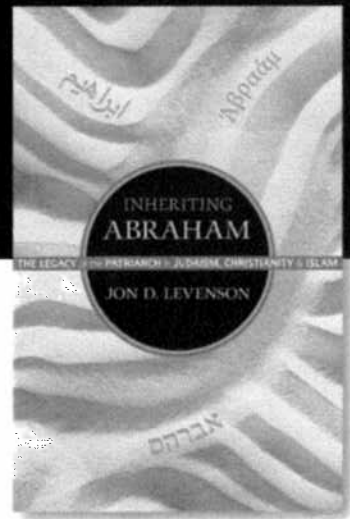


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to have fewer. Modernity has been marked by a dramatic "demographic transition," beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing today, with more and more women deciding to forgo motherhood.

This disconcerting fact poses an urgent and unavoidable challenge both to our continuation as a society and to our very conception of the worth of human existence. Is the demographic implosion a response to practical costs and benefits, which might be amenable to amelioration, or does it tell us something deeper about a loss of purpose or faith?

Overall doesn't dwell much on this question, although she does address whether the extinction of the human race is something worth caring about (it is, she believes). Instead, she concludes her book by defending the personal choice to have children. As a mother, the advice she would give to others is: "Don't miss it."

In ending on this upbeat note, Overall doesn't pretend to analytic rigor, and it's hard to see how she could. She invokes Pascal's wager not so much for the precise parallel but for the notion that making a choice in the face of the radical unknown is unavoidable. Even with all the control and planning that modern science facilitates, the consequences of our decision to reproduce are still largely unpredictable.

We don't know what our offspring will be like, what awaits them in life, or how they will turn out. We must love them "unconditionally," although, as Overall acknowledges in one of the more thought-provoking passages of the book, it's hard to explain exactly what that means when our children disappoint.

In the end, she points to a nonrational notion of human love, and the unique and unprecedented connection that arises when a child is born. We wouldn't want to miss it, she says, but it's not obvious why. Here, at least, Overall doesn't so much duck this difficulty as quail in the face of the mystery. ■

In God's Name

by Phillip Cary

The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity: Distinguishing the Voices (volume 1)

BY R. KENDALL SOULEN
WESTMINSTER JOHN KNOX,
312 PAGES, \$30

Some years ago, when revisionary theologians proposed baptizing people "in the name of the creator, the redeemer, and the sustainer," their opponents insisted that the traditional biblical formula, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," could not be dispensed with, because it is not merely a metaphor but God's own name. There is a problem with this argument, however, because these words do not really behave like a proper name. We get them by translation from the Greek, *Pater, Huios*, and *Hagia Pneuma*, rather than by transliterating them from the original language, like true proper names such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But there is a deeper problem, which is that this same God has already given himself a true proper name in Hebrew. This is the sacred name of the God of Israel, usually known as the tetragrammaton ("the four letters").

R. Kendall Soulen, professor of systematic theology at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., suggests that a number of difficulties in Christian talk about God might be resolved if we recognize that this is a different way of naming than "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," that the revisionary proposal exemplifies a third way with its own uses (though not in baptism), and that all three have their indispensable place in Christian theology.

Phillip Cary is professor of philosophy at Eastern University.

These are not three names, but three ways or patterns of naming, which correspond in Trinitarian fashion to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and which Soulen accordingly labels the "theological," "Christological," and "pneumatological" patterns. His book is an extraordinarily instructive examination of how these patterns unfold in both Scripture and tradition, where all three—often intertwined—operate as the "most appropriate ways" of naming the Trinity, none of which makes the others unnecessary.

The "theological pattern" centers on the God of Israel, his sacred name, and the many ways of not uttering it aloud. In English Bibles the name is usually rendered LORD, with four capital letters, to represent the Jewish practice of saying *Adonai* (Hebrew for "Lord") in place of the name.

There are other ways to avoid saying the name of God, and in the Gospels Jesus uses many of them. Especially common is the "divine passive," in which what God does is described in the passive voice. When Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and earth *has been given to me*," we know who gives the authority without having to say the name.

Most important, when Jesus prays, "*Hallowed be thy name*," he is asking the God of Israel to sanctify his own name, as he promises to do in the Scriptures. Thus, Soulen argues, "Reverence for the divine name, expressed by its nonpronunciation, is the very wellspring of Jesus' speech, a token of his longing for the eschatological vindication of God's name [and] the silent source from which all his audible speech flows."

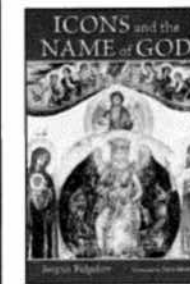
This theological pattern of naming refers not just to God the Father but to Jesus himself, for (as Soulen argues, following scholars such as Larry Hurtado and Richard Bauckham) the New Testament confession "Jesus is Lord" attributes the proper

name of God to the exalted Christ in heaven. It is not just confessing that Jesus has lordship or authority; it is the most powerful way imaginable of saying, in a Jewish context, that he is fully divine: He has God's own name. From this fundamental confession comes Paul's worship of

"one God" and also "one Lord, Jesus Christ" in 1 Corinthians 8:6, which generates the basic structure of the Nicene Creed.

The "Christological pattern" of naming centers on Christ as the Son of God, and thus includes "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," as well as

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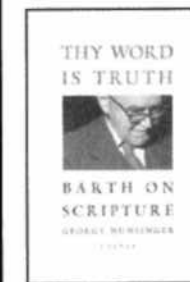
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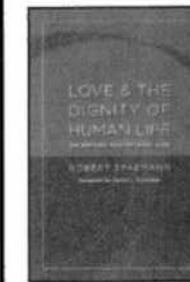
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related terms such as “Our Father in heaven” that grow out of Jesus’ own address to God as his Father. Unlike the sacred name represented by “LORD,” none of these are pure proper names, but flow out of Jesus’ pious Jewish avoidance of uttering the name.

The Christological pattern is the standard way of referring to the Trinity as such, but does not supersede the original self-naming of God. Soulen, a prominent critic of “supersessionism,” the view that Christianity supersedes and replaces all things Jewish in the election and covenants of God, explicitly rejects the anti-Jewish theology that supposes that calling God “Father” must be an advance over the Old Testament naming of God. Both are, in his terms, “most appropriate ways of naming the triune God.”

The “pneumatological pattern” is a third “most appropriate way,” inspired by the work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost causing God to be praised in a multiplicity of human languages. It is the least fixed of the three, and the furthest from the use of proper names. It embraces a fruitful abundance of descriptions of God, including all the substantive terms that can legitimately complete the sentence, “God is . . .,” beginning with scriptural terms such as Word, Wisdom, Water of Life, Bread from Heaven, Truth, and Comforter, as well as alternative proper names such as *El Shaddai* and also *El Roi*—Hagar’s name for God, in the only biblical story where a human being gives God a name.

This proliferation of names continues in the Christian tradition, which knows many “divine names” (perhaps better translated as “divine nouns,” since the underlying Greek term means both). We find them in the treatise *On Divine Names* by

Dionysius the Areopagite, where God is true Being and Goodness and Beauty, but also in the triadic analogies explored by Augustine in his treatise *On the Trinity*, where God is compared to Memory and Intellect and Will, as well as in the triads of nouns fashioned by theologians inventing terms for God in new languages. Soulen gives a long and fascinating list, ranging from the ancient Church Father Irenaeus (“God, Offspring, Similitude”) to theologians from contemporary Myanmar (“Sun, Brilliance, Warmth”).

Dionysius is particularly influential in this regard. Agreeing with the pagan Platonists, he argues that the highest divinity must be named in many ways precisely because it is essentially nameless. The divine nature calls for an indefinite multitude of names because no one way of naming it is adequate. If the Christian tradition can appropriate pagan philosophy in this way, Soulen suggests, why rule out in advance the names that might be uttered by Hagar’s daughters in, say, Myanmar? We should expect the praises of God begun at Pentecost to continue until kingdom come.

On the other hand, there are limits. Just as the triune God is not to be addressed using names such as Zeus, Apollo, and Athena, so all Christian speech must be disciplined by the scriptural witness to the unique God of Israel, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the Dionysian tradition has sometimes failed, due not so much to its roots in Greek philosophy as to the sheer forgetfulness of the lore of Jewish piety in the Gentile church.

The revelation of the sacred name in Exodus 3:15 has been misconstrued, for instance, as God’s refusal to be named, an indication of the ultimate unnameability of God, rather

than God’s act of naming himself. Or it has been treated as a description of God as pure Being (as if it were not a proper name but simply equivalent to the “I am” of Exodus 3:14). And the term “LORD” has been interpreted like the word “king” as an analogical description of God’s rule over creation, rather than a stand-in for the unpronounceable name.

The pneumatological pattern does not function well without the other two. Taken to extremes, it results in treating all words for God as free-floating metaphors pointing at a deity beyond all determinate language, which can be named in any way that expresses the depths of human experience. At this point one loses a sense of *which* God is being spoken of.

Thus all forms of Christian discourse are weakened, Soulen argues, when they forget that the God incarnate in Jesus Christ already has a name, a name he gave himself and made known to Israel. Conversely, Christian theology today can be enriched by recovering an understanding of and reverence for God’s Jewish name, as the foundation of one indispensable pattern of naming along with the two others that have always played a necessary role in Christian worship and thought.

The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity is the first of two volumes. The next will address contested issues in contemporary theology and then draw implications for what can be said about the eternal being of the triune God. It is a volume for Christians to await with anticipation. And it is sure to reinforce the growing, salutary conviction that Christians cannot be children of their Father in heaven without their older brothers and sisters in the faith, the people of Israel to whom the living God revealed his proper name. ■

Ivy Reveries

by George M. Marsden

College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be

BY ANDREW DELBANCO
PRINCETON, 240 PAGES, \$24.95

Books warning of the imminent demise of college education are becoming almost as common as those predicting the demise of the printed book. In *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*, Andrew Delbanco adds his thoughtful voice to the humanists alarmed that the sort of collegiate experience they had a generation ago and which they perpetuate in their own classes is beleaguered on many sides. Delbanco teaches at Columbia University, where he directs the university’s American studies program, and is known for his fine historical studies of American literature and culture.

His ideal collegiate experience is a residential one that fosters a sense of a community of learning and in which appreciation of the humanities plays a prominent role. Those who benefit from this experience, especially young people making the transition to adulthood, should come away with critical self-understanding and the qualities of heart and mind that make for good citizenship. These qualities include a critical discontent with the present in the light of the past, the ability to relate disparate phenomena and to imagine perspectives that differ from one’s own, an appreciation of nature informed by science and art, and a sense of ethical responsibility.

George M. Marsden is the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame and the author of The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship.


The threats to this ideal are familiar. University education has become a commodity (Delbanco mentions a half-dozen recent books whose titles suggest such themes). Parents and students want to get something tangible—usually training for a job—for their money, especially since the most recent economic downturn, but often the highest rewards for professors come from specialized research and publication, not teaching. Meanwhile costs keep going up as schools compete for students and present themselves as though they were luxury resorts.

Promiscuity, sexual and curricular, is so pervasive that not only do colleges not tell students what to think, “most are unwilling even to tell them what’s worth thinking about.” Delbanco cites a remark of the former director of the immense University of Phoenix (five times larger than Ohio State): “I’m happy that there are places in the world where people sit down and think. We

need that. But that’s very expensive. And not everybody can do that. So for the vast majority of folks who don’t get that privilege, then I think it’s a business.”

Delbanco is well aware, of course, of the problems of the exclusiveness of earlier American college education on the basis of religion, race, sex, ethnicity, and social class. But he steps past the usual critiques to ask what we can learn about the common humanity of earlier Americans.

He is particularly open to finding value in religious concerns not his own. So, for instance, he draws an analogy between the Puritan experience of mysterious and undeserved grace and the transforming illumination that might take place in a young person’s classroom experience. Delbanco, who describes himself as a nonobservant Jew, likewise expresses



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