NARRATIVE IN THEOLOGY

Compiled by

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Articles on Narrative Theology


July Issue largely dedicated to this theme; articles by George Stroup, James Cone, James Wiggins, Sallie McFague, and Robert McAfee Brown.


Barbour teaches at St. Olaf College.


Critiques an exaggerated understanding and use of "narrative" in MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*.


Part of "A Symposium on Story in Narrative Theology."


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Builds on William C. Spohn’s foundational insight using the analogical imagination to mediate Jesus Christ as the “concrete universal” in New Testament ethics, especially with reference to Spohn’s notion of the “grace of indirection” as it relates to the potential impact of the arts (such as short stories) on the moral imagination and moral discernment.

Connors is professor of theology at St. Catherine’s University in St. Paul, MN.


Is a response to Julian Harrt's article in the same issue, "Theological Investments in Story: Some Comments on Recent Developments and Some Proposals." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52 (1984): 117-130. Harrt has a rebuttal to both Stephen Crites and Stanley Hauerwas, another responder, on pp. 149-156.


Gives a brief summary of narrative theology.


Published on the occasion of the Festschrift given to Häring in this volume of Studia Moralia.


Includes treatment of "Human Life as Story" and "The Bible as Ethical Story."


Critiques the narrative theology of revelation developed by Ronald Thiemann in his Revelation and Theology and George Lindbeck in the latter's The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age. Both of these writers are critical of any theological method that employs a correlation between Scripture and human experience, because such a correlation assumes either a foundation of knowledge in experience or the possibility of meaningful experience independent of concrete narrative. Gascoigne argues that only a dialectical concept of the relationship between experience, text, and tradition can do justice to the character of biblical revelation.


Discusses how the literary impact of the parable story can affect the shaping of character. Much of Guevin's essay is done in light of the work of Stanley Hauerwas.


The author claims that natural law is known narratively, meaning that natural law is discovered, "progressively over time and through a process of reasoning engaged by the material of experience." Thus, we learn the natural law not by deduction, but narratively as we search for what the good is for us, both individually and communally.


See responses by Stanley Hauerwas and Stephen Cites in the same issue. Hartt also has a rebuttal to both Hauerwas and another responder, Stephen Crites, on pp. 149-156.


Both authors teach at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.


McClendon is a Baptist, who nevertheless teaches at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Episcopal) at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) of Berkeley, California.


Part of "A Symposium on Story in Narrative Theology."


Discusses the way these terms function in the work of Stanley Hauerwas.


Considers David Carr and Paul Ricoeur.


Gives a good overview of Frei's life and work.


Considers the contribution of H. Weinrich, J.B. Metz, G. Lohfink, H. Zahrnt, L. Wachinger, H. Halfas, E. Jüngel, and outlines narrative theology in terms of christology, sacramentology, and biblical exegesis.


Discusses authors, approaches and issues prominent in moral theology in the United States in the mid-1990's.


TeSelle, Sallie McFague. See McFague, Sallie.


Discussion of how religious narratives function from a hermeneutical viewpoint in various cultures.


Part of "A Symposium on Story in Narrative Theology."


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Books on Narrative Theology


Berthoff proposes a conception of virtue, in the word's generative and root sense, as the essential subject matter of imaginative literature. He uses the term, virtue, to connote the integrity of the force which comes from persons, societies, or texts in consequence of their accomplishing their distinctive ends. Berthoff also outlines the notion of virtue from classical times to the present, and examines it as a formative presence in such major literary works as Hamlet, All's Well That Ends Well, The Charterhouse of Parma, plus Robert Musil's The Man Without Qualities as well as the lyric poetry of Shelley, Yeats, and Frank O'Hara.

Berthoff is the Cabot Professor of English and American Literature at Harvard University.

Focuses on four cultural narratives that have shaped the American ethical images of itself and the world: the biblical story, the American gospel of success, the idea of well-being, and the global mission of America.


Includes a good bibliography of material published in the last twenty years. Probably the best recent book on this topic.


Defends a revised version of Kantian universalism, and then investigates some of the novels of Conrad and Austen, as well as the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, in which the protagonists are involved with the struggle with moral conflicts and/or self-understanding as moral persons.


Ellingsen is a pastor in North Carolina and formerly a research professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg.


See especially the last chapter, 16, "'Understanding' and Narrative Community," pp. 307-324.


Discussion of the work of Hans Frei (died 1988).


Articles on identity and narrative, with several treating this theme in relation to moral philosophy and/or theology.


Anthology of seventeen essays on narrative theology.


See especially chapter 1, "From System to Story: An Alternative Pattern for Rationality in Ethics" [also found in Hauerwas' and Jones’ *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*]; and chapter 4, "Story and Theology."


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See especially chapter 4, "The Self as Story: A Reconsideration of the Relation of Religion and Morality from the Agent's Perspective," pp. 68-89. This chapter originally appeared as an article in the *Journal of Religious Ethics*.

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Argues that church congregations can only be understood on the basis of the stories members tell of themselves and their community.

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The author argues that narrative does not just simply tell a story, but also has the capacity to reveal the virtuous life. To this end he examines three texts: James Agee's *A Death in the Family*, Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins*, and Robert Penn Warren's *A Place to Come To*, in order to demonstrate how a study of narrative structure, and particularly the narrative element character explores and reveals the life of virtue. The work concludes with a discussion of how moral criticism has a place in post-modern literary reflection.


Takes a contrasting approach to that of Stanley Hauerwas, Long discusses how contemporary moral decisions can be enlightened by considering the biblical stories of persons and groups who confronted similar concerns.


See especially Chapter 15, The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition.


Essays by Harold Bloom, Hans Frei, Frank Kermode, James Robinson, Donald Foster, and Herbert Schneidau.

McClendon is a Baptist, who nevertheless teaches at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Episcopalian) at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) of Berkeley, California.


According to McClure four codes form each preacher's homiletic profile and are used to inform the various rhetorical strategies. These four codes are: 1) Scripture, which promotes sacred memory; 2) Semantics, which vouches for the theological truth; 3) Symbolic, which sponsors the congregation's theological worldview; and 4) Cultural, which articulates the congregation's religious experience.

McClure teaches at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.


Using images, myths, and metaphors was ways to comprehend the moral life, Mount proposes the covenant as the normative principle for institutional and professional relationships.


Mount is Professor of Religion at Centre College in Danville, KY.


Revised version of a 1984 doctoral dissertation done at Yale.


Addresses from theological, psychological, and sociological perspectives the question of how people come to embody Christian values and the implications for the Church and its ministry.  O’Connell devotes special attention to the role of narrative and imagination in the moral formation of the Christian disciple.

O’Connell is Professor of Christian Ethics in the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University, Chicago.


Also relates Ricoeur's narrative theory to the theological problem of the dichotomy between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Reference in this regard is made to the work of other theologians such as Barth, Bultmann, Tillich, Pannenberg, Frei and Tracy.


Via uses a hermeneutical approach to analyze the Gospel of Mark in order to inform both New Testament and "constructive" ethics. Via focuses on narrative method and considers a number of significant Gospel motifs, such as eschatology, revelation, faith, and the messianic secret. The "Middle of Time" refers both to Mark 10 and to the paradoxical position of the disciple who is placed in the period of the overlapping of the Kingdom of God and the age of the hardness of heart. See especially Ch. 1: "An Approach to the New Testament Ethics and Narrative."


Via is Professor of New Testament at The Divinity School of Duke University.


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