

SHOULD BATMAN KILL
JOKER? EXPLORING ETHICS
THROUGH THE DARK KNIGHT
JORDAN BOTELLO

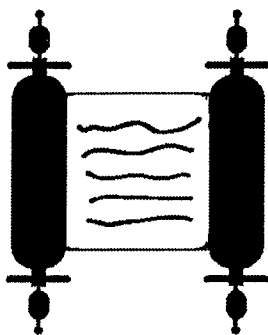
MUSIC REVIEW:

JIMMY NEEDHAM'S
"THE STORY"



BOOK REVIEW:

COMMENTARY ON THE NT
USE OF THE OT



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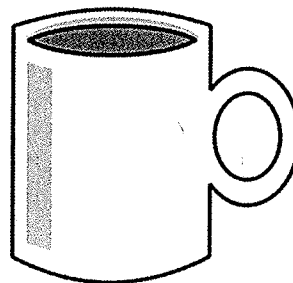
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COFFEE REVIEW:

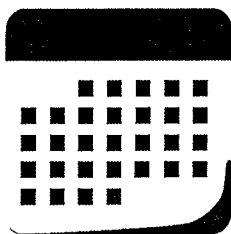
POUROVER PROCESS



ROBIN TAYLOR



**2015-2016
Departmental
Awards**



CALENDAR



PUZZLE



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FROM THE EDITOR
TERANCE ESPINOZA, PH.D.

This newsletter is inspired by the graphic novel's coming of age. As this summer blockbuster season continues its glut of superhero stories, and with DC finally joining Marvel in building its own cinematic universe, it appears that superheroes will continue to be part of pop culture for quite some time. There is good precedent for using pop culture to communicate the Gospel since the New Testament itself was written in Koine Greek, and Jesus' parables exclusively used imagery from daily life of 1st century Judaism.

The main article in this newsletter uses elements of pop culture to examine introductory issues in ethics from a Christian perspective. The regular music, coffee, and resource review articles continue to explore aspects of contemporary pop culture. We will also announce this year's departmental academic award winners. The puzzle (with prizes!) & calendar will round out this edition of *SDG*.

What is Batman's ethical persuasion?

Utilitarianism. According to a utilitarian ethic, killing Joker would be Batman's moral obligation, and not to carry out his duty would be a moral failure. Regarding utilitarianism, an act is moral if it maximizes the total happiness or well-being of the largest amount of people. Thus, saving many lives at the expense of one would be most expedient and thus proffer the greatest utility. So it seems clear that Batman isn't a utilitarian. Like police, Batman normally won't risk the lives of the innocent in order to detain a criminal, even if it would prevent future harm. Batman's standard response to his critics is that killing would send him over a line from which he would never return—making him no different than the criminals he combats.

Consequentialism. Batman is also not a consequentialist. Consequentialism holds that the consequences of one's actions are basis for any evaluation of said action. If Batman were consequentialist, he would have killed the Joker to deter the negative consequences of innocent deaths.

Deontology. Deontologists judge actions themselves rather than the action's outcome. For the deontologists, ends do not justify the means. The means must be justified in themselves, since actions themselves are always right or

ETHICS OF BATMAN
JORDAN BOTELLO

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS IS A CONDENSED VERSION OF A 15-PAGE TERM PAPER. FOOTNOTES HAVE BEEN REMOVED.

Batman has fascinated audiences ever since he was created by Bob Kane and Bill Finger in *Detective Comics* #27 (May 1939). But why has Batman perpetually tantalized the imagination? One reason is that Batman forces us to grapple with the perennial philosophical questions of life. As Mark D. White states, Batman "provides us a way to discuss [ethical issues] without having to experience them, [...] they let us play through an imaginary scenario and imagine what we should or should not do." At the heart of the entire "Batmanverse" is arguably the most defining ethical situation: Batman's refusal to kill the Joker.

Why is the Joker a problem?

The Joker has been a source of Batman's greatest pain, from the vicious beating and murder of Jason Todd (Batman's sidekick), to the paralysis of Barbara Gordon and the murder of Commissioner Gordon's wife. To be clear, the Joker is no second-rate killer; with a psychological profile that aligns with the standard marks of psychopathy, the Clown Prince is amoral (therefore not given to ethical considerations), and driven by an insatiable desire to destabilize societal norms and to reveal the hypocrisies that are often ignored by society.

As Alfred put it in 2008's *The Dark Knight*, "Some men aren't looking for anything logical. They can't be bought, bullied, reasoned or negotiated with. Some men just want to watch the world burn."

Why does Batman refuse to kill the Clown Prince? Joker's death would potentially save countless lives. Batman has considered killing the Joker before. Is Batman's adherence to this code immoral in and of itself? The heart of the matter lies in the ethics of killing to prevent future deaths.

wrong regardless of whether they would prevent further death. Deontology seems to be the most plausible ethic followed by Dark Knight.

However, even the most ardent deontologists would take exception in certain circumstances. Killing in self-defense may be a morally justified act in a deontological ethical system. If killing can be justified under certain provisions, is killing a homicidal villain one of them?

Divine Command. Many Christians subscribe to what has come to be known as a Divine Command (DC) metaethical

theory, which grounds our moral obligations in God's commands to us, and goodness in God's nature. Underlying DC is a presumption of moral realism—that morality is objective and binding.

Batman is most plausibly a deontologist who refuses to kill Joker because he considers the act itself immoral. But how shall the Divine Command adherent who is informed by both moral intuition and biblical data evaluate Batman's dilemma?

Capital Punishment and Insanity

Before concluding, another important factor to discuss is the Joker's psychopathy. If the Joker is not morally responsible for his actions, it seriously diminishes the case in favor of killing him. But how much blame can be ascribed to those who are suffering from a mental disorder? It is a common sentiment that the genuinely insane are not morally culpable. This sentiment was reflected in the landmark case *Ford v. Wainwright* in which the US Supreme Court upheld the common law rule that the insane cannot be executed.

Key to this discussion is the difference between *causal* responsibility and *moral* responsibility. Causal responsibility is concerned with whether an individual's actions are the cause of a particular event. Clearly, the Joker's actions cause untold death, pain and destruction; he is causally responsible.

In contrast, moral responsibility is concerned with attributing moral praise, disapproval and blame connected to an act. A person is only responsible if they are the appropriate subject of moral praise or blame. As Christopher Robichaud argued, "We can defend our belief that one as mad as the Joker isn't morally responsible for his actions. The core idea is that the Joker is not morally responsible because he doesn't perform his actions freely. His craziness has inhibited his ability to form second-order desires about his first-order desires, desires that include very lunatic impulses."

Summarized differently, if one is not an agent endowed with free will (regardless of whether that free will is libertarian or compatibilist), that individual cannot be held morally responsible. Thus, if the Joker is not truly free, then he cannot be held morally responsible. Does this justify Batman's refusal to kill the Joker?

Problem solved?

How is a Christian to answer this question? Aside from limited moral intuition, Christians are also ethically informed by biblical data. While the death penalty may be justifiable in principle, many Christians suggest that the death penalty should not be imposed in societies that have means of properly detaining criminals. This is based off of a biblical principle of the sanctity of life and the possibility of restoration in Christ.

However, in the case of the Joker, he is almost certainly not detainable—escaping from prison whenever he desires. Does this justify killing the Joker? There is no doubt as to whether the Joker has committed acts of murder, and he cannot be detained. What is Batman waiting for?

Of course the answer is not so simple—as often happens in ethics. Batman (and the DC/Christian deontologist alike) has several motivations for *not* killing the Joker:

- 1) Batman believes that the act of killing is wrong.
- 2) Batman has no epistemic certainty that killing the Joker will save lives.
- 3) Batman is not an agent of the state, and therefore would be operating outside the legal system.
- 4) The Joker as a psychopath is not morally responsible for his actions.
- 5) Batman believes that killing Joker would increase Batman's own probability of killing others.

Factor (1) involves the biblical principle of the sanctity of life, and (2) reminds us that we cannot be hasty to prevent the loss of life since we cannot definitively know the results of our actions. The bible makes provisions for capital punishment *in principle*, but (3) reminds us that Batman would be stepping outside of legal authority. Though the bible does arguably permit some forms of capital punishment, (4) reminds us that we can only attribute causal guilt to the Joker. Lastly, (5) considers the gravity the dilemma and how it will affect Batman permanently.

It seems that the Dark Knight is justified in not killing Joker. If so, then what are Batman and Gotham's obligations towards the Clown Prince of Crime? Pity? Institutionalization? Hatred? Should Batman passively allow the Joker to die if the opportunity arises? If one thing is certain, it is that the nefarious foe of the Caped Crusader would find it quite humorous that he was the cause of such ethical agonizing.

MUSIC REVIEW:
JIMMY NEEDHAM,
"THE STORY"
(VICE + VIRTUE, 2015)

Jimmy Needham's spoken word, "The Story," is the final track on his 2015 album *Virtue & Vice*. The poem is a history of salvation narrative (*Heilsgeschichte*), with a particular focus on penal substitutionary atonement.

Professor Teresa Blakney's *OT Literature* and *NT Literature* courses evaluated the poem as part of an in-class assignment. Student reviews of the song are mixed but generally positive. Even those who don't care for spoken word as a genre tend to appreciate Needham's intent. In their own words:

"I felt like I was in a coffee house listening to him tell this story, and when he was finished I wanted to snap. This story is amazing, and I recommend it to everyone." - H.

"The Story' has its roots firmly planted in the 70's-era spoken word movement. The syncopated jazz undertones give the rhythm a warmer feel, making it easier to digest the hard reality that is being discussed in this piece...[I am] excited for more work from him."

-T.

"The Story' encapsulates creation and the story of humanity and our fall from grace. It gives an intriguing perspective that is easy to understand... it explains the brokenness inside of humanity but also the hope we've been given through the Savior, Jesus Christ."

-A.

"I listen to spoken word occasionally, especially artists like Propaganda and Listener. Jimmy Needham is not as good as those others from the

perspective of presentation...but the lyrics themselves were great." -C.

"If the purpose of the spoken word was to explain the power of the history of [humanity] through God's story...does the delivery mechanism of the [Needham's] message - 'a hero, damsel, and villain' - give further depth to [it]? I feel only certain parts do... Regardless, the message is powerful and true. I may not approve of every detail of 'The Story,' but I approve the point. If this spoken word speaks to someone, it has done well."

-Jonathan Foster

"Needham does a fairly impressive job at conveying the most essential doctrines of the Christian faith...Where I was slightly disappointed is how he glosses over not only the crucifixion but also the resurrection. Needham makes mention of Christ's death, but never once does he mention the centerpiece of Christianity, the resurrection."

-Weston Combs

"[The] continued metaphor of *bride & groom* [is an] important element of 'The Story,' as Needham tells it. This is for us. Someone is in love with us. Needham pieces together words that attract the part of us that desires acceptance and to be understood."

-Vanessa R. Vickery

"To be able to explain the Gospel in such an artistic and heart-gripping way is truly a gift. I think that far too often, we Christians get so caught up in legalism and rules, and the stress of doing everything right and living a sin-less life, that we forget to remember the true nature of God...This spoken word reminds me of our sinful nature and the tendency to take God for granted, and yet we have hope. Jesus came to restore us."

-E.

ESPRESSO **YOURSELF:**
POUROVER PROCESS
ROBIN TAYLOR

The world of coffee can be an intimidating place. Most people barely know where to begin, and more advanced brewing methods are continuing to emerge. One good place to start your coffee adventure is with the pour over process. A pour over is a basic brewing method that starts with freshly ground coffee, a cone filter, and a pour over dripper.

With most pour overs it is better to start with a medium coarse grind; the coffee grinds should be around the size of coarse sugar. The drip time will depend in the size of your grind, with finer coffee grinds resulting in slower flow. Experiment with grind size and adjust as necessary.

Most pour overs will begin with a ratio of 60 grams of coffee per liter of water (approximately 2 tablespoons per 6 ounces). Water should be around 195-205 °F, ("just off the boil"), and it's best if you use filtered water.

The wetting process is simple: you make the dry coffee wet. First, add just enough water to wet all of the grounds evenly. This is the initial wetting step. Let the wet grounds rest for about 30 seconds to allow all of the CO₂ that built up from the roasting process begin to escape. It is important for the grounds to be evenly wet and rested before proceeding to the next few steps.

After 30 seconds it's time to start the actual pouring. Remember to keep your flow low and slow to decrease your chances of agitation and water temperature fluctuation. Start pouring your water in the middle and slowly pour in a clock-wise motion, adjusting pouring as needed. On the other hand, this is just one method to pouring the water. Some keep pouring in a pattern and others just pour. Total brew time, including time to drip, should be 2.5-3

minutes, so keep your pour time to 1.5-2 minutes.

The most important thing to remember is that it's okay to mess up. Coffee brewing mostly consists of experimenting and finding which method and process you like the most. So get out there, have fun, and happy brewing!

Book Review: *Commentary on the NT Use of the OT*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson.

Terance D. Espinoza, Ph.D.

Readers of the NT will quickly realize that it frequently cites or alludes to an OT passage or idea. Some allusions are less obvious, but careful readers of the NT will regularly sense the need to explore the OT background to NT passages.

The *CNTOT* was published in 2007 to address that need. Rather than discussing the nuances of typological or intertextual method, the 1,280 pages of the *CNTOT* are devoted to a comprehensive survey of all the OT quotations or allusions in the NT. After an introductory article on each book of the NT, the bulk of this commentary is a verse-by-verse analysis of every NT passages that contains an OT quotation or probable allusion.

This is not a book to be read all at once. It is a reference book that provides data for use in the study of a passage or book of the NT. If you are studying a NT passage for a class, a teaching, or a sermon, look at the *CNTOT* to check if there is an OT quotation or allusion there. The analysis of OT quotations and allusions will bring further depth to your study of the NT.

2015-2016 DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS BIBLE & THEOLOGY FACULTY

Every year the Department of Bible and Theology confers awards for excellence in academic achievement in the areas of biblical, theological, and language studies. This year we also begin our partnership with Zondervan Academic's Greek and Hebrew award program. The Zondervan plaques are already hanging on the wall by the north entrance of Nelson Memorial Library (entrance facing Einstein's).

We are proud to announce the 2015-2016 departmental award winners:

Excellence in Greek Studies + Zondervan Greek Award
Christian P. Sanchez

Excellence in Hebrew Studies + Zondervan Hebrew Award
Zachariah Chrisman

John W. Wyckoff Award for Theological Studies
Scott Bouck

Paul Brooks Award for Bible and Theology
Caleb Johnson and Mary Fagan

PUZZLE

What is the theme of station #3 of the Emmaus Prayer Walk on SAGU's campus? Post your answer—with a picture of the plaque at station #3—to Facebook or Twitter. Tag us on either platform @SAGUBibTheo, and the first correct answer on each platform will win a \$5 Fresh Market Coffee or Starbucks gift card.

CALENDAR

Are you a Bible & Theology major? Dr. Starner, Program Coordinator for Bible & Theology, is hosting a forum

for Bible & Theology majors from 6-6:45 pm on Thursday, April 7th, in S2236. The theme is "Faith, Reason, and Theological Profanity: The Alliance Between Faith & Critical Thinking," and will feature pizza, fellowship, presentation, critical thinking, and Q&A.

"Hello, it's me / I was wondering if after all these months you'd like to meet/ To go over everything / and help you with **Fall course selection** / while we are still in Spring..." Come visit us in the Dept. of Bible & Theology offices if you'd like help selecting classes for Summer or Fall.

Speaking of Fall, if you are considering Grad School, our very own **Harrison Grad School** offers multiple master's and doctoral degrees. Go by the office in the Harrison School of Graduate Studies (attached to the library) or go to sagu.edu and click "degrees" for more information.

Join Dr. Rosdahl and Rev. Jerry Weiss on a trip to Germany in May 2017 to celebrate the **500th anniversary of the Reformation**. Follow us on Facebook & Twitter for forthcoming information.

ETS & SBL 2016: The Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) will hold their separate, annual meetings in San Antonio, Texas, on Nov 15-17, and 19-22, respectively (The next time these meetings will be in San Antonio is in 2021). Student discounted rates are available for each conferences. More information is at www.etsjets.org/annual_meeting_overview, and www.sbl-site.org, "meetings," "annual meeting." Join us in the fall.

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DIY GRAPHIC NOVEL

