N. T. Wright, in *Simply Christian*, attempts to describe and define Christianity through the lens of echoes of a voice. Wright begins by pointing out four “echoes of a voice” that he claims everyone has heard: a cry for justice, a longing for relationship, a love for beauty, and a deep sense of spirituality. With these four echoes, Wright then shows how Christianity best describes the echoes’ source as the voice of the Christian God and how they intertwine with Christian doctrine. Finally, with the theory established, Wright shows how one could practice Christianity in the final section. Altogether, Wright’s main thesis is that the longing for justice developed in the Old Testament was answered by the Kingdom of God and the coming of the kingdom and the Spirit and that Christians are to use that information to make the world better for justice through nonviolent methods. Except for his undeveloped reasoning behind interpreting the echo as a voice of God, Wright makes a convincing argument that the theme of longing for justice is woven deep in the Old Testament story of exile and return and in the Kingdom of God and the Spirit in the New Testament by employing ample Biblical evidence and persuasive stories.

What Wright means by “echoes of a voice” and whether or not they are real is addressed by Wright in his discussion of the cry for justice. Wright likens the “echo” to a dream that you love but can’t clearly remember once woken up. Even so, you are sure of its importance and significance (Wright 3). However, just like a dream can be a silly desire expressed in very weird ways that have no bearing on reality, Wright acknowledges the possibility that some believe the echo for the cry to justice to be just a dream. He outlines three possible perspectives that can be taken on the echo for justice. The first main perspective is the belief that the echo is just a dream or “a projection of childish fantasies” (Wright 9). The problem with this perspective is that it carries extra anarchian baggage, where everyone is essentially a law unto his or her own idea of what good and evil is. Wright adds that, in such a situation, “the only sin is to be caught” (Wright 9). Since most people would disagree that such a world is ideal, Wright is able to dismiss this perspective. Another perspective is that the echoes are of a different world altogether, one in which everything is perfectly ideal. This idea is closely related to Plato’s theory that instances of beauty on earth “are reflections of a higher world” (Wright 44). However, this perspective falls prey to the loss of hope for this earth. If everything on earth is just a worse copy of this other world, there is no hope for any justice for the atrocities people experience every day. The best interpretation of the common longing for making things right, argues Wright, is that the echo is the echo of a creator God who has initiated the world wide operation of restoring the world to what it was meant to be (Wright 9). With the idea that there is a God behind the echo setting the stage, Wright continues to delve into how the echo of justice is woven into the very story and nature of Christian thought.

Throughout the story of Christianity, the longing for justice in the Old Testament is linked directly to the “already but not yet” nature of justice brought by the kingdom of God in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, Israel was tossed back and forth from nation to nation during their exiles. Wright recognizes this theme in many of the Old Testament stories, including Joseph who was sold as a slave only to be restored as a high ruler, Jacob who ran from Esau but eventually came back, and Israel’s many exiles (Wright 77). Because of the repetition, Wright claims, the “exile and homecoming...was cemented into the consciousness of the people who once again began to go up to Jerusalem in the belief ... that his project to rescue his people and set the world to rights was still on course” (Wright 78). In response to the hope and longing in the Jewish world, the New Testament gives a surprising answer in the form of the Kingdom of God as issued by Jesus’s resurrection. What Israel longed for was a physical kingdom of God, in which the Roman rulers would be banished and the Jews would regain freedom and autonomy. Jesus, however, preached a kingdom based on “loving one’s enemies” (Wright 101). While the Jews thought justice meant only punishment, Jesus showed that justice meant not only doing away with evil, but also encouraging good. The irony continues in that, while the Jews expected the Kingdom to mark punishment for Israel’s oppressors, the Kingdom of God was also going to judge Israel (Wright 101). This was done to show that God demanded His people spread the gospel, not hoard it like the Jews did for much of their history (Wright 101).

In addition to introducing the Kingdom of God, Jesus’s resurrection, argues Wright, also initiated the coming of the Holy Spirit, which enabled followers of Christ to turn from evil toward good and whose work foreshadowed the day when justice would be complete. When the twelve disciples of Jesus celebrated Pentecost, the Spirit descended upon them, paralleling the Law descending Mount Sinai in the hand of Moses (Wright 132). The yearning for a better world where wrongs are made right and good is rewarded is answered by the recurring theme of the collision between Heaven and Earth, Wright argues (Wright 218). In the case of the Spirit, followers are directed towards following the moral law of God and are made to despise sin. Wright clarifies that the law followers obey isn’t every Jewish law from the old Testament, such as circumcision, since those parts of the law were fulfilled in Jesus (Wright 131). Furthermore, unlike the Old Testament, followers are not forced to do something they don’t want to do; rather, followers are naturally inclined with the aid of the Spirit to choose rightly and to not choose wrongly (Wright 132). However, as with much of Christianity, justice is not complete in the world, although the work of its completion has been initiated. Wright describes this intermediate state as “a down payment and guarantee … of that eventual setting-right of all things” (136). The glimmer of justice at the end of the dark tunnel of present day injustice continues Wright’s theme of “the overlap of God’s future with our present time” (Wright 218).

Equipped with the Spirit and armed with knowledge of the Kingdom of God, Christians, Wright argues, have the responsibility to “renounce and rediscover” corruption and things inherently good through nonviolent methods in order to bring justice closer to reality (Wright 222). In the context of bringing heaven to earth, Wright describes the world as “out of tune with God’s ultimate intention” (223). In order to fix this, Christ followers, through “the strength of God’s Spirit,” must cast away the things of this world that cause dissonance with God’s world. Furthermore, Christians are to “rediscover” or cultivate and promote the good in the present world and the “new creation” (Wright 223). Through the actions of renouncing and rediscovering, things that are wrong will slowly but surely be brought to justice, and things that are pure, perfect, and good will be lifted up. In continuation of the themes of New Testament irony, the method for bringing this justice to the world is nonviolence. Wright claims that the reason for nonviolence is that, when Jesus was crucified, He took the punishment so that the world could be introduced to a “new type of justice.” With this new justice, “reconciliation and restoration,” not punishment, would be the power through which the world would be brought closer to heaven (Wright 226). Although the world still yearns for justice to be made complete, followers of Christ are enabled by the Spirit to use nonviolent methods to construct a better, albeit imperfect, system of justice in the world that foreshadows the day when heaven and earth collide.

The weaknesses in Wright’s arguments lie in his brief and rushed proof (or actually more of a suggestion) that the commonly held beliefs and longings for justice are actually the voice of God, in which the only evidence supplied was popular opinion. When Wright argued that the two alternative interpretations (viewing the echo as merely a dream from our imagination and viewing the echo as the echo from an ideal world far away), his only reasoning in refuting the other two was that most people would not like the consequences of either. In the case of the first alternative, Wright argues most people in their minds would not wish for rights and wrongs to be made up in the minds of humans if the consequence was hopelessness and a state of anarchy. However, Wright does not develop this theory well, and provides no support. Other than writing that “down that road we find Machiavelli” and other philosophers notorious for promoting a discardment of belief in moral systems, Wright doesn’t explain why such philosophy is not worth exploring as a potential candidate for understanding the echo. As a result, his decision to choose the interpretation that best fits with Christian belief seems done in seems to be made arbitrarily. Wright could have made a very strong argument that Christianity was better than the other options, but instead only argues for why Christianity is a good candidate.

Aside from the undeveloped argument of why God’s voice is the best interpretation of the echo, Wright’s main argument of how the the cries for justice within the Biblical story connect with the major Biblical themes is made convincing due to the amount of evidence. For the theme of heaven and earth becoming one, Wright points out that, throughout the whole Old Testament, and, in a way, the New Testament, Israel is longing for a day when things will be made right, specifically when the nations that have enslaved and exiled them will be punished. Wright supports this theme with specific examples, including Israel's slavery in Egypt and its eventual deliverance, Joseph who was enslaved and later glorified, and many more stories with a plot of being exiled before returning home (Wright 76-77). Paired closely with the theme of heaven and earth coming together is the theme of the difference and similarity between the future and the present. According to Wright, the “Spirit is given to begin the work of making God’s future real in the present” (Wright 125). Wright supports this theme of the “already but not yet” nature of justice by showing how the Spirit is able to turn followers of Christ away from wickedness and wrongdoing towards obedience to the moral law. With ample biblical evidence, Wright makes a strong case for how the yearning and hope for justice is a dimension of two great Biblical themes.

In addition to providing ample Biblical evidence, Wright employs allegorical stories as a means for better explaining how the longing for justice is woven into the Biblical story. In almost every other chapter, Wright begins with a story that illustrates the subject of discussion in an illuminating way. For example, near the start of chapter five is a story of a house in the middle of a wintry night. Wright explains that, to find the flashlight if the power went out, one might have to use a nearby candle. However, Wright then turns this analogy into a convincing argument for why God cannot be observed like most other things can. He likens trying to treat God as “a being” or “an entity” to trying to use a flashlight to see if the sun is out (Wright 56). Including the analogy enables Wright to make the reader not only know why God can’t be treated as something we can study like a cell in a lab, but also feel the absurdity. Another example of Wright’s excellent craftsmanship of tying in interesting stories to what would normally be regarded as boring theology is his twofold analogy of the church. He describes the church as both a river with many sources and a tree with one uniting seed. On one hand, the church is like the river, in that everyone who comes to the body of Christ starts with differences in everyone’s unique background and comes together as one. However, on the other hand, the church is like a tree in that everyone starts from the same seed of Jesus Christ but ends up in different roles and lifes. Some may end up being pastors, while some may be engineering the next skyscraper. With stories, Wright makes an already compelling argument more persuasive by enabling the audience to feel rather than just understand aspects of Christian theology.

Throughout *Simply Christian*, Wright makes the case that the dream of justice that is found in the Old Testament account of Israel is answered in the New Testament account of the Kingdom of God and the aid of the Spirit. Though the reasoning behind why the echo for justice couldn’t be merely an illusion or evidence of another separate world is not well developed, Wright does make a strong case for why God’s voice is a good candidate by supplying a multitude of Biblical examples paired with captivating and persuasive hypothetical stories.