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Franklin, Patrick S. Review of *Rewired: Exploring Religious Conversion*, by Paul N. Markham. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2007. *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith: Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 60, no. 4 (December 2008): 274-275.

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They treat the Kingdom of God as a sub-category of personal salvation, so that the church is merely a contractual association of independent individuals.

Markham identifies two contributing factors to this discouraging state of affairs. The first is a tendency to dichotomize outward and inward spirituality, often resulting from a commitment to body-soul dualism. Such an orientation leads many evangelicals to focus on individual spiritual fulfillment while neglecting the public and communal dimensions of Christian faith. Their goal becomes saving souls, while corporeal aspects are seen as peripheral or secondary. In contrast to both body-soul dualism (whether in Platonic, Augustinian, or Cartesian forms) and the opposite extreme of reductive naturalism (in which all of human existence is explained purely in biological terms), Markham proposes as a third alternative a “nonreductive physicalist” view of human nature and existence. Building upon the theological work of Nancey Murphy and the latest research in neuroscience, this view proposes that the human person is a physical being. However, the human form is sufficiently complex as to allow for the emergence of capacities such as morality and spirituality. Notably, such dimensions are capable of emerging without requiring the existence of an immaterial, ontological entity such as a soul or spirit. Markham avoids falling into reductive materialism by appealing to the inter-relating phenomena of supervenience, emergence, and top-down causation.

The second contributing factor is crisis conversion spirituality, a popular view in American evangelicalism (intensified through some versions of the holiness movement) that sees conversion as something simple and instantaneous. It concerns a change in one’s personal beliefs, which can be (but is not necessarily) worked out subsequently in one’s actions and behavior. In contrast, Markham envisions conversion as a process leading to a holistic, socio-moral transformation that encompasses all of one’s life—one’s attitudes and actions, beliefs and behaviors, personal spirituality and public engagement.

Markham calls upon two broad resources to support his case. First, he combines his nonreductive physicalism with insights from virtue ethicists (notably A. MacIntyre and S. Hauerwas) to argue that conversion is a process-oriented phenomenon of character reformation. He discusses character as an emergent property of the brain’s self-organizing activity, which is shaped through goal-directed practice. Such character-shaping practice “involves purposeful repetition commensurate with the reorganization of frontal lobe systems active in planning, motor command and execution” (p. 152). In other words, consistent practice creates habits of perception and action that are embodied in the brain. Virtue involves rewiring.

Second, he invokes the Wesleyan tradition to construct a progressive and holistic theological portrait of conversion (Markham explicitly equates his understanding of conversion to Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification). Wesley’s doctrine of salvation is holistic in that it addresses spiritual, socioeconomic, and cosmic dimensions of the human condition simultaneously. By cosmic, Markham is referring to the ultimate sources of good and evil as addressed in the *Christus Victor* description of the atonement. Moreover, Wesley’s doctrine of salvation is process-oriented in its explication of grace as being



RELIGION & BIBLICAL STUDIES

REWired: Exploring Religious Conversion by Paul N. Markham. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007. xii + 244 pages. Paperback; \$28.00. ISBN: 9781556352942.

Dallas Willard calls it *The Great Omission*. Ronald J. Sider thinks it *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once gave it the name “cheap grace.” Each sees a devastating gap in popular Christian culture between profession of faith and serious discipleship. In *Rewired*, Paul N. Markham raises this concern specifically for American evangelicalism. Markham charges the latter with having an incomplete view of Christian spirituality, one that is excessively inward-oriented, individualistic, and detached from broader societal concerns. As a result of that truncated spirituality, evangelicals tend to read the Bible through an individualistic and spiritualized lens.

prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying and in its emphasis on growing into perfection in love. Salvation involves the cultivation of holy tempers, which are virtuous or holy affections that have been habituated through practice in community. Accordingly, Wesley prefers to speak of salvation as a multifaceted and nonlinear “way,” rather than attempting to work out its successive steps by means of a traditional order. Ultimately, for Wesley, salvation is about being renewed in the image of God, which he defines as a capacity for relationship with and imitation of God rather than an inherent human possession. It involves being healed and delivered from the penalty, plague, and presence of sin.

A complex and carefully argued book, it is no wonder that Pickwick Publications (an imprint of Wipf and Stock) included the present volume in its *Distinguished Dissertations in Christian Theology* series. Markham’s research is extensive and his engagement in interdisciplinary dialogue is impressive. Moreover, his skill in summarizing and condensing complex ideas and data makes his writing relevant and accessible both to specialists and lay readers. Those with only a basic knowledge of the biological sciences will find his chapter on nonreductive physicalism challenging but well worth the effort. Theologians will likely wonder about the implications of nonreductive physicalism for doctrines like Christology (particularly Christ’s two natures) and eschatology (is there an intermediate state after death?), which Markham does not address. Unfortunately, Markham has a tendency to portray evangelicalism somewhat simplistically as a uniform entity (dialogue with theologians such as K. Vanhoozer, C. Pinnock, or M. Volf would be fruitful here). This also prompts the question: why the one-sided focus on evangelicals? While he criticizes dualist evangelicals for prioritizing the inner life over social engagement, he does not explicitly criticize dualists who reverse the trend and reduce the gospel to mere social activism. What about faith groups that implicitly or explicitly adhere to reductive materialism? He directs his critique only at one side. Nevertheless, Markham’s case for understanding conversion as a process of holistic socio-moral transformation of the whole person is compelling.

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