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Preview Response

FLOURISHING IS IRREDUCIBLY RELATIONAL AND BOUND UP WITH COMMUNITY

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I welcome the clarification of the three dimensions of flourishing provided in the preview. Each is clearly important, not in isolation, as the preview makes clear, but in combination. The preview suggests all kinds of connections with wider biblical/theological themes. As suggested, for instance, by Oliver O'Donovan, the notion of flourishing can be linked to the beatitudes. Of particular interest here is the way in which the beatitudes challenge and overturn common notions of what flourishing/blessedness consists in. Who would have thought that meekness, or mourning can be indications of a flourishing life, or persecution? But Jesus seems to be suggesting that those who are meek (who are not arrogant or proud), those who mourn (who are not heartless or indifferent), and those who are persecuted for his sake and the gospel are living lives in alignment with God's love and purposes for the world. Jonathan Pennington helpfully explores the relation between the beatitudes and human flourishing in his book, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017). The notion of shalom is another biblical idea that comes readily to mind in connection with the concept of flourishing and offers a further avenue of exploration. What impresses me most about shalom, and the same applies to flourishing in my view, is that it is best conceived in relational terms. The flourishing of the individual is irreducibly bound up with the flourishing of the community as a whole, including especially the vulnerable, archetypically identified in Scripture as the widow, the orphan and the stranger.

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