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For Christians, God ‘emptied Himself’ (Phil. 2:5-11) to become incarnate in the human person of His Son Jesus. Jesus, in turn, preached and lived a ministry, suffered and died on a cross for the forgiveness of human sins, and was resurrected to return to His Father. Is this story, embraced in its basics by more than two billion people, at all relevant to philosophy? The contributors to this volume all think that it is.

How so? The essays exhibit a lot of diversity. Editor Paul Moser has helpfully organized them into three parts: ‘Jesus in His First-Century Thought Context’, ‘Jesus in Medieval Philosophy’, and ‘Jesus in Contemporary Philosophy’, and has usefully introduced them (18-23). The authors are a distinguished group of philosophers, theologians, and biblical scholars representing a variety of different Christian faith traditions. There are essays on the Jewish background to Jesus, the influence of Jesus on St. Paul, Augustine, and Aquinas, respectively, and Jesus and the meaning of life. Not surprisingly, most of them presuppose a Christian perspective in discussing the importance of Jesus to philosophy. I think it a stretch to construe Jesus as a metaphysician (74-9) or an epistemologist (149-168). To be sure, he does make a radical ontological claim—that He is the incarnate Son of God, the fundamental reality—and He does claim to know what His Father wants of us in ways that we are incapable of fully understanding; but one finds no systematic metaphysics in the gospel message (how, e.g., can Jesus be *both* divine *and* human) or any account of how Jesus’ way of knowing surpasses ours (except that He is God incarnate). Still, I do think that aspects of his teaching and life are of philosophical relevance and plausibly transcend a Christian perspective. Allow me in this review to consider one of them: Jesus as moral exemplar, which is nicely introduced by Luke Timothy Johnson in a section of his essay, ‘The Jesus of the Gospels and Philosophy’ (68-74). (Lest I be misunderstood, I am not claiming that Jesus’s moral exemplarism *was not* rooted in his religious message. Surely, it was [see 195]. I wish to suggest only that his moral teaching need not be bound to that message.)

How might Jesus be seen as a moral exemplar—by secular as well as religious people? In many ways. For example, in the care and compassion for the disadvantaged—the poor, widows and orphans, and foreigners—that is expressed in all the synoptic gospels. Jesus’ ministry to the disadvantaged is a worthy feature of his ethic of love, which may (I think should) be embraced by religious and non-religious alike. It asks us, for example, to try to see how things look to a poor person, and when contributing to the common good to attend to the needs of the least well off before turning our attention to

the better off. It is also a call to empowerment and liberation. Another way is reflected in the place of forgiveness in Jesus' ethic of love. I will focus on that, since forgiveness certainly should be of interest to anyone interested in moral philosophy. In so doing, I rely on Nicholas Wolterstorff's provocative essay on the subject (194-214).

Wolterstorff weaves his essay around two assertions by Hannah Arendt: first, that forgiveness plays a central role in human action by undoing the seemingly irreversible past, and second, that Jesus was the 'discoverer of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs' (195; citing Arendt's *The Human Condition*, Garden City, NY; Doubleday, 1959, 212-15). As to the first assertion, Wolterstorff argues that Arendt is mistaken in her view of what forgiveness accomplishes. Instead of 'undoing' the past, forgiveness, when properly conceived, reconciles the victim with the wrongdoer by bridging the gap that the evil committed by the wrongdoer created. This is achieved through an act of mercy and love by the victim, not through an act of punishment. But to forgive is *not* to forget. Rather, forgiving *overcomes* the anger and resentment toward the person who committed evil and *foregoes* any claim to retribution that might restore a just balance. That is, it foregoes the negative side of what Wolterstorff calls the 'reciprocity code': do (roughly equal) good for good done, impose (roughly equal) harm for harm done (199-200). As such, forgiveness requires an active component of love in asking the victim to show the wrongdoer mercy and to do him good, even if, strictly speaking, he doesn't deserve it, given what he has done (197, 203-6). This is the path that Jesus followed and that he urged his disciples to follow. It is a difficult path. Given the backdrop of pagan antiquity and Jewish law, the injunction to be merciful to those who have wronged you was hard for the original disciples even to understand, much less to follow. It remains so for many contemporary Christians who regard themselves as followers of Jesus, and certainly to many who do not regard themselves as his followers as well. I return to this feature of Jesus's teaching in a moment.

What of Arendt's second assertion? Wolterstorff thinks that Arendt was correct in identifying Jesus as the original advocate of forgiveness, especially against the backdrop of pagan antiquity and Jewish law mentioned earlier, because the characteristics of forgiveness that forego retributive justice are unique to his ethic of love. Here Jesus offers himself as an exemplar of a way of thinking and living that *was* revolutionary. To show that, Wolterstorff rightly juxtaposes Jesus' understanding of forgiveness with the punishment-laden conceptions of mercy, clemency, and forgiveness found in pagan figures such as Aristotle and Seneca. He concludes that these other notions of forgiveness don't allow for reconciliation, the goal of forgiveness (208-13).

There is much that is admirable in Jesus' notion of forgiveness. Consider the contemporary war-torn world (of which the Middle East, of course, is an apposite illustration). It is reasonable to think that genuine peace requires reconciliation, not just an unstable standoff. But reconciliation, if I understand Wolterstorff's reading of Jesus' message, requires forgiveness. And there cannot be forgiveness without setting aside anger

and the understandable temptation to adhere to the negative side of the reciprocity code. Retribution, ‘getting even’, is not the solution. But neither is forgetting—even if one could. Forgiveness, the key to reconciliation, is not forgetting. Indeed, *not* forgetting is *central* to forgiveness and to reconciliation, which is essential to genuine peace. The reason that enemies cannot be reconciled is that they will not (or cannot) forgive.

Nevertheless, I have some reservations. What is needed for forgiveness? From the side of the victim, it is the overcoming of anger and resentment and foregoing retribution. What about from the side of the wrongdoer? Wolterstorff interprets Jesus as saying (Lk. 17:3-4, Matt. 18:21-22) that if someone wrongs you, then you *must* forgive him (196-7). But what if he doesn’t repent? Does he have any claim on your forgiveness? Wolterstorff, again ostensibly interpreting Jesus, says that he does not, that it would be ‘impossible’ for you to forgive him (205-6). At the same time, he also reads Jesus as telling his followers to show mercy to the unrepentant wrongdoer, to ‘seek his good’ (204)—indeed, to ‘love’ him (206). But how can you love people you cannot forgive? Being asked to show mercy to the unrepentant is hard enough; but to *love* them! Given the sort of creatures that we are, this strains the bounds of the humanly doable. (Think again of the centuries-old conflict in the Middle East.) And resort to religion only exacerbates the problem, since Wolterstorff interprets Jesus as telling his followers that if they do not forgive the sins of their fellow humans, God *will not* forgive theirs (196-7 & notes; citing Matt. 6:14-15, 18:24-25). If I can’t forgive someone who wrongs me because he does not repent, how can I be forgiven by God for what I have done?

Forgiveness is not the only theme of this valuable collection of essays. Far from it. I have focused on forgiveness because it is often neglected by philosophers—even those concerned with the morality of punishment. Retributivist, utilitarian, or contractarian justifications of punishment are the norm. The teachings of Jesus offer another perspective. Indeed, the entire life of Jesus is worthy of philosophical reflection. As Luke Johnson rightly remarks: ‘Insofar as philosophy has to do with thinking about the proper way of being human, the character of Jesus in the narrative Gospels ought to give rise to the most serious sort of thought’ (74).

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