

Brown concretely lays out what humans were created to do: act justly, love mercy, walk humbly. But, without the specifics of creational theology, it is difficult to know exactly what constitutes important concepts like mercy and love. Brown's primary point in this chapter, that our practices *form* us in significant ways, is profound and important. Later, Brown draws on Augustine's understanding of the need for properly ordered desires, but an important question remains: What is the order to which our desires ought to be directed? Brown is clear that there *is* an order, and this order is rooted in God's character, but the specifics of the order remain unclear, thus rendering some of the practices of virtue able to be interpreted in multiple directions.

In this widely sourced, highly accessibly book, Brown has created a helpful resource for students, church groups, and others to engage in important moral reflection and action. The widely sourced nature of the book attests to Brown's proficiency in disciplines outside of his primary discipline, business. There are short sections, both on the prohibitions inherent in law and an exposition of divine command theory, where some inclined to an ethic based primarily on law may find themselves wishing for a more nuanced rendering of their position. But, the introductory nature of this work perhaps precludes detailed discussions of each topic that is addressed.

Designed for Good is a valuable guide for those that desire a framework for pursuing virtue in our secular age. Through his engaging prose and compelling examples Brown presents an invigorating vision of the virtuous life. *Designed for Good* is highly practical and full of wisdom for our time.

—Jessica Joustra
PhD Candidate, Fuller Theological Seminary

Undomesticated Dissent: Democracy and the Public Virtue of Religious Nonconformity

Curtis W. Freeman

Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017 (288 pages)

When one chooses a topic that is centered around nonconformity, anarchism, resistance, symbolism, and subversion, one runs the risk of a disordered narrative, but also gains the possibility of breaking new ground, of taking the reader into new lands, or new depths. This is the cost-benefit dilemma that Curtis W. Freeman embraces in *Undomesticated Dissent*, as he presses the tradition of religious dissent in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and beyond), and offers his provocative and passionate reading of several provocative and passionate writers. Freeman's concern is to show the socio-economic implications of religious and spiritual ideas birthed in literary contexts, all under the oppression of the established church, stretching from John Bunyan to Daniel Defoe to William Blake, with tendrils working through colonial America all the way to Martin Luther King Jr.

The task is complicated by the many layers and iterations of dissent during the hurly-burly of the Restoration, the tenuous reestablishment of the Toleration Acts, and the powerful effect of the Enlightenment on Anglican orthodoxy. Names like Levellers, Diggers, and Muggletonians hint at the quirky world, often fraught by prophetic utterances and by violent persecutions, in which dissenters traveled. Further complications arise through the literary aspects, as Freeman sets out to unpack “the apocalyptic imagination within the dissenting tradition as the primary means of resistance to the powers of the beast” (15).

That, in a nutshell, is Freeman’s gamble—to make sense of apocalyptic writing, to show the ways in which the dense allusivity remained penetrable for those seeking not only spiritual solace but also a stirring toward resistance and even activism. The argument itself takes time to unfold, and requires a deeper reading, but it eventually begins to coalesce once the new, unfolding language is understood. Freeman’s challenge to the reader at the end of the preface to “be particularly attentive to the differing ways in which Bunyan, Defoe, and Blake reconceive their theological accounts to political nonconformity for new contexts, as well as asking how such a vision might serve as a resource for contemporary Christianity,” is bold enough, inviting enough, and cloudy enough to drive the reader forward, in search of clarity.

The account Freeman gives in his first chapter of the dissent culture in the first half of the seventeenth century certainly sharpens the context of apocalyptic visions, fraught as it is with harsh punitive measures against nonconformity. It is not surprising that John Bunyan, during his long imprisonment that led to the composition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, “kept his copy of John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* with him, which next to the Bible was his primary source of reading” (40). Hence, Freeman reveals Bunyan as a link in the chain of the dissenting tradition, although with an invective deeply hidden inside the allegorical framework. Hence, of the persecution of Christian and Faithful in *Vanity Fair*, Freeman articulates that “here, dissenters are not presented as militant revolutionaries leading an army to inaugurate the reign of the saints, but their presence is dangerous to the social and economic order nonetheless” (47). This notion of imbedded threat is perhaps a little forced from a literary perspective, but in the context of the perilous times in which Bunyan wrote, one softens to Freeman’s reading that

the story of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is not merely an allegorized autobiography of Bunyan’s conversion. It became a kind of popular epic of dissent, not for everyone, but certainly for non-conformists like Bunyan and the Baptists, who were regarded by gentry and clergy alike as a turbulent, seditious, and factious people. In its dark figures and shadows, religion and politics were mixed, providing an imagination for resistance hidden deep in its secret code. (61)

Freeman’s account of Daniel Defoe’s dissent narrative in *Robinson Crusoe* presents something of a practical, this-worldly foil to Bunyan’s other-worldly emphasis. Working after the Toleration Act of 1689 (which Freeman is quick to point out gave toleration but

not freedom to dissenters, who could not hold public office, join the military, nor attend university), “Defoe epitomized the new class of prosperous and respectable dissenters that illustrates this complicated history” (96). Defoe’s targets were not those who resisted conversion, but those who fudged on issues of conscience: “For Defoe, dissent was not disposable. It was a matter of conscience. This is the conviction of undomesticated dissent” (97). His targets as a pamphleteer were often other dissenters who double-dipped in the established church, and his vision appears to have been much more horizontal than Bunyan’s—Defoe envisioned a broad unity of dissenters across theological and eschatological boundaries, and hence, Crusoe’s island kingdom eventually becomes a sanctuary for multiple faiths (Protestant, Catholic, and Pagan). That Defoe’s famous novel became more than just emblematic of dissent and freedom of conscience, Freeman makes clear by linking the huge effect of the novel in the American colonies, most markedly among the Virginia Baptist dissenters such as John Leland, who led the entreaty to James Madison that resulted in the Bill of Rights.

The heart of Freeman’s account is also the most surprising part of the account, as he casts the poet and artist William Blake as an heir of this line of dissenters. Certainly it is feasible to go with Freeman’s claim that “Blake did not see evangelical quietism or political activism as offering a viable strategy for the ongoing reformation of Christianity and society—for, in his view, the corruption of religion went too deep.” But it is harder to take the leap with Freeman, or perhaps harder to follow him on his leap, when he argues that “nothing less than an apocalyptic transformation of the mind could redeem the imagination” (141). And yet, Freeman gives a compelling reading, tying Blake’s roots to the Baptists, as well as the Ranters, Antinomians, and Muggletonians—so that his quirkiness and apparent heterodoxy actually fit in the dissenter fringe culture quite well. Freeman’s reading of Blake’s long prophetic poem *Jerusalem* is thus seen as a grand vision of the “kingdom come,” in this case to England, so that, “in Blake’s vision of the building of a spiritual city, the inward turn of Bunyan and the outward reach of Defoe are reunited in the apocalyptic redemption of soul and society” (174). The tone reaches perhaps a defensive timbre in the statement: “Blake is no eccentric theologian. He is a highly centric Christian for whom Christ is the center and love is the circumference. He is no esoteric kabbalist. He is an apocalyptic Christian” (175). By the end of his account, Freeman had pressed my former readings of Blake’s madness and disorder back into the corner a bit, and in citing both Malcolm Muggeridge’s beneficent reading of Blake’s power and N. T. Wright’s misappropriating reading of Blake’s dissent, Freeman builds a case that challenges any easy dismissal.

The question of what such a world as Blake envisions would look like as we practice, pray, and protest toward it is answered somewhat abstrusely by Freeman in his final chapter, “Postapocalyptic Dissent,” as he turns to New World outworkings, first through Roger Williams’s clash with Massachusetts Bay Colony and his founding of Providence Colony as a haven of conscience, then more recently through Clarence Jordan’s racially diverse experiment with Koinonia Farm and of course Martin Luther King Jr.’s reimagining of a

world that embodied Blake’s “transformed understanding of Liberty” (170). I felt a true siren’s call near the end, when Freeman cites Wendell Berry, an author whose work has been formative to me, as one who

is not simply imitating Blake’s prophetic example and imagery. He has heard and answered the call to be a prophet in the building up of Jerusalem—or, to be more precise, in the building up of Jerusalem in Henry County, Kentucky. He has followed a calling to cultivate the disciplines of the domestic arts, from farm and forest to open table shared with friends and strangers. And, in so doing, he has become not just a prophet against empire but a prophet for a community of gladness. (188)

Now that is a sort of dissenting, a sort of confronting and subverting for the purpose of nurturing and rebuilding, which I understand and embrace. And if that is the spirit of undomesticated dissent, after centuries of prophetic labors and suffering, finally gaining a bit of fruition, then I think Freeman’s narrative is both meaningful and compelling. I find myself still a bit mystified by symbolism and perplexed by analogical readings, but ready to join the strand of those who “see themselves as pilgrims in this secular age, answerable to the law of another city toward which they journey by faith on the wings of the love of God and neighbor” (222). Freeman’s narrative gives us both models and motive to join that goodly company, no matter the cost.

—Michael R. Stevens
Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Constitutionalism, Democracy and Religious Freedom: To Be Fully Human

Hans-Martien ten Napel
London: Routledge, 2017 (170 pages)

Professor Hans-Martien ten Napel from Leiden University in the Netherlands has endeavored yet another analysis of freedom of religion and belief within the state. In the atmosphere of militant secularization (or in fact *laïcité*) in many areas of our contemporary sociopolitical life, it is a very relevant and current issue. It seems that there are two models of how religion exists in the state: distinction between the church and the state (as in the thought of Lord John Acton) and separation (the French model). Unfortunately, it is the latter that has become dominant. In any case when religion clashes with the state we are reminded that “we have separation of church and state!” as if *separation* were a revealed word.

This book consists of four chapters in which the author considers, in turn, communal religious freedom under pressure, social pluralist constitutionalism, pluriform democracy, and a generous conception of religious freedom. There is yet one additional “chapter” which is in fact not titled as a chapter, but bears a very intriguing name, “A Horizon of Beauty.” In his book, Professor ten Napel focuses “on these associational and institu-