

## Preface

On January 21, 2013, Barack Obama opened his second term as President of the United States with an oath sworn on a stack of Bibles—the travel Bible of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the personal Bible of Abraham Lincoln. News outlets discussed the symbolic meaning of the use, how it seemed to fuse the work of two monumental leaders in the movement for freedom—and to place President Obama as the heir to their legacy. The King family was delighted at Obama’s gesture; they asked that the President and Chief Justice sign the Bible to commemorate its inaugural use. But Cornel West, philosopher at Union Theological Seminary, spoke of being deeply “upset” at Obama’s decision. In his view, it was unmeet that Obama should so lightly “use [King’s] prophetic fire as just a moment in a presidential pageantry.” Rather, we should understand King’s significance as linked to the history of the people for whose sake he died, but even more to the future for which he fought—a future without Jim Crow, without war crimes, and without poverty. West connected Martin Luther King Jr.’s message to the ongoing quest to eradicate injustice, enjoining the country and the president to “allow his prophetic voice to be heard,” and warning them, “don’t tame his prophetic fire.” Instead of *using* the tradition, West said, we should

let “the subversive power . . . be heard” to bring about the future for which King suffered and died.<sup>1</sup>

The differing ways of reading President Obama’s symbolic use of the pair of Bibles are, at bottom, arguments about which larger story ought to frame his action. Is Obama’s inauguration part of the history—and ongoing future—of government-sanctioned, official, and approved pursuit of freedom in America? Or is it part of a prophetic resistance and refusal that goes against established powers in its pursuit of freedom? The Bible as object has a basic function in an inauguration—a guarantee of good faith in the act of taking the oath of office. But, of course, no person taking the presidential oath is required to use the Bible in order to increase the solemnity of the swearing in. And there is presumably nothing that would force a President to tell the truth because of a hand on the Bible. Yet oath-takers swearing on the Bible treat it almost as a magical object—as if God will smite them if they do not act in good faith, like Huckleberry Finn, who lies with ease only *after* he notices that the book on which he swears “warn’t nothing but a dictionary.”<sup>2</sup> Apparently, the force of the biblical statement against swearing in Matt. 5:37, which enjoins people to simple truth-telling, letting their yes be yes and no be no, is comparatively weak at this level of pomp. Even so, the main issue in the use of the King Bible for the Obama inauguration oath is not the power in the book, but the power of the narrative within which the use takes place. Cornel West seeks a larger story as context for the using the Bible: the past that produced King and the future of his prophetic message. Obama’s use, to West, is just that, a “moment in political calculation.”<sup>3</sup> Barack Obama may have seen the act as one of more political aspiration than West gives him credit for, given that the oath on the Bibles was *inaugural* and therefore rather forward-looking, but the conflict of interpretation remains. Both West and Obama understood that a larger story was

being advanced—not just remembered—as they considered the use of King’s Bible; they disagreed about which larger story.

While this example of interpreting symbolic action refers to a different sort of reading, perhaps, than the kind where the Bible is *open*, it suggests that the use of a text may play into how a larger story unfolds. In this book, I suggest that not just the symbolic act of swearing on but also the actual reading and interpretation of texts participates in the unfolding of a larger story—the story of the future of Christ, the word of God. Texts have an eschatology, a part in God’s purpose for the cosmos set in motion at creation. They, with all creation, move toward participation in what Stanley Grenz has called the eschatological “community of the new creation,” the Trinity’s expanding, creative love.<sup>4</sup> This book tells the story of how readers participate in the future of the word, the eschatology of texts.

### **Eschatology, the Theology of Hope . . . for Texts?**

It is by no means automatically clear that eschatology, the larger story of God’s plan for the cosmos, bears that much on texts or our understanding of them. Broadly speaking, eschatology is the theology of Christian hope, of last things.<sup>5</sup> It is, however, more beginning than ending, more foundation than culmination, as scholars recognized anew early in the twentieth century, when Albert Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss rediscovered a less-understood part of Christ’s message, *thoroughgoing eschatology*.<sup>6</sup> As the eschatological framework of the New Testament was recovered, eschatology was newly understood to orient theology—and Christianity—as a whole. Karl Barth famously wrote in his *Epistle to the Romans*, “If Christianity be not altogether *thoroughgoing eschatology*, there remains in it no relationship whatever with Christ” (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> Jürgen

Moltmann has declared that eschatology is “the medium of Christian faith as such”<sup>8</sup> and Paul O’Callaghan that eschatology is “the definitive vantage point from which to contemplate the entirety of Christian revelation.”<sup>9</sup> While the term’s etymology links eschatology with the study of “last things,” Stanley Grenz, among others, has argued that the term should refer to ultimate things rather than final ones.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, given the fact that the Bible, Old and New Testaments, are shot through with promise, eschatology, the study of last things, is as much the study of first things, or as G. C. Berkouwer wrote, the study of the promise of the First and Last, Christ himself.<sup>11</sup> As Trevor Hart has put it, Christian theology is “irreducibly eschatological.”<sup>12</sup>

But how is eschatological hope related to texts? First, eschatology has to do with the purpose for the cosmos. Texts are a part of the created order, and they are part of God’s purpose for the creation.<sup>13</sup> While texts, even the inspired texts of the biblical canon, might be considered secondary creations—that is, they are made by human agents—they are yet of interest in an eschatological discussion. Texts are part of the created order, and thus God will judge them.<sup>14</sup> Even from the limited point of view of personal eschatology, texts as human works (even the most chance-inflected works cannot escape the influence of human agency) will be judged as their makers are judged. But eschatology is an exploration of the purpose for which everything was made, or, of the *meaning* of all creation’s story. Texts, having very much to do with both meaning and story, merit a special place in the discussion of that purpose.

For one text, eschatological importance may be assumed. God’s word, Isa. 40:8 reminds us, will stand forever. It thus has a special eschatology. But of course, the “word of God” in Isa. 40:8 refers as much to the promises of God as any textual instantiation of the word of God. And in that passage particularly, the promise of God is

actually that God himself will fulfill his promise by *coming* as the God of promise, judgment, and charity:

See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep. (Isa. 40:10-11)

For Christians, the promises of the Old Testament are the promises of Christ, and their assurances are of Christ's triumph in and over history.<sup>15</sup> As Jürgen Moltmann puts it, "In the gospel the Old Testament history of promise finds more than a fulfillment which does away with it; it finds its future. 'All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen' (II Cor. 1.20). They have become an eschatological certainty in Christ, by being liberated and validated, made unconditional and universal."<sup>16</sup> Because the God of the covenant promises is the God who raises Christ, the eschatology of the Bible is, after all, the future of Christ the divine word, who is subject, enactor, guarantor, and liberator of the divine promise. The future of the word is the future of the incarnate God.

The bodily form of the incarnate God may seem to downplay the textual future that this book asserts. However, this book argues that, rather than foreclosing it, the future of the incarnate Christ founds the future of texts. For the divine word, Christ, is creator and savior; his future of creation and salvation crafts future becoming into all creation. John 1 declares, "All things *came into being* through him, and without him not one thing *came into being*" (1:3). That is, Christ, the word become flesh, is the agent of creation, and his crafting, as the abundant repetition of coming and becoming in John 1 seems

to indicate, has brought things into becoming—has made them to become. Revelation 21:5 pictures the “one who was seated on the throne,” Christ, saying, “See, I am making all things new.” In Christ all things continue to become. He is making all things new, even in the new Jerusalem, which joins and transforms the earthly Jerusalem.

And Christ will have had to make things new for them to enter his kingdom in the first place. Revelation declares that the “first things” of death, mourning, and crying will have passed away as the “first earth” passes away (Rev. 21:1, 4), but that nonetheless, things will survive and go into the new Jerusalem: “[T]he kings of the earth will bring their glory into [the new Jerusalem]” and “people will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev. 21:24, 26). Revelation asserts that “nothing unclean will enter [the new Jerusalem], nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). Since all of the earth is tainted by sin and decay, nothing and no one may enter the Lamb’s book of life or the New Jerusalem without the Lamb redeeming and transforming it. Thus Christ’s “See, I am making all things new” draws our attention to how God prepares things for the new Jerusalem that comes down to join the earthly city. Because of him, all manner of glory and culture may enter it, as he makes them new—even the words that are to be brought in with the glory of the nations.<sup>17</sup>

The second reason that eschatology concerns texts is that, linked as it is to the meaning of all creation, eschatology always has to do with human orderings of time, that is, with history. The theology of hope makes history historic, as Moltmann has written, since “[t]he promises of God disclose the horizons of history” and “events . . . experienced within the horizon of remembered and expected promises . . . are experienced as truly ‘historic’ events.”<sup>18</sup> History is made of interpretations of time; and since eschatology has to do with

the interpretation of time, it also is a story of time's meanings. Textual formations of all kinds—in their relationship to syntax, grammar, and the sentence—interpret and organize time. Since text, from the moment of its composition, is under temporal pressure and entails an interpretation of time, it is related structurally to eschatology.

Not only do both texts and eschatology organize and interpret time, they also share a common temporal shape: the not yet. Eschatology acknowledges and texts enact a gap of meaning that in the articulation of the past creates desire for and orientation toward the future. This mood of future-from-the-past is not just the linearity or sequence of some stories as they work toward endings or closure. Literary expression has a special—textual—claim to not-yet-ness. Literary texts are not closed—their meanings are deferred, shifting, negotiable, even at their ends. Even while limited by established boundaries of the physical/digital text or the interpretive community, their meanings are renegotiable in new settings and times. Even if seemingly designed for closure, any interpretable word is open. The nature of text is not yet.

The third link between eschatology and texts is their communal nature. The divine goal for all creation is community, or communion—the communion of the Trinity extended to the creation.<sup>19</sup> Conceiving eschatology as the theology of *hope* in particular—personal hope, even—also emphasizes its relational nature.<sup>20</sup> Gabriel Marcel asserts that the one who hopes is one who receives a gift: “[T]here can be no hope which does not constitute itself through a *we* and for a *we*. I would be very tempted to say that all hope is at bottom choral.”<sup>21</sup> The communal dimension of eschatology parallels textual communality, for meaning is made communally in text. Private interpretations, in the strictest sense, do not exist: the text is not a text at all without, at least, an implied reader. The text may be the receipt of a gift from an author, a

conversation of sorts between author and reader, a set of relations between implied authors and implied readers, but for there to be text, there must be encounter.<sup>22</sup> And beyond even the complex set of relations for one person and text (with all their attendant implied and imaginary roles), the larger reading community holds and reshapes a text's shifting meaning between them. Literature is poorly read without a community; we see our private poverty most clearly by contrast when we experience the vast riches of engaging with others in our reading.

### **Wait, What Do We Mean by “Texts”?**

Already in this book, the question should be raised of what is meant by the words “literature” and “texts,” two terms that have been thrown around with what might seem an astonishing liberality. This is no accident. The definitions and delineations of these particular ideas, which we might expect at this point in an academic argument, are self-defeating in this particular case. For the definition of at least the term “literature,” and most likely the term “text” as well, or even “writing” or “books,” historically presupposes either a form or a function, both of which point to precisely that which I am trying to call into question. This book seeks to draw what has been referred to within the larger story—and to understand it within the temporal becoming that Christ gives all things. Thus the terms of the discussion will, at times, feel hazy. It would be fair to ask, as a colleague of mine did, whether the ideas in this book apply to all texts, used grocery lists and old car manuals as well as *The Iliad*. And it would be fair to wonder whether only written materials—or if also orature—have a place here. The argument here is intentionally inclusive, insofar as the inquiry aims at the future of the creation in



the kingdom of God and seeks also a generative function in theology and literary studies.

### **On the Structure of This Book**

The argument of this book proceeds as follows. The introduction asks, “Why might an eschatology of text matter?” It looks into contemporary ideas about reading practices both popular and scholarly and finds within them an aspiring quality—an openness to plenitude or mystery that is profoundly—though limitedly—eschatological in shape. Using the work of Jacques Ellul on means and ends, and of Augustine on use and enjoyment, I suggest the resources of Christian eschatology—that is, the future of the word of God in the resurrected Christ—are an enrichment and clarification of these widespread aspirations. In the first chapter, “The Future of the Word,” I argue that the future of Jesus Christ, the word of God, grants not only the creation at large, but also texts in particular, a purpose in God’s eschatological kingdom as well as signifying-power toward that kingdom’s ends.

The second chapter, “Reading for the Future of the Word,” shows how an anthropology of creation and an anthropology of the new creation may ground the idea of reading for the future of the word as participation in the kingdom of God. In the chapter, I use the “scribe trained for the kingdom” in Jesus’ parable as a scriptural base from which to explore a few of the many possibilities for reading for the future of the word, including preservation, utterance, translation, criticism, and call and response. This theological exploration funds a sense of possibility or hope for reading that leads into the first of several engagements with literary works, *scrivenings*, that intersperse the chapters. The first of these scrivenings is tentative, foregrounding not my own readings, per se, but literary works’ readings of other

literary works. I show how select literary texts—from light concept pieces such as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*’ reading of *Pride and Prejudice* to bestsellers such as Haruki Murakami’s *1Q84*, which rereads George Orwell’s *1984*, to even 19<sup>th</sup>-century African American poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s interpretation of Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* in verse—offer ways of thinking through how texts might be futured—forth both in concert with and dissonant from standard or popularly predominant interpretations.

From here, the argument must hesitate to consider a potential challenge to readers’ participation in the future of the word—ways that reading can not only till and keep the future of the text as Adam and Eve the garden of Eden, but could seek to inhibit the future of the text. Chapter 3 considers evil reading, a privative embrace of nothingness rather than eschatological becoming. In the chapter, I describe two possible threats to our participation in the future of the word: reading that seeks to freeze a text in interpretive certainty and reading that seeks to freeze a text in interpretive uncertainty. The first amounts to the insistence on a static, univocal meaning. The second amounts to a refusal to read, in which the multiplicity of meaning so overwhelms a reader that engagement with the text becomes impossible. Following this chapter, in a second attempt at scrivenings, I explore how two works of American literature, Henry James’s *Daisy Miller: A Study* and Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, pose similar questions and offer their own provisional and troubled anatomies and prognoses of evil reading.

The final theological chapter in the book considers how best, in reading for the future of the word, we might encounter the faults and fallenness of texts. Knowing that offenses must come, that readers cannot, even in an era of prejudgment, avoid them, this chapter offers a theology of reading what variously offends us as readers—that is, texts we consider obscene, or false, or ugly, or

worthless. In chapter 4, I look to John the Baptist as a model of the dual requirement of prophetic judgment and prophetic forgiveness within the community of engagement with the word; I describe and argue for reconciliation with the text. In the scrivenings that follow this claim, I seek to reconcile with Francine Rivers's *Redeeming Love*, an inspirational evangelical romance novel that retells a version of the story of Hosea set in Gold Rush California.

The book ends not with the Four Horsemen of the eschatological apocalypse, but, as we are, still in the not yet. The conclusion closes out the argument in scrivenings that seek the creative plentitude of the Trinity's love even from within a text that seems to repudiate it: Vladimir Nabokov's infamous *Lolita*, the lyrical, enchanting apologia of a pedophile, a work that was tried for obscenity in 1955 and remains significantly troubling after more than fifty years in print. From the perspective of the Come-Lord-Jesus, *Maranatha* end of the Bible, the close of any book is always an openness, a futuring forth and a becoming of the word through the fellowship of the love of the Trinity. By ending in readings, I end in hope, in an open book and the future of the word.

### **On Literature and Theology, On the Choice of Texts**

The seeming-despair that has attended my own reading practice and that of a wider body of readers, both academic and popular, over the last several years, drove me to dig in this book at the theological warrant for reading. Alan Jacobs's book *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* sketches out the lineaments of a charitable engagement with literary texts; his chapter, "Love and the Suspicious Spirit," rightly diagnoses the problem with a field tied so strongly to a hermeneutics of suspicion: "[T]he hopeless interpreter,

in the lassitude of despair, can neither receive nor offer gifts: Having petrified the *personae* of human discourse and thereby transformed them into the *res* of commodified ‘texts,’ he or she has nothing left to love, and in the end lacks even the consolations of interpretation itself.”<sup>23</sup> Thus for me, this book: eschatology, the theology of hope, became the way to investigate the assumptions and warrants on which a practice or life of reading charitably may proceed. Perhaps, then, this book is a prelude to the love Jacobs sets forth, though of course the confluence of the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love make it also something of a harmonic to his work.

When I reenter the library, however, buttressed by the eschatological assertion that readers, too, may be scribes trained for the kingdom, I find that literary texts do not line up behind theological affirmations as neatly as shelved codices behind the bookend. In fact, the reading of texts demonstrates that the tracing out of the future of a text is far messier—distinctly imperfect, nonlinear, and nonteleological—than the arguments I have forwarded might suggest. Thus the relationship of literary text to theological claim in this book is not precisely practice to theory, nor is it precisely illustration or application to claim. Readings seem to dance between the already and the not yet—not only from within the fraught process of meaning-making at the level of linguistic DNA, but also in the larger interactions between texts and contexts over time. We participate in the glorious future of the word under conditions vulnerable to sin and error, which lead to interpretive difficulties of many kinds.

Because my home, training, and inclination are not primarily in theology but in literature, the complicated interrelationship of any given text’s past, present, and future remains *the* vital place, for me, out of which questions may proceed and in which moments of topmost glory reside. It did, however, seem necessary to make the

theological claim to reach across disciplinary subdivisions. Instead of relying on examples from literary texts to illustrate the claim for an audience mired in the ins and outs of a complex argument, this work relies on theological assertions to offer shared vocabulary and starting points that expand in the ins and outs of the literary texts.

The literary works under discussion have been selected for their challenge and possibility in relation to the claim, rather than for their representativeness or canonical greatness. Because I am making an unapologetically enormous claim about meaning's repletion in Christ, it makes sense to choose works that operate outside out of a Christian framework; they will most readily illustrate the difficulties. None of the works under consideration here are explicitly apocalyptic or self-consciously eschatological under commonly held understandings of those terms. Aside from the biblical text, the only works mentioned here written from an expressly Christian perspective have been chosen for the ways their popular, accessible styles and generic commitments *risk* their literary futures rather than for their enduring greatness. It seemed necessary not simply to consider the future of the obviously long-lived texts from available traditions, but nineteenth-century popular verse or a pulpy Christian romance novel that one may or may not wish to be caught dead reading. In addition, I am intentionally dealing with works outside a great books tradition—recent works even, which may or may not stand long in the light of popular or scholarly approval. These raise for me the most pressing questions about the future of the word. One might not be surprised, perhaps, to think about *Paradise Lost* having some sort of place in the kingdom of God—perhaps as cultivating the future of the biblical text in some way. *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* seems a bit more of a stretch; but, it is therefore more worth investigating for the possibilities, problem areas, and nuances

involved in the cultivation of the future of the word in the kingdom of God.

Thus in the scrivenings sections of the book, I look into this ragtag assortment—first tentatively reading a few texts’ readings of *other* texts, then reading texts *about* reading, and finally, trying to reconcile with a few literary texts of the past and present. The book makes its way from a beginning thick with theology to an ending thick with literature—reading in hope for the future of the word.

## Notes

1. Cornel West, “Cornel West Explains Why It Bothers Him That Obama Will Be Taking the Oath with MLK’s Bible,” n.p. YouTube, [http://youtu.be/96d\\_CzrfxsM](http://youtu.be/96d_CzrfxsM), accessed January 21, 2013.
2. Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Thomas Cooley (New York: Norton, 1999), 187.
3. West, “Cornel West Explains Why It Bothers Him.”
4. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 623.
5. The seventeenth-century term has become a container for any number of theological topics. Stanley Grenz has divided these into three subcategories: personal eschatology (having to do with issues surrounding death, resurrection, and the afterlife), corporate eschatology (having to do with time, history, and apocalypse), and cosmic eschatology (having to do with judgment, heaven, hell, and new creation). Eschatological debates have traversed these topics across the centuries, with particular vicissitudes of emphasis (e.g., the question concerning the rapture and those “left behind,” say, or the timing of the second coming of Christ—millennial, post-millennial, amillennial, pretribulation, posttribulation—the form of the resurrected body, or the question of universal salvation). *Ibid.*, 571–72.
6. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 328.

7. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 314. It seems here that Barth is talking about the hope that saves us, the hope that sets everything toward the future.
8. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993), 16.
9. Paul O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope: An Introduction to Eschatology* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 329.
10. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 571.
11. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, ed. Marlin J. Van Elderen, trans. James Van Oosterom (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 9.
12. Trevor Hart, “Unexpected Endings: Eucatastrophic Consolations in Literature and Theology,” in *Art, Imagination, and Christian Hope*, ed. Trevor Hart, Gavin Hopps, and Jeremy Begbie (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 171.
13. As Stanley Grenz writes, “Eschatology is the exposition of the goal toward which the triune God is bringing his creation,” in Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 573. It is, to Grenz, “a goal which is ultimately cosmic in scope, one which envelops all creation.” Ibid., 623.
14. As Paul O’Callaghan writes, “No created thing, no aspect of human life, ‘is excluded from or eliminated in God’s judgment.’” O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 139–40.
15. Paul Ricoeur’s *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1969), has elaborated the eschatological cast of even the foundational myths of the biblical text—the first chapters of the book of Genesis. Ricoeur notes how Abraham, before a second Adam in Christ has been conceived of, is already a response of hope and promise to the fall. He further explores how the meaning of the Abrahamic promise flowers into meaning that “had not been exhausted” in Joshua’s Canaan, in Israelite history, etc., eventually tracing Christ’s role as judge and coming king as further futures set in motion by the promise of the early myth (260–78). While Ricoeur does not particularly focus on the *textual*, he acknowledges the movement from oral to text in his reference to editorial additions and changes in a piecemeal biblical text, in which intertextuality and midrash are key ways the promise sets in motion the furtherance of meaning. Ricoeur’s work setting forth a sort of biblical eschatology is by no means unique—it follows some of the dominant thinking in eschatology of the middle and late twentieth century. Ricoeur’s

work is unique in its helpful contribution to how the symbols of the myth themselves give rise and place to the thinking about resistance, pardon, and redemption of evil.

16. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 147.
17. See Richard Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), for a discussion of how Isaiah's picturing of the repurposing of the ships of Tarshish in Isa. 60 figures into the theology of the eschaton, particularly how God purifies and transforms elements of culture for their purpose in the New Jerusalem.
18. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 106, 107.
19. See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 624. Also, Han Urs von Balthasar's insistence in *Theo-Drama: The Last Act* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988) on a Trinitarian eschatology emphasizes the relationality of present and future being in Christ (57). For von Balthasar, this revelation is "being itself," "present . . . in every 'now'" (57). For Paul Fiddes, too, in *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), God's purpose for creation is communal, active, and open. God's plan is "to be satisfied by fellowship with personal beings who can, in love, make their own contribution to the relationship," or "the making of personalities in relationship with others and with God's own self," a creation "certain in fact and open in content" (174, 178).
20. Aquinas's writings on the supernatural virtue of hope also point out the extent to which others are involved in the becoming and courage-development of the individual.
21. Gabriel Marcel, "The Encounter with Evil," in *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond: Including Conversations Between Paul Ricoeur and Gabriel Marcel*, ed. John Wild, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 143.
22. Wayne Booth's *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) offers one vision of how this works: his argument centers around the relationships that we choose to have with texts—and their beneficial effects—and the evaluative process, coduction, by which we make those relational choices.
23. Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 90.