right; you have to agree with me"—concordance; or to tell each other, "Look, we're better off if we stay out of each other's hair"—independence.

These latter approaches assume that the sciences-faith relationship is fixed and settled once for all. Yet, like any human relationship, the sciences-faith relationship is always ongoing and dynamic, involving navigation and renegotiation. Try treating your relationship with your spouse or best friend as fixed and unchanging and see where that leads! The sciences-faith relationship cannot be healthy and growing unless we take the multiple perspectives involved seriously, as contributors to the ongoing conversation of how to do life together. *PSCF* readers interested in pursuing that adventure will be rewarded by a close reading of chapter 4 and its examples.

In chapter 5, Vukov attempts to show that we need the conflict, independence, and dialogue models to do different jobs at different times. But this leads to an incoherence in his discussion. I think taking the ideas of relationship and conversation more seriously could remedy the incoherence. For instance, Vukov critiques the dialogue model by pointing out that some proponents only have dialogue as a goal. But this is a failure to grasp that the sciences-faith conversation is always in service of learning more about each other and growing in how to get along as partners coming to understand God's world. In a marriage, little gets accomplished if partners simply focus on dialogue for the sake of dialogue. Likewise, little gets accomplished if partners engage in conflict or independence. Understanding the relationship, when we can mutually help each other, when it is appropriate to encourage the other to "do your thing!," and how to productively engage those times when we find ourselves in a conflict are all part of working out healthy ongoing relationship. Similarly for the sciences-faith relationship.

If sciences and faith are aiming at truth, as Vukov correctly argues, then the focus should be on developing the healthiest relationship enabling sciences and faith to pursue that aim. Arguing that the relationship is best modeled sometimes as conflict, sometimes as independence, or sometimes as dialogue, undercuts the aim for truth. A marriage or a family would not work well if partners are constantly shifting their relationships among these options. Instead, one always needs to understand how conflicts arise and how to address them within the ongoing relationship of a marriage. One always needs to understand what appropriate forms of independence are in the ongoing relationship of the family. And these understandings always need to take place in the context of humble, open conversation. Good dialogue is central to any healthy human relationship. The same is true for the sciences-faith relationship.

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History and Social Studies of Science

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WHO TO TRUST? Christian Belief in Conspiracy Theories by Nigel Chapman et al. Victoria, Australia: ISCAST, 2022. 164 pages. Paperback; $12.99. ISBN: 9780645067156. ebook/discussion paper. https://iscast.org/conspiracy/.

Conspiracy theories (CTs) have existed for as long as humans have been able to record them for posterity; however, due to the exponential growth of electronic media, the proliferation and popularity of CTs have made them ubiquitous. Western societies have been particularly affected by CTs in recent decades through our ability to communicate unfiltered diatribes at the speed of light, by the seductive influence of CTs as a form of mass entertainment, and by unabashed populists who use them to tar their political rivals. Though they still frequently draw ridicule, conspiracy claims are now a mainstream form of grievance, spread by people—rich, poor, weak, and powerful—across the political spectrum. This is largely why academics in the behavioral and social sciences, concerned by the harmful impact of CTs on public discourse and social behavior, have begun to treat them and the people who promote them as objects of serious study.

Sadly, committed Christians are no strangers to the conspiracy mindset, and not only those who belong to fringe communities obsessed with end-times prophecy and creeping authoritarianism. Hence, learning to identify the common elements of conspiracist thinking and guarding themselves, their relationships, and their faith communities against its corrosive influence, is a timely and urgent issue for those who claim to be followers of Christ.

This short book (or long "discussion paper," as its authors describe it) is the product of fifteen science and theology authors who are committed Christians and associates of the Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology (ISCAST), an Australian organization that promotes dialogue on the intersection of faith and science. The central goal of this work is to harmonize the academic research on conspiracy thinking with biblical ethics in order to help Christian leaders and their communities address the

phenomenon of conspiracism in a socially constructive and spiritually uplifting manner.

The book contains five main chapters—two of a theoretical nature and three of a practical nature. The first two summarize the ideas of leading academics (Barkun, Brotherton, Douglas, Dyrendal, Uscinski and Parent, van Prooijen, etc.), with a special focus on political polarization and populism, and the ways these shape, or are shaped by, conspiracy theories. The third chapter examines popular vaccine and COVID-19-themed conspiracy theories in Australia, North America, and Europe, and it highlights the exaggerated suspicions many Christians harbor toward government, media, academia, and other mainstream epistemic authorities. The last two chapters discuss the ethical, psycho-social, and organizational challenges that conspiracism poses on the way Christians live and think, admonishing them—as individuals and faith communities—to examine conspiracy claims in an epistemically responsible, socially constructive, and biblically grounded manner.

This book presents several strong arguments. First, because some conspiracy claims turn out to be true (Watergate, Iran-Contra, etc.), there is need to exercise careful discernment, engage in charitable exchanges, and consult appropriate expert sources when considering the credibility of specific CT claims. Real conspiracies generally turn out to be less ambitious in scope than the more elaborate theories that flourish in alternative media (JFK, "deep state," flat earth, deadly vaccines, etc.) and are usually the product of organized criminal networks, political graft, or fraudulent business deals.

Second, implausible CTs are often promoted by fringe media, non-experts, and subversive political movements, all of whom habitually traffic in speculation rather than hard evidence, blame vague or invisible enemies who cannot be prosecuted, berate official narratives rather than present a consistent counter-theory, ask rhetorical questions that invite the hearer to distrust experts, and make bombastic claims that reinforce anxieties of impending doom, furtive enemies, secret patterns hiding in plain sight, social marginalization, and political alienation.

Third, CTs negatively affect social relations by "building isolation, paranoia, anxiety, or depression in some individuals, […] splitting friends, families, churches," disrupting communities, and "undermining [legal, political, and academic] institutions through cynicism and mistrust" (p. 6). Not only is the impact of strong conspiracy beliefs detrimental to healthy social relationships and responsible citizenship, CTs also undermine the New Testament's instructions not to slander, not to proffer angry judgments and insults, nor to engage in strife and partiality but rather to live in harmony, love, respect, patience, and forbearance in accordance with Christ's example.

Fourth, these considerations should lead Christians who feel drawn to conspiracist explanations to exercise humility in their search for truth, and to nurture a predisposition to healing rather than attacking relationships and institutions. "A Christian conspiracy theorist should understand themselves to be seeking truth and justice" (p. 6), cultivating awareness of the biases and self-victimizing tendencies that especially affect Christians (e.g., through divisive biblical and pseudo-biblical doctrines), and fostering dialogue rather than fractious debate. "Conspiracy theories may be true or false. But if we want to avoid spreading untruths, injustices, and strife, then we must cultivate a reasonable and peaceable impartiality in the way that we assess or discuss them" (p. 114).

Finally, "inoculation is better than cure" (p. 131). By sensitizing believers to the challenges of cognitive biases and disinformation, we can help them guard their hearts and minds against disruptive CTs and the unhealthy behaviors they elicit.

> We should train Christians to hear diverse views; have good conversations; debate ideas; hear from Christians who work as experts or authorities in public life; demand consistent democratic values in public life; and have the emotional maturity to be generous in spirit toward their opponents. (p. 6)

This book/discussion paper serves as a useful and well-rounded survey of academic literature on conspiracism and as a primer for practical discussions on trust, responsible research, and Christian ethics. It contains useful definitions, summaries, and suggestions for further reading that make the text easy to read and to follow. Its language is accessible to most, though its content is less balanced in its accessibility to a mass audience. The information presented in the first two chapters may be complex to those with little knowledge of psychology and political science, while the second half, strong in biblical references, requires the reader to have some level of familiarity with the scriptures and (it goes without saying) a belief in their moral authority. Inversely, well-versed readers may find that the overview presented in the first half of the work lacks depth of analysis. Readers will also notice a lack of cohesion (and some repetition) between chapters, but this is unsurprising in a 163-page discussion paper written by fifteen authors divided into four working groups. Like the old adage that a giraffe is a racehorse designed by a committee, so too does this work end up lacking some

unity. Nevertheless, it still serves as a useful guide for church leaders seeking greater theoretical and/or practical understanding of conspiracy thinking, and for small groups wishing to improve communications, counselling services, and ministry to the politically and socially disaffected within their church or wider community.

If we reformulate the title of this text to "Whom Should Christians Trust?," and distill it through the clichéd but effective rhetorical question "What would Jesus do?," we might then ask ourselves, "Whom would Jesus fear?" The answer to this question, of course, is "no one," because his kingdom is not of this world. This maxim encapsulates the central message of this discussion paper, which admonishes its readers not to fall prey to worldly anxieties but to have—and to guide others toward—the confidence that Christ has already won the battle against all evil plots. His followers need only guard their hearts against despair and pursue the truth with love.

Reviewed by Michel Jacques Gagné, a historian, podcaster, and the author of Thinking Critically about the Kennedy Assassination: Debunking the Myths and Conspiracy Theories *(Routledge, 2022). He teaches courses in critical thinking, political philosophy, and ethics at Champlain College, St. Lambert, QC.*

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ILLNESS, PAIN, AND HEALTH CARE IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY by Helen Rhee. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2022. 367 pages. Hardcover; $49.99. ISBN: 9780802876843.

> *"The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head."* —William Osler (1849–1919)

Helen Rhee, professor of the History of Christianity at Westmont College, has encapsulated this famous saying in her recent book, *Illness, Pain, and Health Care in Early Christianity* by demonstrating how partially objective medicine as an early science co-evolved with subjective religious thought throughout early Greek, Roman, and Christian history. Indeed, even today, a patient's pursuit of relief from suffering often involves the clinical science of medicine occurring arm-in-arm with spiritual care. Such examples include use of hospital chaplains, visitation and assistance from members of a congregation, and personal prayer. This book is comprehensive in nature and academic in tone, and Rhee has found some fascinating continuing threads of healthcare occurring in these aspects of Western civilization.

The book begins with general ideas of illness in all three cultures. Greek culture considered the importance of the Hippocratic ideas such as humoralism (defined as various body fluids and their effect on human illness) as well as prioritizing an individual's health to be a societal priority. The emphasis placed on one's individual health inherently makes sense when one considers Greek culture's lack of modern medicine, the absence of understanding public health, the high mortality rate of pregnant women and young infants, and the constant presence of death in their society (pp. 1, 2). A Greek athlete was considered the exemplar of health with the expectation that their health attributes, like all humans, would decline over time.

Roman ideas followed, led by Galen, in which each part of the body was defined simply by its usefulness and its ability to work together in concordance with every body part to make up a healthy human. Thus, Galen believed that all human function descended from a divine design; this was in sharp contrast to the ideas of Epicurus who believed nature's design had random underpinnings. This early philosophical debate involving Roman medicine still continues almost 2,000 years later with regard to a potential purpose versus a lack of purpose in biological evolution. Typically, suggestions for changes in diet and exercise were the main Roman recommendations in the setting of illness, in that medicine and public health would not be viable study areas for many centuries. The author brings up the stark reality of terrible sanitation in ancient Rome which exacerbated many of the infectious pandemics. In fact, pandemics often were considered a part of divine punishment possibly for unknown sins. We can consider the parallels of pandemics of our time, such as those associated with HIV/AIDS or COVID-19, which unfortunately have been incorrectly associated with societal sin.

Subsequent early Christian ideas regarding health and illness received significant influences from both Greco-Roman and Hebrew society. Illness was considered more holistic—encompassing both the physical and the spiritual. Specific cultural influences affecting early Christian society's views on health included the importance of caring for others (for example, Deut. 15:10) and the Levitical dietary restrictions which probably had some health benefits (p. 3). A healthy person would benefit from overall shalom; a decline in one's health could be considered demonic. Jesus was seen as the perfect healer through his miracles, and stories of healing in the Gospels were added to the already-present Greco-Roman influences such as the balancing of humors. Mental illness, which is still under-appreciated and considered an individual "weakness" in much of today's society, was evaluated and treated using the entire gamut of early Christian thought: from being a disease of the soul, to being a result of divine judgment, to being a physical problem (perhaps not yet understood during that time period).