that behavior, and then convert that idea into an impression (79). Sympathy is important for Waldow because it involves attributing a mental cause to the physical actions of others (83).

What must be explained is how sympathy can allow for attributions of mental content to other's physical actions, thereby producing a general conception of mind. Waldow's answer is that "[w]hen Hume describes the mechanism of sympathy, he places the subject in a world that is inhabited by other subjects. From the very beginning it is thus assumed that there are other mind [sic] and the only thing that Hume ventures to explain are the cognitive channels through which the conception of other minds proceeds" (103). In order to explain how, through sympathy, the observation of the other's behavior can provide us with ideas about another's mental contents, we must assume that the world is in fact populated with other minds. For Waldow, this shows that quasi-Cartesian, solipsistic construal of Hume is misplaced insofar as his conception of mind implies the presence of other subjects (103).

While chapter two explains how the belief in other minds comes about, in chapter three Waldow turns to the question of whether this belief is justified. Hume, she writes, does not hold that all natural beliefs are justified since he allows that we can use reflection to recognize the flaws with these beliefs (151). The criterion of justified natural belief, according to Waldow, is that a belief does not result in any mental irritation and conflict (154). For example, Waldow invites the reader to imagine that scientists have created a sophisticated robot that acts and appears like actual humans in every respect except that the robot's laughter is followed by an outbreak of anger. In this case, we would initially observe the behavior of the robot, note the resemblance that the robot shares with us, and naturally conclude from sympathy that it has a mind. Yet, over time this initial belief would cause mental irritation when the robot acted idiosyncratically (155). Such irritation would occur because the belief that the robot had a mind would inhibit successful interaction (155), and would result in conflicting beliefs (158). Thus, as long as a natural belief promotes successful interaction and coheres with our existing body of beliefs it is not in need of correction by reflection and reason. In sum, Hume does not view reason as that which legitimizes beliefs; instead, Hume views reason "as a problem-solving instrument that needs to be consulted only in

the event of irritation and conflict" (167). Once a belief causes mental irritation, reason is warranted in setting out to correct it. However, because the belief in other minds does not engender any genuine doubt or mental irritation, there is no impetus to correct it with the use of reason (163). The belief in other minds, just as our belief in external objects, is exempt from the critique of reason so long as it coheres well with our overall body of belief, and promotes successful interaction.

Waldow's book is excellent for its clear and detailed explanation of how Hume's negative skeptical arguments can be integrated into his positive naturalistic conclusions about the formation of justified beliefs. She does a good job of placing Hume within the current philosophical literature on the problem of other minds, which makes her book of interest to more than just Hume scholars. My main criticism regards her claim that Hume believes reflection is capable of controlling and revising natural beliefs, a claim which opposes the common view, found in Kemp Smith (1949) and Gaskin (1974), that natural beliefs are irresistible (151). In favor of this interpretation, Waldow cites a passage in which Hume states that "very little reflection and philosophy is sufficient to make us perceive the fallacy" of the vulgar view of external existence (*Treatise* [hereafter *T*] 210). In my view, this passage does show that we can use reason to notice flaws in our natural beliefs, but not that reason can subvert natural beliefs. For instance, Hume states that those who deny the continued existence of external objects "maintained that opinion in words only, and were never able to bring themselves to sincerely believe it" (*T* 214). The fact that Hume thinks those who claim to have subverted the belief in external objects have done so "in words only" shows that one's cognizance (at least during short periods of reflection) of a belief's rational faults is not sufficient to eradicate it. This objection would not seemingly modify Waldow's main claim that a natural belief in other minds is justified insofar as it promotes successful interaction and is consistent with our other beliefs. However, if correct, it may entail modification of how she conceives of epistemic responsibility for natural beliefs.

Additionally, Waldow's interpretation highlights important aspects of Hume's thought which may be amenable to Polanyi's project. This may be a surprising claim, given Polanyi's explicit criticisms of Hume as one who ascribed to the method of doubt. Even though, as Polanyi states in *Personal Knowledge*, Hume "openly chose to brush aside the conclusions of his own scepticism at those points where he did not think he could honestly follow them" (PK 270), Hume did not genuinely reject his skepticism. Because he failed to recognize that putting aside skepticism required expressing his "personal beliefs," Hume's "dissent from skepticism was strictly unofficial, forming no explicit part of his philosophy" (PK 270).

Yet if Waldow is correct, then Hume's rejection of skepticism is not merely a peripheral afterthought, but instead a substantial reflection which shows that knowledge is fundamentally dependent on human subjects. Once this more nuanced understanding of Hume's views is recognized, an interesting convergence with Polanyi appears. As opposed to specifying some objective and impersonal criteria for truth, Polanyi states that "[w]e might have a better chance of achieving the purpose of epistemological reflection if we asked ourselves instead why we do believe certain statements of fact" (PK 256). Waldow's book shows that there may be interesting parallels between Hume and Polanyi on this point. As she argues, Hume is greatly concerned with identifying the faculties of human psychology that allow for the natural belief in other minds. Furthermore Hume holds that such natural beliefs, which depend upon facts about the human subject, are necessary for the functioning of reason and the "advancement of knowledge." Of course, Hume has an important difference from Polanyi insofar as he believes the elements of cognition which allow for knowledge are universally shared facts about human psychology (thereby eschewing the particularity which Polanyi believes is essential to personal knowledge). Still Waldow's book demonstrates that both Hume and Polanyi can be placed within a tradition of thought that posits reason as fundamentally dependent upon the characteristics of human subjects. My reflections on this point have been necessarily brief, but this sug-

gestion may provide fertile ground for those interested in the connection between Polanyi and Hume.[1]

Ryan Pollock
rcp170@psu.edu

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