



Volume

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## Oliver O'Donovan

Oliver O'Donovan's *Self, World, and Time*\* (Eerdmans, 2013) and *Finding and Seeking*\* (Eerdmans, 2014) are the first two of three volumes comprising *Ethics as Theology*, a masterful exploration of "the logic of acting and thinking." *Self, World, and Time*, O'Donovan explains, "is concerned primarily with the form and matter of Christian Ethics as a discipline, in relation to its material (moral thought and moral teaching), its setting among the humanistic faculties of study, and its proper shape, a triadic trajectory in which self, world, and time are reflected and restored." The "self" in the title reflects O'Donovan's interest in understanding the nature of moral agency, and his conviction that scholars who are engaged in the study of Ethics "must enter into the lived experience of practical deliberation for themselves, and inhabit it as residents, not as those visiting on occasional research trips." The "world" referenced is not just the world we live in, but the world of Ethics as a discipline with a history: Ethics "has its texts — canonical, traditional, and critical — and must attend to them. It may never say, 'I have no need of that hypothesis!' — not, at least, until it has understood what need others have had for it, ensuring that none of its serviceability is lost. There is a scholarly task of careful and judicious remembering; Ethics no less than doctrine needs its *ressourcement*. That is one reason why moralists should not think themselves exempt from the normal rules of careful scholarship, using original sources and, where possible, original words, and not only from favorite and familiar authors, but from those who have been lost sight of or may seem of doubtful value. Yet as a branch of theology Christian Ethics must also answer for its concepts theologically. It cannot be merely eclectic, picking up from the tradition or beyond it whatever may take its fancy. It must have God's revelation on its mind, must think in reference to it and in obedience to the canonical Scriptures that attest it." "Time" in the book's title suggests O'Donovan's abiding concern that ethical reflection is never a quest for timeless solution to timeless problems, since all ethical action occurs in a specific context. "Our own age is the hardest of all ages to understand. It is composed of a mass of popular ideas and perceptions, often difficult to document though they are as familiar as the air we breathe, which acknowledge no duty to be consistent with each other. They may be derived from the thoughts of great thinkers, but when they are, they have lost most of what subtlety and discrimination they once had. They ration and restrict our access to thought about life and action in ways we must look hard in order to

## Disc 1

- 1 **Introduction**
- 2 **Christopher Shannon**, on the tendency among historians in the U.S. to tell a single story of progress and freedom, rather than the discrete narratives of specific communities, including the Church
- 3 **Kevin Vanhoozer**, on why it is appropriate and instructive to describe the doctrinal life of the Church in terms of drama and theater
- 4 **Oliver O'Donovan**, on the nature of moral reflection, the dangers of "spontaneity," and the possibilities of well-formed moral improvisation

## Disc 2

- 1 **Rebecca DeYoung**, on the differences between sins and vices, the nature of true glory, and the character of the forgotten vice of vainglory
- 2 **Thomas Forrest Kelly**, on the temporal nature of music and the consequences of the development of musical notation
- 3 **Calvin Stapert**, on the life and work of Joseph Haydn, whose music suggests the glory of Creation before the Fall

\*An asterisk means that the book is in print; if you wish to purchase it from our friends at Eighth Day Books, call 1.800.841.2541.

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recognize. (It is not easy to think in a disciplined way through any social question outside the constraints of a would-be economic calculus which scarcely deserves the serious philosophical name of 'utilitarianism.')

Even more cramping, they determine the way we describe the material objects of our thought, so that there are decent and gullible souls, for example, who think it 'unscientific' to refer to the child in the womb as 'a person.' *Ethics as Theology* is a continuation of O'Donovan's seminal work, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*\* (Eerdmans, 1986). In it, O'Donovan insisted that the reality of the resurrection makes Christian ethics *Christian* and capable of making *universal* moral claims: "Since creation, and human nature with it, are reaffirmed in the resurrection, we must firmly reject the idea that Christian ethics is esoteric, opted into by those who so choose, irrelevant to those who do not so choose."

## Other Works Mentioned

Christopher Shannon's *The Past as Pilgrimage: Narrative, Tradition and the Renewal of Catholic History*\* (2014) is published by Christendom Press. Kevin Vanhoozer's *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*\* (2014) is published by Westminster John Knox Press. It is a sequel to his 2005 work, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*\* (Westminster John Knox Press). Rebecca DeYoung's *Vainglory: The Forgotten Vice*\* (2014) is published by Eerdmans. Thomas Forrest Kelly's *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*\* (2014) is published by W. W. Norton. Calvin Stapert's *Playing before the Lord: The Life and Work of Joseph Haydn*\* (2014) is published by Eerdmans.

The **MARS HILL AUDIO** *Journal* is produced at our studio in rural central Virginia, outside of historic Charlottesville. The *Journal* is one of several audio products we distribute, all of them intended to encourage greater wisdom about interaction with contemporary culture.

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