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**Book Review: Deane-Peter Baker, *Tayloring Reformed Epistemology: Charles Taylor, Alvin Plantinga and the De Jure Challenge to Christian Belief*, London, SCM Press, 2007**

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*Tayloring Reformed Epistemology: Charles Taylor, Alvin Plantinga and the De Jure Challenge to Christian Belief.* By Deane-Peter Baker. Pp. xii, 228, Veritas, 2007.

Is Christian belief justified, rational or warranted? The search for a response is the heart of the *de jure* challenge. The very search itself can be perilous as it can fall into reduction, apologetics or even 'lite' analytic, doxastic practices. The reductive temptation is to end up answering the *de facto* question of whether belief in God is true. The fall into apologetics, again, another attempt to avoid the *de jure* challenge, is to spend more time defending one's own position to the detriment of developing an engaging epistemological and theological imagination. Lastly, the fall into 'lite' analytic and doxastic practice is, for example, to utilise analogies and hypothetical creations with a 'thin' perceptual practice. Observant of these temptations, Deane-Peter Baker invites the reader on a journey into the world of Reformed epistemology. He does this in two major parts.

In Part 1, Baker initiates a quest to find a rational way to respond to the *de jure* question by way of his Reformed tradition. To this end, he deconstructs the Reformed epistemology of three eminent figures, Nicholas Wolterstorff, William Alston and Alvin Plantinga. Finding that the deontic justification approach of the 'internalists', Wolterstorff and Alston, are wanting in their approaches to respond to the *de jure* challenge of Christian belief, Baker looks to the 'externalist', Alvin Plantinga, for

direction. Bringing to attention Plantinga's epistemic model, asserting that Christian belief is warranted, Baker alerts the reader to a key starting point to his own response to the *de jure* challenge, namely to the *sensus divinitatis*. Beyond inference and argument (thematizations), there is the disposition of a *sensus divinitatis*. Acting like an immediate experience of perception, a properly functioning *sensus divinitatis* produces 'basic beliefs'. Theologically, this evidences a logic or 'eyes' of faith. Plantinga names this the 'Aquinas/Calvin' (A/C) Model - given that 'a kind of natural knowledge of God' resonates in the works of both Aquinas and Calvin. Plantinga's key insight here will prove to be crucial as Baker forms his analyses and conclusions.

In Part 2, Baker does something unique and commendable by setting out to bring both the Analytic and Continental traditions of philosophy together. His aim is to enhance Plantinga's A/C Model with the moral phenomenology of Charles Taylor, 'a leading analytic exponent of Continental philosophy'. Evidently, it seems Baker is learning from Taylor to seek out a continental route to develop the Analytic tradition of Reformed epistemology. For some this might seem like a radical trespass. But for others, it shows openness and boldness to reach beyond traditions and borders. Particularly, Baker's approach reveals that both the Analytic and Continental traditions need each other especially when their own ways of doing things appear to dry up, so to speak.

Towards the aim of 'Tayloring Reformed Epistemology', Baker introduces the reader to the moral dimension of phenomenology through the lens of ontological language, that is to say, the necessity of having a moral life. For Taylor, such a condition must strive towards the transcendence of an 'incomparably higher good'. And at the basis

of the good is the structure and history of Christian theism. Here, in the midst of Baker's analysis, we find de-ontic, analytic claims to morality, structure and theism resonating in Taylor's 'moral phenomenology'.

After exhausting many of Taylor's 'interlocutors' such as Melissa Lane, Gary Gutting and Stephen Mulhall, eventually Baker begins his own creative construction of an 'Augmented Model' to broach an expanded *de jure* question 'of whether or not Christianity is true is one that *need not, and indeed ought not, be taken seriously*'. In conclusion, the *de jure* question and challenge, for Baker, directs the quest of Reformed epistemology to the insight and discovery that the existence of God and claims of Christianity should not be reduced to 'high standards' of proofs and thematisations. Rather, it is enough to show that Christian belief is reasonable and reliable.

In sum, Baker provides the reader with a thoughtful, critical, searching and, at times, a complex discussion on epistemological foundations of Christian belief. The book itself nurtures hope to realise the importance of moral living and transcendence for Christian faith. And given the unique place that Continental philosophy takes up in Baker's *Tayloring Reformed Epistemology*, not only is the work a worthy introduction to the world of Analytic philosophy, but it becomes a testimony for both traditions to learn from one another.