

The Eclipse of God at Century's End: Evangelicals Attempt Theology Without Theism

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The sense of an ending is not a fact of nature, observed Frank Kermode, it is a feature of human consciousness.¹ We ascribe meaning to the turn of a new century, and feel a sense of ending as the twentieth century comes to a close. If a sense of ending is not a fact of nature, it is certainly a fact of our experience.

As the last century closed, Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed that God was dead, and that we had killed him. The twentieth century has not been an era of great theological achievements. The romantic liberalism of the early decades gave way to the unstable half-way house of neo-orthodoxy, which in turn surrendered to a host of radical and revisionist theologies, united only in their denial of classical orthodoxy.

The century also saw the development of a resurgent evangelicalism in English-speaking Protestantism. Matured and chastened by the theological controversies of the century's first fifty years, the evangelicals coalesced into a formidable intellectual, evangelistic, and cultural movement. If the radical and revisionist theologians were united in their rejection of classical orthodoxy, the evangelicals were defined and recognized by their fervent commitment to the classical, evangelical, orthodox, and biblical convictions of historic Christianity.

As the century draws to a close, the radical theologians have been even further radicalized, and the revisionists continue their program of eviscerating the historic claims of Christianity. The declining precincts of "mainline" Protestantism

are not safe territory for the supernatural claims of Scripture, or for the doctrinal foundations of classical orthodoxy.

What about the evangelicals? The second half of the twentieth century began with great promise. The newly resurgent evangelical movement quickly produced a credible body of theological literature in the defense of Christianity's historic doctrines. Alarmed by the massive theological accommodation of the age, the evangelicals contended for biblical truth and claimed an intentional continuity with the classical Christian tradition of orthodox doctrine.

The closing years of the century have demonstrated a very different pattern, however. The ideological acids of modernity, the theological accommodationism of the age, and the temptations of the larger academic culture have infected evangelicalism to the point that the theological integrity of the movement is clearly at stake. Having debated issues ranging from biblical inerrancy to the reality of hell, evangelicals are now openly debating the traditional doctrine of God represented by classical theism.

My argument is that the integrity of evangelicalism as a theological movement, indeed the very coherence of evangelical theology is threatened by the rise of the various new "theisms" of the evangelical revisionists. Unless these trends are reversed and evangelicals return to an unapologetic embrace of biblical theism, evangelical theology will represent nothing less than the eclipse of God at century's end.

The Doctrine of God in Crisis

The very concept of God is among the most contested issues in contemporary thought and culture. To some, the notion of God in this postmodern culture is a totalizing and oppressive concept. To others, the concept of God is merely a matter of emotivism and sentiment. Clearly, to suggest that the doctrine of God is in crisis is not to suggest a fading interest in spirituality. To the contrary, few cultures could exceed the sheer variety of variant spiritualities found in modern America.

God, in fact, seems to have become a commercially popular topic of interest. In just the past few years, God has received a full-length biography which reached the best seller's lists. The volume, *God: A Biography*, treated God as a narrative character who, though not the God of the Bible, was a significant literary figure.² In addition, God is the subject of a recent 400-page history.

Karen Armstrong, whose various writings on spiritual issues have catapulted her to fame, recently released *A History of God*.³ Nevertheless, Armstrong is not concerned with the creator God who is sovereign and transcendent, but only with God as a cultural artifact, a literary character, or a religious symbol. Armstrong claims as her warrant the decline of the classical and biblical doctrine of God as a culturally binding symbol. As she states, "When one conception of God has ceased to have meaning or relevance, it has been quietly discarded and replaced by a new theology."⁴ Thus, according to Armstrong, a doctrine of God reveals very little about God, and very much about those who formulate the doctrine.

Indeed, Armstrong seems to have little confidence that we can know much about God himself. She explains that "it becomes

clear that there is no objective view of 'God:' each generation has to create the image of God that works for it."⁵ If this be true, we should shudder to think of what doctrine of God would "work" for this generation.

We see the eclipse of the God of the Bible at century's end. In the wake of the Enlightenment, the prophets of extremity and the high priests of suspicion (Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx), and those who followed them have led the onward march of secularism and protest atheism. Modern culture commonly denies God as God, as well as the very notion of God as an objective referent. Furthermore, discussion of God, at least the God of the Bible, has been evacuated from the public square. This official atheism, often masked by banal spirituality, is the result of a century of increased secularism and secularization.

Inside the church, atheism has been played out in a myriad of forms. Modernism reduced God to a kindly, if incompetent cosmic grandfather. Stripped of supernaturalism, God has been rendered a mere concept in most liberal theology. A myriad of secularizing theologies, ranging from Modern to Postmodern, has made the doctrine of God a matter of ideological controversy. Analytical philosophy reduced God to a symbol, and other philosophical trends have reduced deity to a linguistic referent. Process Theology reduced God to a force within a pantheistic cosmos, struggling with creation. Liberation theology presented God as the Great Emancipator, yet clearly with much work to do. Revisionist theologies of various forms present God as a concept to be molded and transformed at will. Feminist theology has treated God as a patriarchal oppressor, or transformed the concept of God to include the feminine. In the wake

of modern feminism, the title “Lord” has been rejected as oppressive and masculine, and the Trinity has been reconstituted on egalitarian terms.

The God of classical theism is out. What Vanderbilt Divinity School theologian Edward Farley calls, “the classical, catholic theology of God” must be surrendered, he argues. As John A. T. Robinson said during the 1960s, “Our image of God must go.”

Various forms of protest atheism have become commonplace. Karen Armstrong rejects the classical doctrine of God as abhorrent: “An omnipresent, all-knowing tyrant is not so different from earthly dictators who made everything and everybody mere cogs in the machine which they control. An atheism that rejects such a God is amply justified.”⁶ Yet, protest atheism is not a force exclusively external to the church. To the contrary, the temptation of protest atheism has been the driving force in much mainline Protestant theology. As we look to the end of this century, the God of the Bible has been abandoned by many of the Church’s theologians.

What about evangelicalism? Surely we would be assured that within evangelicalism the God of the Bible is worshiped, recognized, and confessed. But a look at popular evangelicalism reveals a God of sentimentality not unlike the God of the early modernists. The “user friendly” God of market-driven evangelicalism bears little resemblance to the God of the Bible. This God is often presented as nothing more than a domesticated deity; or, as R. C. Sproul has lamented, “a cosmic bell-hop.”

Years ago, A. W. Tozer warned, “The God of the modern evangelical rarely astonishes anybody. He manages to stay pretty much within the constitution. Never breaks our by-laws. He’s a very well-behaved God and very denomina-

tional and very much one of us, and we ask Him to help us when we’re in trouble and look to Him to watch over us when we’re asleep. The God of the modern evangelical isn’t a God I could have much respect for.”⁷

Though certainly true decades ago, Tozer’s statement is even more clearly warranted today. In popular evangelical piety we find a confusion of anthropomorphisms and feel-good conceptions of God. In many circles, God is merely a therapeutic category. Many evangelicals are now mostly concerned about what good this God will do for us, how well this God may make us feel, and how much self-esteem this God may give us as His gift.

God in the Hands of Evangelical Theologians

The bankruptcy of modern evangelical piety is both a symptom and a reflection of the breakdown of the classical doctrine of God among many evangelical theologians. This doctrinal shift reveals deep fissures in the evangelical movement.

The new developments among those who call themselves evangelicals are strikingly similar to the pattern of the early modernists and liberals. As the century now draws to a close, some evangelicals have adopted the language and the categories of the liberalism which began the century. The evangelical movement was driven by an explicit commitment to stand for biblical truth, even as that truth was under assault by the modern, secular, and anti-supernaturalistic world view. That is to say, evangelicalism grew out of an explicit rejection of liberalism and modernism. To some extent, evangelicals knew who they were not only by the positive substance of what they confessed, but also by the negative measure of what others

denied. Yet, over the last thirty years, evangelicalism has become itself marked by an increasing theological pluralism. Doctrinal diversity is no longer an issue merely extraneous to evangelicalism. The evangelical movement is now marked by theological pluralism and diversity, even concerning the doctrine of God.

To some extent, many evangelicals appear to believe that the health of evangelicalism is established by how many different positions, convictions, and confessions can be drawn within the tent. Early evangelicals were willing to stand together, while acknowledging differences on baptism, church government, and other issues of denominational distinction. This early diversity pales in significance to the pluralism now urged upon evangelicalism by many of its theologians.

The doctrine of God is the central organizing principle of Christian theology and establishes the foundation for all other theological concerns. Evangelicals believe in the unity of truth. Therefore, a shift in one doctrine—much less the central doctrine—necessarily implies and involves shifts and transformations in all other doctrines.

My concern in the face of an evangelical crisis of theism does not relate to simple belief in God. Rather, the crisis is focused on the classical Christian doctrine of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture and developed by the believing church through centuries of theological development. That is, the crisis of evangelical theism is seen in the denial of the God of classical theism as sovereign, transcendent, omnipotent, and omniscient.

The God of classical theism is self-existent, self-sufficient, simple in His being, and immutable. His moral character is revealed in attributes of love, holiness,

and mercy. His power is evident as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that this God is one in three and three and one—one God in three persons. This God is the sovereign Lord over all his creation, who rules, decrees, and reigns, and whose creation of the cosmos was *ex nihilo*. The God of the Bible is the sovereign Lord over all beings, objects, and all time.

Needless to say, this is a God far removed from popular spirituality. This is not the God referenced in popular, cultural conversation, nor the God of much evangelical worship and piety.

A study of religious belief conducted in the 1970s reveals just how radically our culture has compromised the doctrine of God. Sociologists asked the question, “Do you believe in a God who can change the course of events on earth?” One answer, which became the title of the study, was “No, just the ordinary one.”⁸ That is to say, modern men and women need no longer believe in a God who can change the course of events on earth, just the “ordinary” God who is an innocent bystander. Measured against the biblical revelation, however, this is not God at all.

The crisis of belief in the biblical doctrine of God is deeply rooted in modern culture. In his Bampton Lectures, philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre identified modernity as the root problem. The modern worldview, he acknowledged, is inherently hostile to the traditional doctrine of God. Indeed, the worldview of modernity rejects any claim of transcendence or the supernatural. Thus, MacIntyre suggests that “theology must choose between the orthodox path—which many modern persons will find incomprehensible—or the path of adaptation, which will lead away from orthodoxy.”⁹

MacIntyre sets the issue clearly. These are the only two paths available to modern theology. Those who continue to confess and worship the God of classical theism will be increasingly marginalized in secular society. More to the point, the classical doctrine of God is now increasingly marginalized even within the church.

Evangelicals who confess biblical theism must recognize that we will become increasingly incomprehensible to a secular culture. Our theological witness will grow increasingly foreign and antiquarian to a culture opposed to authority and dismissive of truth. To hold to the classical doctrine of God is, in some quarters, to be socially as well as theologically and ideologically displaced. To speak of God in terms of classical Christian theism is to employ a language and reference a worldview unknown to many evangelicals.

As MacIntyre indicates, the only other path is some form of adaptation. This is the path taken by mainstream Protestantism and those who seek to negotiate a truce with the modern worldview. The result is, of course, a surrender of transcendence, and the loss of the coherence of biblical theism.

Long ago, those committed to liberalism chose the road of radical adaptation. Divine transcendence and sovereignty were forfeited, and God became merely symbolic—impotent but nevertheless intellectually interesting and culturally useful. The God of modern liberalism may at best be consulted. He certainly is not feared.

A generalized theological confusion now marks the church. As Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson has suggested, “Plainly, western Christenism is now baffled by its God.”¹⁰ Evidently, many Christians are baffled by their God; that is, the God of classical theism as confessed

by the believing church. This God is out of place in our modern world, surrounded by the theological immaturity of the contemporary church. The coming evangelical generation appears largely defenseless against the modern worldview.¹¹

Jenson argues that this bafflement is the inevitable consequence of modernity. Current ideologies rule out the supernatural, the transcendent, and the very notion of God Himself. God, suggests Jenson, suffers three great disabilities in the modern age:

God is useless in the context of a community that interprets itself and its world mechanically; God is offensive in the context of our pragmatism of historical liberation; and God is particular in the context of universal acquaintance.¹²

Jenson’s list of God’s three apparent disabilities in our age is instructive but not exhaustive. Postmodern culture has clearly rejected the God of the Bible and has replaced the self-revealing God of Holy Scripture with a deity cut down to size in order to fit modern ideological conceptions. The secular worldview is so thoroughly committed to scientific naturalism that no concept of God is now necessary to explain the cosmos. For many, any concept of God is now useless or irrelevant.

What is at stake for the believing church? As I stated above, the doctrine of God is the central axiom of Christian theology. Or, as J.I. Packer has argued, theism is the paradigm of Christian theology. That is to say that theism is “the basic conceptual structure in terms of which all particular views of doctrine should be formed and focused.”¹³ As Packer continues, “Views that reflect a different paradigm may be interesting, but they cannot be fully Christian.”¹⁴ Packer is precisely correct. Classical Christian theism is the paradigm of Chris-

tian theology, and thus is the form, the morphology, and structure of Christian thinking. No other paradigm, no matter how interesting and fascinating, can be considered authentically Christian.

Where does evangelicalism stand on this account? Ominous signs of evangelical compromise are already apparent. In 1990, the evangelical news magazine *Christianity Today* trumpeted what some have called “The Evangelical Megashift.” Robert Brow argued that evangelical theology has shifted from an Augustinian and Reformation foundation to a doctrine of God far more congenial to modernity. Brow declared and championed this theological revolution. What will this revolution reject? Rendered obsolete and out of step are such central doctrines as substitutionary atonement, any penal understanding of the cross, forensic justification, imputed righteousness, and eventually the notion of hell. This revolution has declared out of date a notion of God as omnipotent, omniscient, and sovereign. Brow is quite confident of the eventual victory of this theological revolution. As he stated, “A whole generation of young people has breathed this air.”¹⁵

Clearly, Brow is correct in his assessment that an entire generation has breathed deeply the fumes of modernity.¹⁶ Research indicates that the hegemony of the modern world view is leading to theological transformation and compromise in evangelical ranks. As James Davison Hunter states,

This overall course—of tradition conforming to the cognitive and normative assumptions of the modern worldview—is relatively new to Evangelicalism, but not to the theological enterprise generally. It has gone furthest in liberal theological traditions. And though the Evangeli-

cal pattern has not gone as far as theological liberalism, the two share the central process.¹⁷

Young evangelicals are not alone in following this process of cultural accommodationism. Older evangelicals have largely paved the way for this pattern of theological acquiescence. The pattern has played out sufficiently for Brow to be confident of the eventual triumph of a new theism within evangelicalism. Brow understands that behind this shift in doctrine is a larger and more fundamental shift in consciousness. As he observed:

Many readers of *Christianity Today* will recognize that they have moved in some of these directions without being conscious of a model shift. And the old model can be modified and given qualifications for a time. But once three or four of these changes have occurred, our thinking is already organized around the new model. We may still use old-language and assume we believe as before, but our hearts are changing our minds.¹⁸

Brow is not alone in urging evangelicalism toward this theological revolution. He is joined by such figures as Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Tasker, David Basinger, and Clark Pinnock. These, joined by a few others, are the current molders of the theological “megashift.”

Of these, Clark Pinnock deserves special attention. If any single character in modern evangelicalism represents this doctrinal revolution, it is Pinnock. More than any other evangelical theologian, Pinnock has intentionally represented and championed this megashift and the redirection of evangelical theology.

In *The Openness of God*, Pinnock sets forth his justification for revising classical theism: “I believe that unless the por-

trait of God is compelling, the credibility of belief in God is bound to decline.”¹⁹

Setting two rival conceptions of God in tension, Pinnock distinguishes between the classical doctrine of God and the new “open” doctrine of God. He criticizes the classical doctrine of God as too Augustinian and dependent upon formal philosophical categories. This classical conception, he argues, presents God as an aloof monarch, who is unchangeable, all-determining, and irresistible. Over against this doctrine of God, Pinnock presents his new model, with God conceived as a caring parent, characterized by love and responsiveness, and attitudes of generosity, sincerity, openness, and vulnerability. God the aloof monarch is here set against God the caring parent.

Clearly, Pinnock can claim some biblical foundation for his notion of God as a caring parent. The Bible presents God as Father, a loving parent whose reign over creation is not dictatorial, but is the expression of omnipotent love. But this parental conception of God urged upon us by Pinnock also suggests that the qualities he identifies as openness and vulnerability are inherent in the biblical notion of God as parent.

When applied to the doctrine of God, the very notions of openness and vulnerability demand explanation and clarification. To whom or to what is God understood to be open? How are we to conceive God’s vulnerability?

First, we must recognize the false dichotomy presented by Pinnock and the other exponents of the new theism. Their pattern is to present the traditional doctrine of God in terms which are so impersonal, remote, and static that the doctrine is seen to violate the texture of scripture. Yet, Pinnock is neither fair nor accurate

in his presentation of the traditional doctrine of God.

Pinnock claims to have retained a notion of God’s sovereignty. Nevertheless, he admits that the mode of God’s sovereignty presented by his new conception is radically different than sovereignty as conceived in classical orthodoxy. Essentially, Pinnock argues that the doctrine of God developed by the early church was overly influenced by Hellenistic philosophy and a “tilt toward transcendence.” He blames Augustine and the early churches’ use of Greek philosophy as the fountainheads of a distorted doctrine of God which, he charges, continued in development through the medieval synthesis, the Reformation, and continues even today in popular piety. At base, Pinnock argues that the classical doctrine of God is overly dependent upon Greek philosophy and insufficiently established in scripture.

The static and transcendent doctrine of God championed by classical orthodoxy is, Pinnock charges, no longer culturally compelling. It is a doctrine which fails to fit congenially within the modern worldview and contemporary intellectual culture. Rather than fight the trend, Pinnock suggests that evangelicalism will do well to adopt modernity’s thought forms. He states that

Modern culture can actually assist us in this task because the contemporary horizon is more congenial to dynamic thinking about God than is the Greek portrait. Today it is easier to invite people to find fulfillment in a dynamic, personal God than it would be to ask them to find it in a deity who is immutable and self-enclosed. Modern thinking has more room for a God who is personal (even tri-personal) than it does for a God as absolute substance. We ought to be grateful for those features of modern culture which make it easier to re-

cover the biblical witness.²⁰

Pinnock sets clearly the most important issue faced by evangelical theology. Is it our task to force the biblical doctrine of God to answer to modern culture, or to address modern culture with the biblical doctrine of God? If modern culture—or any culture—establishes the baseline for the doctrine of God, such a doctrine will certainly bear little resemblance to the God of the Bible.

Pinnock's revisionism does not extend only to the general conception of a doctrine of God, but to the particulars as well. The doctrine of the Trinity is re-conceived as a community of persons rather than as modes of being, and Pinnock urges a social understanding of the Trinity as a replacement for the historic affirmation of an ontological trinitarianism. Providence is redefined, for the God of freewill theism is stripped of the traditional understandings of omniscience and omnipotence. Instead, Pinnock defines providence in these terms: "At great cost, God is leading the world forward to the place where it will reflect the goodness that God himself enjoys."²¹

Though Pinnock denies that his new doctrine of God is a form of Process Theology, the pantheistic structure of process philosophy is evident in Pinnock's system. He claims to hold to a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, but God appears to be collapsed into the cosmic system after the act of creation. Pinnock fails to demonstrate how his new theism avoids the admitted biblical failures of Process Theism.

In the new evangelical theism, God's power is re-defined in terms of partnership with his people. In language which would fit well within modern political discourse, God's partnership is exercised through his empowerment of creation.

This empowerment is essentially relational and limits God's own sovereign power, or at least His exercise of power. As Pinnock explains:

Condescension is involved in God's decision to make this kind of world. By willing the existence of significant beings with independence status alongside of himself, God accepts limitations not imposed from without. In other words, in ruling over the world God is not all-determining but may will to achieve his goals through other agents, accepting the limitations of this decision. Yet this does not make God "weak," for it requires more power to rule over an undetermined world than it would over a determined one. Creating free creatures and working with them does not contradict God's omnipotence but requires it. Only Omnipotence has the requisite degree and quality of power to be (in Henry Boer's words) an "ad hoc" God. one who responds and adapts to surprises and to the unexpected, God sets goals for creation and redemption and realizes them "ad hoc" in history. If Plan A fails, God is ready with Plan B.²²

This extended statement must be taken in one piece in order to see the full effect. By these words the theological revolutionaries set forth the case clearly. God's rulership over all creation is reduced to an "ad hoc" sovereignty. In creation, Pinnock argues, God necessarily took a great risk, and refused to be an all-determining deity.

This notion of "ad hoc" sovereignty shakes our theological foundations. The God of the Bible, whom Pinnock claims to present more faithfully than classical theism, is not a God who exercises an "ad hoc" sovereignty. His sovereignty is absolute and unconditional, and, though presented in intimate and personal terms, does not compromise God's essential character or power. The theism Pinnock

presents understands God to be ready with Plan B when His Plan A fails. But the God of the Bible is not a God whose plans ever fail.

If God's providence and power are radically redefined, God's omniscience is basically eviscerated. The relationship between human freedom and divine foreknowledge has been argued since the earliest centuries of the church. Origen and Celsus argued the issue and, in a modern context, Pinnock now raises the issue as a necessary redefinition of the doctrine of God. As he argues, "Philosophically speaking, if choices are real and freedom significant, future decisions cannot be exhaustively foreknown."²³ He continues, "It would seriously undermine the reality of our decisions if they were known in advance. . . ."²⁴ Without embarrassment, Pinnock claims modern libertarian notions of human freedom and autonomy as adequate justification for limiting the knowledge of God. He continues his argument, "I would contend that the Bible does not represent God in possession of exhaustive knowledge of all future contingents. On the contrary, it presents God as a dynamic agent who deals with the future as an open question."²⁵ This radical revision of the traditional doctrine, he admits, is "a faintly heretical possibility."²⁶

God's sovereignty is further re-defined in terms of his "ad hoc" conception. God does the best He can do under the circumstances, argues Pinnock. In taking the risk of creation, God accepted the vulnerability that was inherent in creating a universe of free creatures and contingent objects. This is necessary, he argues, in order to ensure genuine human freedom and the meaningfulness of human existence.

God, as presented by Pinnock, is always ready with Plan B when Plan A fails. We must presume that Pinnock would al-

low for Plans A, B, C, D, E, etc. as necessitated by subsequent world events that are unexpected and unknown by God.

Clearly, this requires a thorough redefinition of divine sovereignty. As Pinnock defines God's sovereignty, it means that

God is sovereign according to the Bible in the sense of having the power to exist in himself and the power to call forth the universe out of nothing by his Word. But God's sovereignty does not have to mean what some theists and atheists claim, namely, the power to determine each detail in the history of the world.²⁷

God, according to this system, is "the ground of the world's existence and the source of all its possibilities."²⁸

God brings His will to effect by His power "to anticipate the obstructions the creatures can throw in his way and respond to each new challenge in an effective manner."²⁹ The God presented by those who advocate this "creative love theism" is responsive and clever, but not sovereign in any legitimate sense. This God is resourceful, but does not insist in having his way. He allows his creatures to frustrate his plans and obstruct his design. Human freedom is set against divine sovereignty in such a way that one claim limits the other.

In Pinnock's argument, divine sovereignty and foreknowledge are limited by a very straightforward assertion of human freedom. As Pinnock acknowledges, "I stand against classical theism which has tried to argue that God can control and foresee all things in a world where humans are free."³⁰

The Theological Challenge: The Recovery of Theism

This brief review of current theological revisionism among evangelicals

hardly begins to raise the full scope of issues at stake. My concern is directed at the heart of these issues—the call for a revised doctrine of God.

Those who demand the transformation of the classical Christian doctrine of God claim the radical shift of thought in modern culture as sufficient cause for their doctrinal modification.

In response, while theology must always take modern thought forms into consideration, the biblical doctrine of God cannot be surrendered. Our task is not to ensure that our doctrine of God is culturally compelling, but that it is biblically faithful.

The “creative love theism” advocated by an increasing number of evangelicals represents a clear and present challenge to the doctrinal integrity of the evangelical movement. This finite theism fails the test of biblical fidelity and presents a God hardly recognizable in the light of scripture and nearly 2000 years of Christian theology.

B.B. Warfield once remarked that God could be removed altogether from some systematic theologies without any material impact on the other doctrines in the system.³¹ My fear is that this indictment can be generalized to much contemporary evangelical theology. As the culture draws to a close, evangelicals are not arguing over the denominational issues that marked the debate of the twentieth century’s early years. Sadly evangelicals now debate the central doctrine of Christian theism. The question is whether evangelicals will affirm and worship the sovereign and purposeful God of the Bible, or shift their allegiance to the limited God of the modern megashift.

ENDNOTES

¹ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

² Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

³ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

⁴ *Ibid.*, xx.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 383.

⁷ A. W. Tozer, *The Quotable Tozer, Volume 2* (Camp Hill, PA.: Christian Publications, 1994) 78.

⁸ Grace Davie, “An Ordinary God: The Paradox of Religion in Contemporary Britain,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, 41 (1990) 395-422.

⁹ Cited in David Wells, “Modernity and Theology: The Doctrine of God,” in *Faith and Modernity*, ed. by Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1994) 125-126.

¹⁰ Robert W. Jenson, “The Christian Doctrine of God,” in *Keeping the Faith: Essays to Mark the Centenary of Lux Mundi*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1988) 25.

¹¹ James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹² Jenson, “The Christian Doctrine of God,” 27.

¹³ James Packer, “Taking Stock in Theology,” in *Evangelicals Today*, ed. John King (London: Lutterworth Press, 1973) 25

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Robert Brow, “The Evangelical Megashift,” *Christianity Today*, February 19, 1990, 12.

¹⁶ James Davison Hunter identifies this process as “Cognitive Bargaining.”

¹⁷ Hunter, *Evangelicalism*, 48.

¹⁸ Robert Brow, “The Evangelical Megashift,” 12.

¹⁹ Clark Pinnock, *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994) 101.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

²² *Ibid.*, 113.

²³ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Freewill: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 1986) 139. Contributors to the volume included John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach, and Clark Pinnock.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

³¹ His specific concern was C.G. Finney’s Systematic Theology.