

### 1: Toward an Alternative Theology : Sara Grant :

*Toward Alternative Theology has 5 ratings and 2 reviews. Theresa said: This is the text of the Teape Lectures (3) which Sara Grant delivered in It'.*

Philosophy and Christian Theology In the history of Christian theology, philosophy has sometimes been seen as a natural complement to theological reflection, whereas at other times practitioners of the two disciplines have regarded each other as mortal enemies. Some early Christian thinkers such as Tertullian were of the view that any intrusion of secular philosophical reason into theological reflection was out of order. Thus, even if certain theological claims seemed to fly in the face of the standards of reasoning defended by philosophers, the religious believer should not flinch. Other early Christian thinkers, such as St. Augustine of Hippo, argued that philosophical reflection complemented theology, but only when these philosophical reflections were firmly grounded in a prior intellectual commitment to the underlying truth of the Christian faith. Thus, the legitimacy of philosophy was derived from the legitimacy of the underlying faith commitments. It was during this time however that St. Thomas Aquinas offered yet another model for the relationship between philosophy and theology. According to the Thomistic model, philosophy and theology are distinct enterprises, differing primarily in their intellectual starting points. Philosophy takes as its data the deliverances of our natural mental faculties: These data can be accepted on the basis of the reliability of our natural faculties with respect to the natural world. Theology, on the other hand takes as its starting point the divine revelations contained in the Bible. These data can be accepted on the basis of divine authority, in a way analogous to the way in which we accept, for example, the claims made by a physics professor about the basic facts of physics. Since this way of thinking about philosophy and theology sharply demarcates the disciplines, it is possible in principle that the conclusions reached by one might be contradicted by the other. According to advocates of this model, however, any such conflict must be merely apparent. Since God both created the world which is accessible to philosophy and revealed the texts accessible to theologians, the claims yielded by one cannot conflict with the claims yielded by another unless the philosopher or theologian has made some prior error. Since the deliverances of the two disciplines must then coincide, philosophy can be put to the service of theology and perhaps vice-versa. How might philosophy play this complementary role? First, philosophical reasoning might persuade some who do not accept the authority of purported divine revelation of the claims contained in religious texts. Thus, an atheist who is unwilling to accept the authority of religious texts might come to believe that God exists on the basis of purely philosophical arguments. Second, distinctively philosophical techniques might be brought to bear in helping the theologian clear up imprecise or ambiguous theological claims. Thus, for example, theology might provide us with information sufficient to conclude that Jesus Christ was a single person with two natures, one human and one divine, but leave us in the dark about exactly how this relationship between divine and human natures is to be understood. The philosopher can provide some assistance here, since, among other things, he or she can help the theologian discern which models are logically inconsistent and thus not viable candidates for understanding the relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ. For most of the twentieth century, the vast majority of English language philosophyâ€”including philosophy of religionâ€”went on without much interaction with theology at all. While there are a number of complex reasons for this divorce, three are especially important. The first reason is that atheism was the predominant opinion among English language philosophers throughout much of that century. A second, quite related reason is that philosophers in the twentieth century regarded theological language as either meaningless, or, at best, subject to scrutiny only insofar as that language had a bearing on religious practice. The former belief is. Since much theological language, for example, language describing the doctrine of the Trinity, lacks empirical content, such language must be meaningless. The latter belief, inspired by Wittgenstein, holds that language itself only has meaning in specific practical contexts, and thus that religious language was not aiming to express truths about the world which could be subjected to objective philosophical scrutiny. In the last forty years, however, philosophers of religion have returned to the business of theorizing about many of the traditional doctrines of Christianity and have begun to apply the tools of

contemporary philosophy in ways that are somewhat more eclectic than what was envisioned under the Augustinian or Thomistic models. In keeping with the recent academic trend, contemporary philosophers of religion have been unwilling to maintain hard and fast distinctions between the two disciplines. As a result, it is often difficult in reading recent work to distinguish what the philosophers are doing from what the theologians and philosophers of past centuries regarded as strictly within the theological domain. In what follows, we provide a brief survey of work on the three topics in contemporary philosophical theology that "aside from general issues concerning the nature, attributes, and providence of God" have received the most attention from philosophers of religion over the past quarter century. We thus leave aside such staple topics in philosophy of religion as traditional arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, the epistemology of religious belief, the nature and function of religious language. We also leave aside a variety of important but less-discussed topics in philosophical theology, such as the nature of divine revelation and scripture, original sin, the authority of tradition, and the like.

Trinity From the beginning, Christians have affirmed the claim that there is one God, and three persons "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" each of whom is God. Although we profess three persons we do not profess three substances but one substance and three persons. If we are asked about the individual Person, we must answer that he is God. No doubt this is an understatement. Indeed, it looks like we can derive a contradiction from the doctrine, as follows: Either way, however, we have a problem. If the Father is identical to God and the Son is identical to God, then by the transitivity of identity the Father is identical to the Son, contrary to the doctrine. On the other hand, if the Father is divine and the Son is divine and the Father is distinct from the Son, then there are at least two divine persons. Either way, then, the doctrine seems incoherent. At first blush, it might seem rather easy to solve. The answer, in short, is that the Christian tradition has set boundaries on how the doctrine is to be explicated, and these sorts of models fall afoul of those boundaries. Modalism confounds the persons. It is the view that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mere manifestations, modes, or roles played by the one and only God. Ruling out modalism thus rules out analogies like the Superman analogy just given. Tritheism divides the substance. It is a bit tricky because controversial to say exactly what tritheism, or polytheism more generally, is. For discussion, see Rea. But whatever else it might be, it is certainly implied by the view that there are three distinct divine substances. Assuming the items in your shopping cart count as multiple distinct substances, then, the problem with the shopping cart analogy is that it suggests polytheism. In what follows, we will consider several more sophisticated models of the trinity: These do not exhaust the field of possible solutions, but they are the ones to which the most attention has been paid in the recent literature. For more detailed surveys, see Rea and, at book length, McCall. This suggests the analogy of a family, or, more generally, a society. Thus, the persons of the trinity might be thought of as one in just the way that the members of a family are one: Since there is no contradiction in thinking of a family as three and one in this way, this analogy appears to solve the problem. Those who attempt to understand the trinity primarily in terms of this analogy are typically called social trinitarians. This approach has been controversially associated with the Eastern Church, tracing its roots to the Cappadocian Fathers "Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory Nazianzen. Against this practice, see especially Ayres and Barnes b. Consider, for example, the children of Chronos in Greek mythology, of whom Zeus was the liberator. These children included Zeus, Hera, Ares, and a variety of other Olympian deities "all members of a divine family. Nobody, however, thinks that the fact that Zeus and his siblings nor even, say, Zeus and his begotten daughter Athena count in any meaningful sense as one god. For this reason, social trinitarians are often quick to note that there are other relations that hold between members of the trinity that contribute, along with their being members of a single divine family, to their counting as one God. Richard Swinburne, for example, has defended a version of this view according to which the unity among the divine persons is secured by several facts in conjunction with one another. First, the divine persons share all of the essential characteristics of divinity: Second, unlike the deities of familiar polytheistic systems, their wills are necessarily harmonious, so that they can never come into conflict with one another. Third, they stand in a relationship of perfect love and necessary mutual interdependence. On this sort of view, there is one God because the community of divine persons is so closely interconnected that, although they are three distinct persons, they nonetheless function as if they were a single

entity. One might think that if we were to consider a group of three human persons who exhibited these characteristics of necessary unity, volitional harmony, and love, it would likewise be hard to regard them as entirely distinct. And that is, of course, just the intuition that the view aims to elicit. Still, many regard the sort of unity just described as not strong enough to secure a respectable monotheism. Thus, some social trinitarians have attempted to give other accounts of what unifies the divine persons. Perhaps the most popular such account is the part-whole model. Moreland and William Lane Craig have argued that the relation between the persons of the Trinity can be thought of as analogous to the relation we might suppose to obtain between the three dog-like beings that compose Cerberus, the mythical guardian of the underworld. One might say that each of the three heads—or each of the three souls associated with the heads—is a fully canine individual, and yet there is only one being, Cerberus, with the full canine nature. At this point, therefore, it is natural to wonder what exactly it is that makes both proposals count as versions of social trinitarianism. Unfortunately, this is a question to which self-proclaimed social trinitarians have not given a very clear answer. However, this answer is less than fully illuminating. What is needed is some characterization of the common core underlying the diverse views that are generally regarded as versions of social trinitarianism. The following two theses seem to capture that core: One of the more serious problems is that it is inconsistent with the Nicene Creed. Likewise, the Creed says that Father and Son are consubstantial. This claim is absolutely central to the doctrine of the trinity, and the notion of consubstantiality lay at the very heart of the debates in the 4th Century C. But the three souls, or centers of consciousness, of the heads of Cerberus are not in any sense consubstantial. Other versions of the part-whole model raise further worries. A cube, for example, is a seventh thing in addition to its six sides; but we do not want to say that God is a fourth thing in addition to its three parts. The reason is that saying this forces a dilemma: Either God is a person, or God is not. If the former, then we have a quaternity rather than a trinity. If the latter, then we seem to commit ourselves to claims that are decidedly anti-theistic: Bad news either way, then. Thus, many are motivated to seek other models. Historically, the use of psychological analogies is especially associated with thinkers in the Latin-speaking West, particularly from Augustine onward. Augustine himself suggested several important analogies, as did others in the medieval Latin tradition. However, since our focus in this article is on more contemporary models, we will pass over these here and focus instead on two more recently developed psychological analogies.

### 2: Mornings with Crosby: Toward a Deeper Theology of Stewardship

*The Teape lectures, given in Cambridge in were subsequently published as a book, *Toward an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian*, from which the title of this article is taken as an apt summary of Grant's work.*

This is the one topic pastors hate preaching on and lay members loathe hearing about. Recently, I led a workshop on stewardship at a small church conference. One of the participants in that workshop said that the members of his church have verbally indicated that they do not want him to preach on stewardship. Where does this fearfulness come from? Why do we think the faithful use of money and possessions should be off the table in preaching and teaching? Or is the faithful use of money not a part of following Jesus? While there are many ways of answering those questions, one of the reasons for this fear is a lack of depth in our theology. We have not devoted enough attention to a theology of stewardship. Jesus knew that these things could become idols in our lives; they can serve as roadblocks in our discipleship. So what is your theology of stewardship? The assumption behind this question: As you think about your story, let me briefly share my story. I graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in June of 1980. At that time, I was merely learning this life of ministry. Those early months, especially as we were approaching the budgeting and pledging season, I thought naïvely that things would simply fall into place. They were a small church and I falsely assumed that they could accomplish the budgeting without me. As you might guess, this was not an effective strategy. We were far short of our budgetary needs for the projected year and there was some consternation on the Session, our governing board. I promised I would do better the following year. The following year buzzed by and before I knew it we were into September once again. It was time to talk stewardship and I was unprepared. Going to the local Christian bookstore, I found a resource that was workable. What I liked about this resource was the use of a day devotional as well as the unassuming way it approached stewardship, which is to say it avoided it. It might have decreased, actually. Towards the end of our financial secretary came to me with some bad news: Forget about being able to make it five more years, we were facing the end of ministry in that place. Immediately I contacted a colleague who worked for Pittsburgh Presbytery. After getting some basic information, my colleague set me on a clear path: In addition, knowing my lack of comfort and knowledge in this realm, the team paid for me to attend a Stewardship Kaleidoscope conference offered by the denomination in Indianapolis. It changed my life in ministry. There I learned about new approaches in the world of stewardship. I was able to see what we were doing wrong. Engaging in various workshops and lectures I began to see the field of ministry differently in terms of stewardship. After that event I began preaching and teaching about stewardship. I got my own financial house and theology on stewardship in order; my wife and I were not faithful givers and we certainly were not tithing. We changed that practice. There are twin themes that appear in scripture that are related to our thinking concerning stewardship: While a number of scripture passages are pertinent to this topic, I want to lift a few that have shaped my thinking. Dominion is not about ruthless lordship but is related to cultivation. The land belongs to God; we are but tenants. Jesus begins an extensive section on prayer, reminding his disciples that their Father in heaven knows their needs. Jesus tells the parable of the Rich Fool and concludes with the reminder that we should be rich towards God. Within these scripture readings we see that we worship a God who is generous and who offers abundance. We recognize that everything we have is everything! Will we hoard it for ourselves or will we live generously dare I say, liberally? Can we imagine abundance in our lives? At this point, we might be on comfortable terrain. This is familiar territory. By contrast, something that we are often uncomfortable with thinking about in terms of stewardship is fundraising; this especially applies to pastors in the life of the church. Fundraising has become, in many ways, a pejorative word in the life of the Christian faith. I know a pastor who refuses to use it. It was something he drilled in to the minds of his church. In many circles within the Christian worldview, fundraising is a dirty or untheological word. But Henri Nouwen, a widely respected thinker, writer, and priest offers an alternative way of thinking about fundraising in the short little work, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*. It is a way of announcing vision and inviting other people into our mission: Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer people the opportunity to

participate with us in our vision and mission. Upper Room Books, , Fundraising is not begging nor is it directed to a singular project. Rather, fundraising is a way of inviting people to participate in the mission of the church, to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ through the church. Because we approach potential donors in the Spirit of Christ, when we ask them for money we can do so with an attitude and in an atmosphere of confident freedom. Asking people for money is giving them the opportunity to put their resources at the disposal of the kingdom. To raise funds is to offer the chance to invest what they have in the work of God We ask in the name of Jesus for the sake of the ministry of Jesus as an investment in the kingdom that belongs to Jesus. If we trust in a God who is abundant and generous, who has revealed that abundance and generosity through the beauty of creation and principally in coming among us in, through, and as Jesus Christ then there should be no fear in inviting others to "put their resources at the disposal of the kingdom. If you are reading this and preparing for a stewardship campaign, I would invite you to think deeply about your theology of stewardship. Do the people entrusted to your care understand where you are coming from? Is your message simply about "keeping the lights on and the doors open" or are you inviting them into a deeper way of living as a disciple? As a pastor I recognize that I have been entrusted with a great responsibility. Sometimes, it is easy to let talk of money and possessions go to my head. It is easy to forget about the realities that exist in the lives of others. And so there must always be an element of grace when speaking about stewardship as well as prayerfulness. Nouwen reminds me that prayer is absolutely indispensable when speaking about stewardship. Prayer can embolden us to trust in Jesus and his call to worry about nothing. Prayer enlivens our faith to see abundance and generosity in new ways and places. Prayer is radical because it uncovers the deepest roots of our identity in God.

### 3: Toward a Theology of Creative Worms

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Even as that post was in production, the editorial team here pushed back a little, wondering how the idea might relate to non-human created things. Bethany responds to that concern today. This one is a fruitful idea to explore. I wrote in my last post that God works with creatures to finish the project of creation: When God invites us to act, God waits with full attention, giving us the space and time to choose our actions—and not only us, but the whole spectrum of living creatures. The whole of creation is an improvisational drama with a billion times a billion players. This line proved more controversial than I expected. The freedom of humans to act, to participate with God, was acceptable. Yet there was a hesitancy to accept without qualification the idea that other non-human creatures share in that freedom. It is a reasonable objection. The vast majority of philosophical debates center only on human moral freewill, as if moral choices were the only important type of choices we can make in terms of changing the world. But there are non-moral choices that can change the world as well. For many centuries, natural philosophers like Descartes and scientists like T. Huxley defended the idea that other animals made no choice of any kind; they they were no more than automata. Their behaviours were thought to be nothing more than complex and involuntary reflexes: Experiments showed that very simple avoidance behaviours in frogs and rats still happened when the brain was disconnected from the body, and this reinforced belief in the automatic nature of animal action. However new scientific discoveries and further theological reflection suggest it might be time to reinvestigate these long-held positions. First, let us look at the science. While there is no question that reflexes are automatic and involuntary, there is no reason to assume that all non-human animal behaviour is reducible to reflex. Consider the killdeer bird. These birds lay their eggs in nests on the ground where they are vulnerable to different kinds of threat. If successful, the bird slowly lures the predator away from the nest. If the danger is instead from a passing herbivore that might be in danger of trampling the nest, the bird takes an opposite tack. She stands right next to the nest and makes herself as big and conspicuous as possible to ward away careless hooves or feet. The bird has to make something like a decision between strategies depending on the assessment of threat. This sort of behaviour is not easily understood as a reflex. It might be called instinctive usually a word reserved for behaviour that does not need to be learned, but this is quite different from the sorts of brain-divorced avoidance movements that first spawned the idea of automatic behavior. It is the bird herself who determines which alternative to take. The same is true of animal learning. Tool use and problem solving are simply not amenable to the argument that animals have no inner conscious life. Milk was regularly delivered to doors in glass bottles with a tinfoil or cardboard cap. But an enterprising bird near Southampton discovered that the top could be removed to provide a tasty treat. Once one bird discovered the possibility of opening milk bottles, the trend caught on faster than a cat video on Facebook. All across the country frustrated people found their morning milk deliveries plundered by birds. The fad was not limited to one species of bird or one method of removing the cap one observer saw a bird use two different techniques in a matter of minutes. All it seemed to require was for birds to understand that milk bottles could provide food, and they found various ways to access it. The problem became so bad that morning milk deliveries came to an end: Now, many avian generations later, the tradition of delivering milk bottles has been taken up again. A friend of mine in London has had milk delivered to her door for 5 years, and not once have the bottles been opened by feathered friends. The learning that was once widespread across British birds has been forgotten. If the bird learning had been instinctive or somehow reflexive, the behaviour would not drop out after just a few generations. Instead, the incidents point toward bird learning being a genuine choice made amongst a variety of options: In another example, the macaque monkeys of Koshima were fed sweet potatoes on the beaches so that primatologists could more easily study their behaviour. Soon all the other monkeys did the same. Then it was found that washing in the sea instead of the stream seasoned the potatoes with salt. A second problem was also solved by the innovative Imo. The scientists would also leave piles of wheat out for the monkeys to eat. Inevitably, sand mixed with the

wheat, leaving the monkeys with the long and boring task of sorting out sand from wheat. One day Imo scooped up the whole pile and threw it into the sea water. The sand sunk immediately, leaving Imo to collect the floating wheat. Soon, others did the same. There was one more unintended consequence: Swimming, diving, and playing in the water became a common pastime and endured long beyond the point when scientists stopped feeding the macaques. Fifty years later, the macaques still visit the beaches to wash potatoes and play in the water. The change in behaviour has also opened up new food sources: One small innovation by one individual set off a chain of behavioural changes in an entire population that could in turn influence ecological and evolutionary relationships. Slime molds solve networking problems in similar ways to the best human engineers. Plants use networks to communicate with each other that work in ways uncannily similar to neural networks. The more we look, the more we find hints and signs that intelligence is all around us. While plants and other animals may not have moral freewill, it does seem that they have the ability to learn and innovate on their actions. Insofar as behavioural innovation and behavioural plasticity change the world around the innovating organism, then the door is opened theologically to the possibility that we humans are not the only creatures who have a part in creating the world with God. Innovation by innovation, small changes eventually take similar evolutionary pathways into vastly divergent ways, leading to wondrous new diversity. What does this mean theologically? First, it means that God is more generous with power than we usually imagine. The much-beloved project of creation is not a jealously guarded activity. Humans have a unique relationship with God, but they do not have a monopoly on relationship with God. God was not simply waiting for humans to arrive before enjoying creation. Psalm exhorts the entire living and non-living cosmos to praise God: Though we cannot understand them as consciously praising God, we can understand them as praising God through all their capacities of living and being.

#### 4: Toward Alternative Theology: Confessions Non Dualist Christian by Sara Grant

*Toward an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian is the spiritual and intellectual autobiography of Sara Grant, a Roman Catholic Scottish nun, who, until her death in , established herself as one of the leading twentieth-century figures in Indian Christian theology and the contemplative life.*

#### 5: Philosophy and Christian Theology (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

*Ganeri, Martin Toward an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-dualist Christian: Sara Grant RCSJ's contribution to Catholic Theological and Spiritual Encounter with Hinduism.*

#### 6: Toward a Theology of Santa Claus | Matrika Press

*Toward an Alternative Theology by Sara Grant, , available at Book Depository with free delivery worldwide.*

#### 7: Sara Grant - Wikipedia

*Toward an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian is the spiritual and intellectual autobiography of Sara Grant, a Roman Catholic Scottish nun, who, until her death in*

#### 8: Sara Grant (Author of Toward Alternative Theology)

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#### 9: "The Dark Side of Healing: Toward a Theology of Well-Being." • " Shane Clifton

## TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE THEOLOGY pdf

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