

THEOLOGY, ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY

Henri de Lubac: A Return to Mystery

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Everything Is Sacred: Spiritual Exegesis in the Political Theology of Henri de Lubac, Bryan C. Hollon, Wipf and Stock, 2009 (ISBN 978-1-55635-857-9), 214 pp., pb \$24.00

De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed, David Grumett, T&T Clark, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-8264-9315-6), 187 pp., pb \$26.95

Meet Henri de Lubac: His Life and Work, Rudolf Voderholzer, Michael J. Miller (trans.), Ignatius, 2008 (ISBN 978-1-58617-128-5), 222 pp., pb \$12.95

Abstract

This article engages with three books which could serve as introductions to thought of Henry de Lubac. They show that his thought is not of merely historical interest. On the contrary, de Lubac's reintegration of the natural and the supernatural in the face of the strict separation promoted by some neo-Thomisms presents a strong case for a return to the mystical theologies of the church fathers. Such a theology relies on a participatory ontology to militate against understandings of nature as independent or separated from the supernatural and provides deep resources for the current interest in theological understandings of mystery.

These three relatively popular new books on Henri de Lubac (1896–1991), all published in the past three years, and all sympathetic to de Lubac's theology, are indicative of a surging interest in the twentieth-century French theologian. The books' contents leave little doubt as to the reasons behind this renewed focus on de Lubac. The French Jesuit

caused quite a stir in the 1940s through his reintegration of nature and the supernatural in opposition to what he considered the 'separated theology' of the neo-Thomist establishment. Despite his denial that the encyclical, *Humani generis* (1950), was aimed at his own theology, there is little doubt that the encyclical dealt with issues that de Lubac and his followers were stirring up. But the resurgence in de Lubac studies are more than a matter of purely historical interest. De Lubac's reintegration of nature and the supernatural caused him to plead for a return to the mystical theology of the church Fathers – including their ecclesiology, their interpretation of scripture, their understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, and a number of other theological issues. The participatory ontology of the premodern world held great attraction for de Lubac. A late modern society that is weary of the reification of the natural realm's independence will, therefore, find rich resources in de Lubac's return to mystery in theology. The three books under discussion are an indication, it seems to me, of this renewed theological interest in mystery.

Any of the three books under discussion can be read by way of a first entry into de Lubac's thought. Most helpful in terms of getting a fairly quick overview of de Lubac's life and overall thought is, perhaps, Rudolf Voderholzer's *Meet Henri de Lubac: His Life and Work*. Voderholzer is obviously at home in de Lubac. His book, a translation of *Henri de Lubac begegnen* (1999), deftly combines in-depth knowledge of de Lubac's writings with an amazingly accessible entry into his life and work. Of the three books, Voderholzer's is the one to pick up for a fairly elaborate and clear biographical account, which covers de Lubac's life in the first half of the book. The second half, entitled 'Theology in History', deals with various aspects of de Lubac's thought, and it covers in relatively short space almost all of de Lubac's theological concerns. Voderholzer has read many of the less well-known articles and books of de Lubac, and his brief summaries will no doubt whet the reader's appetite. Understandably, the nature and scope of Voderholzer's book render detailed discussion and evaluation of de Lubac's theology impossible. Some of the most interesting sections in this second part are the chapters on Christology and on spiritual interpretation. (The latter is well-trod territory for Voderholzer. In 1998, he published *Die Einheit der Schrift und ihr geistiger Sinn: Der Beitrag Henri de Lubacs zur Erforschung von Geschichte und Systematik christlicher Bibelhermeneutik*.)

Voderholzer's book is obviously intended as a general introductory text to de Lubac. Thus, footnotes explain theological terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers, and the book concludes with a bibliography that consists of suggested readings for those wishing to delve further into de Lubac's writings and into some of the secondary literature. Despite the entry-level character of the book, Voderholzer does manage quite well to highlight what he regards as the key to de Lubac's

thinking: his return to mystery. The first chapter of the theological part of the book is entitled 'Paradox and Mystery', while the final chapter carries the title 'Mysticism'. Voderholzer rightly highlights the fact that for de Lubac, 'all mysteries of the faith have a *paradoxical* structure as tenets developing from the one original *mysterium*' (p. 117). This approach to theology implies a return to premodern understandings of theology. It 'is not so much a deductive process for acquiring deeper understanding as it is a subsequent reception of this divine self-revelation in Jesus Christ' (p. 115). Mysticism and Mystery were, as Voderholzer points out, closely connected for the French Jesuit. In de Lubac's own words: 'Mysticism interiorizes the Mystery; it owes its life to the mystery and in turn keeps it alive' (p. 214). Voderholzer rightly contends that for de Lubac, this concern to connect with the mystery of Christ lies behind his interest in spiritual interpretation. In a few instances, I perhaps have some minor quibbles with the author's depiction of de Lubac's view on mystery. For example, Voderholzer presents Rahner's 'supernatural existential' as in agreement with de Lubac's focus on the mystery of man (pp. 134–5), ignoring de Lubac's expressed reservations with regard to Rahner's view on this matter. And it seems to me that the description of St Bernard of Clairvaux's allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs as 'not intended to be scriptural commentaries' (p. 217) does not do full justice to the fact that spiritual interpretation *was* biblical commentary, both for the medieval interpreters and for de Lubac. As said, however, these are minor quibbles. This book is probably the most accessible introductory book to the life and work of de Lubac currently available.

David Grumett's *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* is, of the three books, the most comprehensive in terms of presenting an overview of de Lubac's work. It jumps straight into de Lubac's theology and presents distinct chapters on many of de Lubac's central theological concerns (church; scripture; person, world, and history; faith, belief, and reason; Christ and the Buddha). It is also clear that Grumett, like Voderholzer, has read widely and deeply in de Lubac's writings. The main weakness of the book, as I see it, is that it does less than full justice to its subtitle. It is sometimes difficult to follow the author's thought pattern. Lengthy sentences and patterns of thought that may not immediately be clear to the reader tend to make the book difficult to follow. While Grumett certainly does clear up some of the perplexity of first-time de Lubac readers, I am less than convinced that they will have a clear sense of what animated de Lubac and what it is that they can beneficially take away from the Jesuit of Fourvière. That said, the book does contain a wealth of information on de Lubac, and for those already somewhat familiar with de Lubac's thought, this book will no doubt deepen their understanding and appreciation of the French theologian. The late Avery Cardinal Dulles rightly comments in the foreword that

Grumett's book is 'unique at the present time because it surveys the thinking of de Lubac not on one theme or another but on nearly all the major questions he treated' (p. x).

Perhaps the single most significant (as well as controversial) theme in de Lubac's theology is that of the nature–supernatural relationship. Indeed, when de Lubac looked at particular theological areas (ecclesiology, biblical interpretation, doctrinal development, etc.), he always placed them in the light of this important issue in fundamental theology. Grumett's choice to deal with this issue in his opening chapter is, therefore, a felicitous one. At the same time, I am not convinced that Grumett pinpoints de Lubac's views on pure nature and the natural desire for the beatific vision with complete clarity or accuracy. For example, while Grumett is correct to say that for de Lubac God was not obliged to give sanctifying grace (p. 15), the author does not make clear that in making this point, de Lubac was very much on the defensive. In other words, the neo-Thomist critique of Baianism – that it obviated the gratuity of grace – was identical to this movement's critique of de Lubac, precisely because de Lubac attempted to reintegrate nature and the supernatural. The gratuity or nonnecessity of sanctifying grace was not de Lubac's central concern; it was rather something he had to assert in the face of objections that his theology undermined it.

At the same time, throughout the book, Grumett puts his finger on some key notions in de Lubac's theology. Thus, in his discussion about the changing discourse regarding Eucharist and church in the Middle Ages, Grumett rightly senses that for de Lubac, the separation between Eucharist and church affected both Catholic and Reformed thought: '[T]heories of the Church began to develop outside any sacramental framework in both Catholic and Reformed traditions' (p. 61). With regard to biblical interpretation, Grumett is correct to observe the mutual relationship between the literal and spiritual meanings of scripture: 'The historical sense of Scripture provides the foundations for all its other senses. At the same time, the historical sense depends on each of the others for the full expression of its meaning because the whole of history is Christ-centred' (p. 80). And Grumett very helpfully describes the faith–reason dialectic in de Lubac when he comments: 'The function of the proofs for God's existence is essentially to clear away obstacles to a clearer perception of divine reality: the proofs are *ways*, and not foundations of a system of knowledge' (p. 120).

Bryan Hollon's *Everything Is Sacred: Spiritual Exegesis in the Political Theology of Henri de Lubac* is quite a different kind of book than the two I have just discussed. Hollon's book is a revised dissertation, written under Barry Harvey at Baylor University. As such, it is both more limited in scope (focusing mainly on spiritual interpretation) and places de Lubac in the context of contemporary hermeneutical concerns (in particular, the theology of postliberals like Hans Frei and George

Lindbeck and the theology of John Milbank). At the same time, the dissertation background does not in the least hamper the book's readability. It is eminently accessible, and in the process it presents a powerful defence of de Lubac's hermeneutical concerns. Hollon places the French Jesuit in the context of the increasing secularization in France in the pre-World War II years. As a result, he argues that 'de Lubac's theological career should be interpreted largely as an attempt to draw the Catholic Church out of its self-imposed cultural exile in order to reinvigorate its engagement with secular society' (p. 182). Hollon, therefore, presents a careful analysis of de Lubac's *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (1944), in which de Lubac confronted the philosophies of Auguste Comte, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche. This project was the result, argues Hollon, of de Lubac's insistence that Catholic neo-scholasticism had been partially responsible for the church's marginalization by failing to engage directly the atheistic philosophies (p. 34). Hollon reinforces this interpretation of de Lubac's concerns by way of an appeal to some of de Lubac's most well-known writings. Specifically, he argues that de Lubac's *Catholicism* (1938) was meant to present an ecclesiology that was 'inherently social and political' in character (p. 48); that *Corpus mysticum* (1944) depicted the abandonment of a functional understanding of the state (57–68); that *Surnaturel* (1946) described the rise of an autonomous 'pure nature', which de Lubac rejected in favor of a participatory ontology (pp. 79–94); and that *Medieval Exegesis* endeavored to reintegrate theology and interpretation: 'For de Lubac, theological science is superficial and inauthentic unless it does in fact lead to true knowledge of God, which must be participatory, since God is not an object to be known extrinsically' (p. 103). In short, Hollon insists that de Lubac's ecclesiology, ontology, and exegesis all addressed the church's complacency in the face of the crises of twentieth-century Europe. Summarizes Hollon: 'A participatory ontology such as the one envisioned by de Lubac means that there can be no partition between the natural and the supernatural' (p. 105).

The remainder of the book focuses in detail on the significance of de Lubac's attempt to recover spiritual interpretation as a tool to confront the secularity of contemporary society. In doing so, Hollon engages in a sympathetic-critical dialogue with postliberal interpretation (Hans Frei, George Lindbeck), as well as with the approach of Radical Orthodoxy (John Milbank). While appreciating the return to theological interpretation among the postliberals, Hollon remains critical: the intra-textual and descriptive approach of narrative theology continues to imply that 'the world of the text is viewed as an enclosed semiotic system' (p. 127). Since salvation involves participation in the economic Trinity (Rowan Williams, Reinhard Hütter), an extrinsic identity description of Jesus 'would have no saving power' (p. 131). In

opposition to such an extrinsic approach to interpretation, Hollon insists that participatory exegesis involves the reader through participation in Christ's body, the church (p. 131). Furthermore, while he appreciates Milbank's reappropriation of a participatory ontology, Hollon maintains that Milbank fails by mistakenly assuming that a theory or ontology will, by itself, be sufficient to counter modern secularity. Hollon argues that only spiritual or participatory interpretation of scripture is able to perform this task. Furthermore, Hollon expresses his concern that Milbank ignores spiritual interpretation, thereby abandoning the humanity of the Jesus of history: 'Milbank is forced to leave Jesus behind because he, like Frei, has attempted to make too much of the literal sense of Scripture' (p. 168). The result of Milbank's evacuation of Jesus is a subsuming of Christology under ecclesiology (pp. 144–6). Hollon then turns to de Lubac, convinced that the latter's Christological mysticism offers a more fruitful way forward: 'Happily, de Lubac's mystical Christology avoids the problem of extrinsicism that characterizes postliberalism, without affirming the primacy of ecclesiology over Christology as Milbank does' (p. 160).

Each of these books presents a solid entry into the life and thought of one of the most significant Jesuit theologians of the twentieth century. It will be clear that the books are, in a variety of ways, rather different from each other. As such, they nicely complement one another. It is this reviewer's hope and anticipation that they will contribute to the deepening impact of de Lubac in the twenty-first century.

The Clarity of God's Existence: The Ethics of Belief After the Enlightenment, Owen Anderson, Wipf and Stock, 2008 (ISBN 978-1-55635-695-7), xvii + 206 pp., pb \$25.00

Paul famously declares that 'since the creation of the world [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made' (Rom. 1.20). In his ambitious book *The Clarity of God's Existence*, Owen Anderson argues that Historic Christianity implies the truth of the Principle of Clarity. According to this Principle, the existence of the Christian God can be decisively proven; every alternative to this God can be shown to be impossible. Consequently, every human being can and should use reason to recognize the existence of the God of Christianity, and all who do not recognize the existence of this God are, in Paul's words, 'without excuse'. Historic Christianity implies that failure to believe in the God of Christianity stems from culpable ignorance and hence is a sin.

Anderson covers a lot of ground in the ten chapters of this book. In the early chapters, he critically examines various historical and contemporary views that reject the Principle of Clarity. The middle chapters focus on the challenges to theistic belief posed by the Enlightenment thinkers David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Of the many figures discussed in the book, Hume and Kant receive the most attention. The later chapters are devoted primarily to responding to the challenges of Hume and Kant and to developing the initial steps of a proof of God's existence. Anderson attempts to prove that there must be something that is eternal. This is only the first step in a complete proof of God's existence because the Christian God is 'a Spirit who is infinite, eternal, and unchanging in being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth' (p. 139).

The significant breadth of the book entails a certain lack of depth. Still, Anderson's discussion is generally clear and informative. One virtue of the book is that it provides an accessible introduction to many important thinkers as well as a helpful historical overview of the centuries-long debate about the existence of the Christian God. Philosophically, the most important element of the book is Anderson's attempt in Chapter 8 to prove the existence of an eternal being. I will focus the rest of my comments on that attempted proof.

Anderson understands an eternal entity as a temporal being that has no beginning (and presumably no end). To establish that an eternal being exists, he argues that the supposition that there are uncaused events leads to absurdity. Thus, there cannot be uncaused events, from which it allegedly follows that there must be at least one eternal being.

In thinking about Anderson's argument, it is crucial to see the difference between the following pair of claims:

- (i) There exists some thing, *x*, such that it is not the case that there is something that caused *x*.
- (ii) There exists some thing, *x*, such that there is some other thing, nonbeing, and *x* is caused by nonbeing.

If I assert that 'nobody could open this door', it would be a mistake for you to begin searching for the muscular nobody who can do the job. (Odysseus plays on this sort of confusion to trick the Cyclops in Homer's *Odyssey*). Similarly, if I assert that 'nothing caused this event', it would be a mistake for you to begin searching for the nothing (or 'nonbeing') that did the job.

A fundamental problem with Anderson's argument is that it rests on a conflation of (i) and (ii): '[I]f no being is the cause [of some event], then *non-being* is bringing about . . . something that is' (p. 150). Here, Anderson mistakenly equates the denial of the existence of something that brings about a given event with the assertion that a certain thing, nonbeing, brings about the event in question.

The heart of Anderson's argument is contained in the following passage: 'Here then is the contradiction: if being can come from either being or non-being, then on this point they are not different, which is to say that being is non-being . . . But *being* and *non-being* are different on all points and in every respect' (p. 153).

The idea here is that the supposition that being can come from non-being implies that being is identical to nonbeing, which is impossible. Thus, being cannot come from nonbeing. This reasoning shows at most that (ii) is impossible. But the conclusion Anderson needs is that (i) is impossible, and the falsity of (ii) does not imply the falsity of (i).

Another problem with this reasoning is that it depends on the assumption that if being and nonbeing have *some* property in common, then they have *all* properties in common. But, supposing we are thinking of nonbeing as an entity that can have properties, why think that this is the case? Being and nonbeing might both be capable of producing existing things and yet still be different from one another in other respects.

I should emphasize that in pointing to these problems with Anderson's argument, I am taking no position regarding the possibility of uncaused events. The point here is simply that Anderson's argument fails to rule out this possibility.

Suppose we were to put aside these difficulties and grant that Anderson's reasoning does establish that there must be an eternal being. I doubt that the success of Anderson's proof would imply that failure to recognize the reality of an eternal being stems from culpable ignorance. The reason is straightforward: from the fact that there

exists a sound line of reasoning for the existence of an eternal being, it does not follow that anyone who fails to carry out such reasoning is blameworthy for failing to do so. A person might fail to carry out the reasoning for any number of reasons. For example, hard as it may be for philosophers to fathom, many people simply are not interested in the sorts of questions that would lead them to discover the reasoning Anderson sketches. And some who are interested may simply fail to notice this particular line of reasoning; even the brief passage quoted above suffices to show that there is enough complexity to the argument that failure to discover it can hardly be classified as sinful. It is unreasonable to suggest that a person with no exposure to Christianity or the idea of an eternal and perfect spirit who fails to discover Anderson's reasoning is acting immorally in failing to recognize the existence of an eternal being. Indeed, the very existence of Anderson's book supports this point: if the philosophical proof of the existence of an eternal entity is so clear and obvious that failure to utilize the proof is actually immoral, it is hardly necessary to produce a written explanation of the proof.

In summary, then, *The Clarity of God's Existence* is a useful and largely accessible entry-point into an interesting and important debate about the culpability attached to failure to recognize the existence of the Christian God. Anderson advances a bold thesis – that failure to believe in the Christian God is always sinful. However, Anderson's defense of this bold thesis is ultimately unsuccessful.

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God and Mystery in Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama, David Brown, Oxford University Press, 2008 (ISBN 978-0-19-923183-6), 288 pp., hb £25.00/\$49.95

God and Mystery of Words is 'the final of the three volumes on religious experience as mediated through culture and arts' (p. 1). Having not read the previous volumes, I inevitably find myself caught *in media res*, where Brown wants to 'reclaim the wide variety of contexts in which experience of God has been identified in the past before these were artificially narrowed, as centuries passed' (*ibid.*; cf. p. 148). The author is guided by his conviction that 'revealed religion builds on natural religion rather than wholly subverts it' (*ibid.*). Brown appeals for 'more dialogue with ordinary human experience' (p. 268).

The book is divided into two parts, first of which focuses on experiencing words and second of which focuses on experiencing acts. As a layman, I find Part One of *God and Mystery of Words* quite a bit more engaging than Part Two which may resonate better with clergy.

Throughout the book, Brown expresses his dissatisfaction with control, fixation, closure, containment, and restraint. He constantly urges one to open up and stay open, to 'marvel' just like Mary and Joseph did (Lk. 2.33). In order to do so, Brown 'wants to engage in as open dialogue as possible with the wider culture of both past and present' (p. 2). Clearly unhappy with the closed mindset and self-serving attitude of much of historic Christianity, Brown's confession 'I am rebelling against past narrowness' (p. 226) reminds me of the words of an Estonian poet who complained that 'I do not fit into this world and this world does not fit into me'.

Brown emphasizes the contextual embeddedness of everything we think, say, and do. This, in turn, draws attention to the author's own context and to the 'original', intended audience of his remarks. He is an eminent Anglican clergyman, Canon of Durham Cathedral of seventeen years (p. 251). Those in his social/religious location will arguably benefit most from his enlightening discussion of several topics.

Brown displays his vast learning and wide reading which, at times, is used to sustain the argument, and other times, is displayed perhaps more for its own sake (e.g. pp. 37, 152–8, 174, 187–97). On occasion, the sheer volume of names, titles, facts, and references to God knows what tends to wear readers out and thus, obscure rather than clarify the particular conclusion toward which the discussion is moving. The author's untamed urge to educate readers – his 'encyclopedist syndrome', if I may be excused – can turn them off rather than on.

The overviews of various subject-matters that Brown provides, such as hymnody, Greek tragedy, Baroque poetry, the Eucharistic overgarment, are often summaries of primary and good secondary sources, but generally they are less valuable than his much more original application of the gained insights to the contemporary situation. The hard work of following through the myriad of examples leads sometimes to rather modest results. For example, the over thirty-page discussion of (the history and theories of) drama and religion comes down to saying that '[u]nusual stimuli [i.e. new liturgical acts or unfamiliar music] can sometimes deepen engagement rather than undermine it' (p. 184).

Although to create such a dichotomy is to simplify matters considerably, the ancient debate about the correctness of words can be divided into two main positions: Cratylus (Stoics/Origen) (emphasizing 'nature') and Hermogenes (Aristotle/Augustine) (emphasizing 'convention') (pp. 27, 30; cf. p. 71). Brown seems to want to revive some aspects of the Stoic/Origenean understanding. He proposes taking another look at the idea of words capturing something of the reality

that they name, thus perhaps ignoring the lesson that 'natural' understanding of language has proved not to work for Christian theology (cf. the debate between Cappadocians and Heteroousians).

Brown is especially intrigued by the parallel between linguistic signs and sacramental signs. In fact, he ponders about the sacramentality of language and does not shy away from stating that 'God is himself sometimes to be found in and through the words' (p. 17). (The concept of the sacrament that Brown promotes fits better with the 'natural' understanding of language.) At the same time, Brown also attempts to uphold the (linguistic) inexhaustibility of the infinite God (p. 20) and keep together the incommensurable – the finite language and the infinite God. The sophisticated Brown realizes, of course, that 'more modest ambitions for words are . . . necessary' than imagining that human words can capture the divine (p. 32).

Brown identifies the two-fold tendency in Western monotheism: (1) the desire to define and explain, and (2) the desire to stay open and accept the mystery (pp. 4, 22). Then he finds the mindset of the Christian Church generally to be more like the one found in medieval scholasticism (emphasizing *logos*) rather than in Kabbalah (emphasizing *mysterion*). (Kabbalists, too, have attempted a theological justification of the 'natural' understanding of language [p. 38].)

Mentioning Kabbalah certainly broadens the scope of Brown's discussion (to use non-Christian examples is his deliberate move [p. 267]), but it also makes one wonder why the point about mysticism has to be made with the help of another religion and not by referring, for example, to Eriugena, Mechthild of Magdeburg, or Eckhart. Staying within the limits of Christianity would have also helped to balance the rather one-sided picture of medieval scholasticism with counterexamples from the same brand of faith.

Brown sides with Ricoeur (contra Davidson), although not invoking these names, in contending that metaphor has additional meanings to its literal point and that it should be allowed to provoke free associations and new ways of thinking. Even though his explanation of poetry on pp. 46–55 may undermine his plea to leave metaphors creatively suggestive, Brown nevertheless reminds one of the richness of nonliteralized metaphors and their capacity to provide an experience of God.

For this reviewer, Brown's comparison of preaching to illuminated manuscripts is one of the highlights of the book, as he explores the captivating idea of the symphony/synopsis of hearing and seeing. This is definitely a fresh insight and also a very successful attempt to keep all communicative media interconnected (pp. 131–5). The author is aware of the resistance of many (Protestants) to the reintroduction of image and so he observes early on: 'The modern fundamentalist who claims an absolute character for the precise words as written down is thus no better than the medieval peasant who mistook the statue of Mary or

Christ in the local church for the reality itself. What is wrong with both alike is their failure to recognize the openness that is alike inherent in both art forms' (p. 18).

Besides theologians, this book is recommended for church leaders, preachers/homilists (especially Part One, Chapter 4), liturgists/music-ministers (especially Part One, Chapter 3), Bible translators, and Christians who like to ponder about things and learn from the past and from the larger culture.

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Theological Aesthetics After von Balthasar, Oleg Bychkov and James Fodor (eds.), Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008 (ISBN 978-0-7546-5834-4), xxxiii + 238 pp., hb \$99.95/£55.00

Theological aesthetics has become something of a growth industry in religious publishing in recent years. On the one hand, there have been numerous specific engagements with literature and film, intended to illustrate, illuminate or comment on theological truths. On the other hand, there has also been increasing consideration of the theological (and philosophical-theological) issues related to intentionally Christian engagement with aesthetics. This present work falls (primarily) into the second category. It is a volume in the ongoing series by Ashgate of *Studies in Theology, Imagination, and the Arts*, an important effort in advancing thought and debate about this area. Other books in this series have considered theological-aesthetic issues related to specific theological loci such as the passion, as well as more aesthetic topics such as performance and its relation to Christian practice and tradition. The present work collects together essays from two separate conferences on theological aesthetics sponsored by the Franciscan Holy Name Province. The essays are thematized under the rubric of 'theological aesthetics after von Balthasar'.

There are three ways in which the word 'after' in the title may be taken. First, it may signal a decisive break: after having gotten over von Balthasar, here is what theological aesthetics looks like. Second, it may indicate indebtedness: after von Balthasar decisively reconfigured the field, here is what theological aesthetics now looks like. Finally, it may indicate a work undertaken in allusion to, or in imitation of, somewhat as a painting executed 'after' Rembrandt: here is what theological aesthetics looks like in the style of von Balthasar, but undertaken in

different times and places, with different subject matter. Such allusion might go beyond mere imitation, sometimes well beyond it. Of these three senses, the 'after' of the title turns out to bear primarily the second and third, as the essays in this book fall generally into those categories, with little serious critique or 'post-Balthasarian' (in the first sense) work in evidence.

That is not to say that it is primarily an encomium. The tenor of the essays on the subject of von Balthasar is most often appreciative, but with select criticisms; partly this reflects the degree to which he is *au courant* in theology, and partly the reality that his thought is still being plumbed and received in the English-speaking world. Although there have been certain disputes within von Balthasar studies – one thinks of the debate between Ben Quash and Kevin Mongrain, conducted primarily in footnotes, over von Balthasar's use of Hegel in his dramatics – generally speaking the field is still developing and criticism from 'outside' has not arisen prominently yet. (Some of the recent work of Karen Kilby constitutes a partial exception to this and may well be a harbinger of more critique to come.)

A substantial essay by Oleg Bychkov introduces the work, providing a helpful overview of theological aesthetics in the wake of von Balthasar, as well as introducing the essays to follow and noting common themes and perspectives among them. Among the overarching themes of the book's essays is the notion that, contrary to much of the conventional discourse, aesthetics is 'not an autonomous field' . . . 'but an area that always interacts with and serves other fields, such as ethics, cognitive theory, or theology' (p. xviii). Aesthetics is thus considered instrumentally, mutually implied with truth and goodness and in that way occupying itself primarily with reality as a whole. Alongside this, the essays are united in addressing the 'three primary features of aesthetic experience – revelatory, transformative, and participatory – that are so central to von Balthasar's own work'. Beyond these commonalities, however, there are also great differences among the essays and their approaches.

The book itself is divided into three parts. The first part considers von Balthasar's 'legacy'; the second offers 'some criticisms' of von Balthasar; and the third goes beyond von Balthasar in considering other, wider-ranging theological-aesthetical topics.

The first division includes two particularly fine essays on von Balthasar's own work, by Francesa Aran Murphy and Ben Quash. Both essays situate von Balthasar's concern for aesthetics within the scope of his larger project. Murphy argues that his occupation with beauty was to allow him to show that 'love is the very heart of both God and the world' (p. 5). In his turn, Quash demonstrates an Ignatian pulse lying behind von Balthasar's movement from aesthetics to dramatics in the trilogy, a movement from contemplation to action. In light of this

Ignatian influence Quash goes on to consider in detail the substance of von Balthasar's aesthetics and, in conclusion, to raise a query about the limitations of his selection of drama for 'illuminating the human condition in its most extreme dimensions' (p. 30). The remainder of the essays from this section constitute a subsection entitled retrieving the past, and include chapters on Gadamer, Aquinas, Scotus, and Hopkins. The first three of these do not consider von Balthasar explicitly; indeed, the first is not even explicitly theological, and the second focuses on Thomas' aesthetics seemingly to the exclusion of theology. The Hopkins chapter is a welcome exploration of the theological echoes and subtexts of his poems, with an especial view toward his appropriation – one might say inhabiting – of Scotus' notion of *haecceitas*, and its relation to sacramentality. These latter chapters (with the one exception) reflect not so much on von Balthasar's legacy as on the legacy he inherited, the intellectual context within which he worked.

The second division, the briefest, promises 'some criticisms' of von Balthasar in its title, and delivers in the form of three chapters. In the first, English Roman Catholic scholar Fergus Kerr reconsiders von Balthasar's overenthusiastic tracing of 'the English tradition' of aesthetics, and particularly its alleged 'dwelling poetically on the singularities and idiosyncrasies of things' (p. 90). Drawing in the work of Eric Mascall and Austin Farrer, Kerr queries von Balthasar's account of this tradition. It must be said that while this is a fine essay, as a critique of von Balthasar it seems more to praise him with faint damns than anything. The other two essays in this section raise substantive questions about what von Balthasar and Protestant aesthetics might have to say to each other, and whether the time is right for a theological aesthetics (or ought more time be spent attending to specific forms of culture).

The third and final division looks beyond von Balthasar in addressing both general perspectives and specific issues in theological aesthetics. Among the essays in this section, Nicholas Wolterstorff raises questions about what he terms the common 'Grand Modern Narrative of the Arts' (p. 119). After offering substantial critique of this tradition, he outlines a different approach to art, grounded in the social practices related to art rather than in the work itself. Also, Richard Viladesau considers the important questions of whether and how the cross may be properly considered beautiful. Posing the question of whether good art is good for religion, Frank Burch Brown gives a qualified 'yes', raising questions about both kitschy religious art as well as common assumptions about 'high' art. James Fodor, through the work of Stanley Hauerwas and Paul Ricoeur, examines the beauty of Christ as manifested in the parables. Finally, Timothy Gorringer is found in his bailiwick, considering the shape of the built environment theologically, and particularly in this essay with a view toward aesthetics and ethical implications of development.

There is much to recommend this work as a collection of essays on an area of growing interest in theology. Contributors come from a variety of backgrounds and include Roman Catholics and Protestants. The book's price, however, dictates that it will in almost all cases be a library volume. Most likely it will find its way onto few private shelves, apart from the ardent (and well-heeled) scholar or the canny reviewer. While it is not needlessly technical, it will most likely not be widely read by nonspecialists. But any of those who work in the relevant fields, whether theological aesthetics, von Balthasar studies, or any of the other cognate discourses represented in this volume would want to make recourse to this collection, and so it would certainly be a valuable acquisition for theological libraries.

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Briefly: Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, David Mills Daniel, SCM Press, (ISBN 978-0-334-04130-6), viii + 95 pp., pb £7.99

Briefly: Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, David Mills Daniel and Dafydd Mills Daniel, SCM Press, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-334-04123-8), viii + 134 pp., pb £7.99

Briefly: Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism*, David R. Law, SCM Press, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-334-04121-4), x + 98 pp., pb £7.99

Unlike analytic philosophy, existentialism lends itself to expression in fiction, drama, and film. Yet, it is also a philosophy everyone wants to grasp in a single sound-bite. The 'Briefly' volumes dedicated to these three classic existentialist works may curtail the pleasure of watching a Sartrean play or reading a Kierkegaardian novel, but they do give the reader more substance than a sound-bite. Mills Daniel and his collaborators continue to demonstrate an ability to synthesize without sacrificing the integral flow of original works. Yet, even more than other installments in this series, these three best fulfill their purpose when they lead the reader to explore the original works.

In *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Kierkegaard (1813–1855), under the pseudonym of Johannes de silentio, unpacks the meaning of authentic faith by contrasting it with verisimilitudes. He focuses on the emblematic figure of Abraham who, despite having many opportunities to doubt, places unmitigated trust in God's power to prevail in every

circumstance. External appearance would suggest that Abraham should have been consigned to an insane asylum: he is determined to kill his only son and cannot tell anybody why. Yet, he never hesitates for a moment to second guess God's providence. Johannes delves deeper into the utter totality of faith through the tale of two knights: one who renounces his love for a princess and offers it to God because he knows the princess will never requite his love, and another who similarly renounces his love, though still believes he will win the princess precisely because it is absurd for him to think such a thing could happen. This leads Johannes to reflect at length on what one is to do when there is a conflict between God's command and a universal ethical precept. Mills Daniel shows that Kierkegaard is rightly considered the first Christian existentialist writer insofar as he frames the difference between faith and doubt in terms of a stark contrast between one's relationship with God and a willingness to carry out his commands, and a conformity to society's universal ethical precepts. According to Kierkegaard, the way of faith entails individual determination, utter isolation, and societal condemnation.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) carries the dialectic between faith and doubt even further. 'He encourages us to doubt, and then to doubt even the validity of our doubting, before we move "beyond" with him' (p. 3). This 'Briefly' covers only sections 1–3, 5, 6, 9 of Nietzsche's book, but it is more than enough to understand that for Nietzsche, authentic human existence is achieved only when we are completely free to exist truly as a collection of individuals, honest with ourselves and with the world. Nietzsche believed that philosophers have invariably ignored the complexity of the world in a vain attempt to make it fit their systems, deceived as they were into thinking that nature was something they could understand. This 'Briefly' offers incisive, challenging questions in the 'Issues to Consider' section which would spark lively discussion in any study group.

The discussion would presumably remain more civil than what erupted on October 29, 1945 at *Le Club Maintenant* in Paris when John Paul Sartre (1905–1980) delivered the lecture that would later be published as *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946). Law echoes Sartre's regret that, though one of the most accessible introductions to existentialism, this brief essay easily leads to misunderstandings of the finer points more fully elaborated in *Being and Nothingness*. Law also points to further confusions created by poor translations of the title (literally 'Existentialism is a Humanism'), the term *mauvaise foi* as 'self-deception' rather than 'bad-faith', and the word *subjectivité* as 'subjective' rather than 'subjectivity'. Nevertheless, Sartre's argument is clear enough: namely, existentialism is not a pessimistic esoteric theory offering nothing but despair, but an optimistic philosophy that asserts our fundamental freedom to choose what we want to be. Thus, the technical

meaning of 'despair' as the lack of a predetermined future should not lead to apathy, but action. We are in fact neither more nor less than the sum total of our actions. 'In an age in which human beings increasingly blame their faults and failures on their genes or social background', Law asserts, '*Existentialism and Humanism* serves as a reminder of the responsibility each of us must take for our actions and for the sort of human being each of us has chosen to become' (p. 14).

Many professional philosophers are of the opinion that full-blooded existentialism has run its course. It is simply vulnerable to too many valid criticisms to maintain its staying power in the midst of more refined schools in Continental philosophy. Yet, as these three works demonstrate, existentialism will forever find resonance in the hearts and minds of the wider public. Moreover, it is a philosophy that possesses some kernel of truth about the radical absoluteness of Christian faith. Yet, history has shown that it makes its greatest impact when experienced in literary and dramatic form – Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Camus are but three names that come to mind. That is precisely why these three 'Briefly' volumes would make fine guides for those seeking to understand the philosophical ideas underlying these masterpieces.

Daniel B. Gallagher
Sacred Heart Major Seminary



Studying Mary: The Virgin Mary in Anglican and Roman Catholic Theology and Devotion, Adelbert Denaux and Nicholas Sagovsky (eds.), T&T Clark, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-567-03231-7), xii + 277 pp., hb \$130

Studying Mary compiles the working articles that informed the production of the 2005 Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) Agreed Statement *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*. It is a multi-disciplinary set of articles drawing from scholars, both within and outside of ARCIC, who address the ecumenical issue of Marian theology. The articles cover historical, biblical, liturgical, and dogmatic themes.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, which has been experiencing some rocky times of late due to Vatican balking at the Anglican Communion's ordination of women and its current turmoil over the ordination of homosexuals, has proceeded in two phases so far since its establishment in 1967 (in the more progressive days of the Vatican II era). The first phase, completed in 1981, dealt with matters of liturgy, polity, and authority. The second phase, to which the 2005 Mary document belongs, has dealt with dogmatic issues such as salvation,

ecclesiology, and, now, Mariology, which concluded this phase. The Commission is currently in preparations for a third phase.

It is a bit difficult to take *Studying Mary* as a stand-alone text. It does not include the actual sixty-two page document on Mary, which is available elsewhere (a free version is online at the website of the Anglican Communion, and Continuum has published the document along with commentaries and study guides in an affordable 2006 edition). This in itself makes a reading of the present book slightly difficult to contextualize. Furthermore, the essays are no more than what they claim to be, 'working articles', which is to say, short, succinct, and oriented to highly technical issues of Marian theology. There is little pretense to artifice or, in some cases, argument; instead, the essays straightforwardly and soberly present the relevant data.

Fifteen essays, plus an appendix, compose *Studying Mary*. They are, as already noted, interdisciplinary, and few are longer than fifteen pages. Late renowned liturgical theologian and ecumenist Jean-Marie Tillard sets out the issues, especially focusing upon liturgical language in the two communions. John Muddiman and Denaux together and separately contribute three exegetical studies; Emmanuel Lanne, Rozanne Elder, Liam Walsh, and Michael Nazir-Ali with Sagovsky offer another five historical studies; and Sara Butler, Liam Walsh, and Charles Morerod examine the dogmatic and magisterial issues subsequent to the *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854), which defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Finally, Charles Sherlock and Peter Cross contribute two concluding essays surveying the contemporary issues and positions, with an appendix by Denaux detailing the redaction history of the 2005 Seattle Mary document.

It is instructive to survey the contributors; despite a significant nod by Tillard toward the feminist issues wrapped up in the very subject, and its relationship to the 'deadlocked problem of "women and the church"' (p. 4) only two women contribute (Sara Butler and Rozanne Elder), and feminist questions are nowhere to be found. Roman Catholic contributors outnumber Anglicans somewhat; apart from one essay on Eastern Orthodox concerns, a (superb) historical survey of the common Latin tradition, and one essay on Mary in the sixteenth to seventeenth century Anglican Church, the themes are heavily oriented to the Roman Catholic Marian triffecta: the Perpetual Virginity, the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption. For these are, of course, the ecumenical obstacles.

All this is to say the volume does exactly what it says it does – present a set of internal documents, memos even, that function as background and secondary reference to an ecumenical document on Mariology, particularly oriented to the specific issues of dogma and authority that are the relevant ecumenical sticking points. In that case, the volume is primarily useful for those working in ecumenical studies or

ecclesiology who need to contextualize and source the Mary document. Once that is established, however, one can take up the question of the usefulness of the text to theological scholars outside of this small group. And, it turns out the text is useful indeed.

For one, it is fascinating the way in which various contributors argue for the 'placement' of the doctrine. Tillard argues that Mariology should be understood in terms of salvation and eschatology; Muddiman argues cogently that it is an ecclesiological question; Lanne claims that it is an issue of Christology. Several acknowledgments are present (especially in Walsh's study of Aquinas and the Immaculate Conception) that the traditional grounding of Marian theology is in Augustinian anthropological issues of original sin, but the context seems to have decisively shifted on this point. This in itself is an interesting commentary on contemporary theological concerns.

Second, some (not all) studies could easily be used in seminary courses or as references for more general theological studies. For example, Rozanne Elder's historical survey is excellent and very readable (as is Lanne's study of patristic Mariology, though it is somewhat more schematic than Elder's); Muddiman's exegetical article is valuable for its methodological observations alone; Walsh's study on Aquinas is nuanced, detailed, and informative; and, for technical studies on papal dogmas, Butler and Walsh give detailed exegeses of *Ineffabilis Deus* and *Munificentissimus Deus* (the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary), respectively.

Third, to return to the feminist concern, it does illustrate something instructive about the current situation of ARCIC. In fact, it is fascinating, at a time when sexuality and gender issues pose the largest obstacle to Roman Catholic and Anglican ecumenical dialogue, that a volume on Mariology nowhere takes on the question. This is not necessarily to fault a generally excellent set of contributors for not doing something they did not intend to do; but it is to voice a lingering question about the way in which ARCIC is currently proceeding.

In sum, the volume has some essays that are accessible and useful beyond its immediate subject, and it contains vital information for those involved in or studying ecumenical concerns, and for scholars of contemporary Mariology. Of course, it continues the trend toward exorbitantly priced theology texts, so barring a more affordable paperback edition, most will want to consult it in their university or seminary library.

Travis E. Ables
Vanderbilt University



The Constant Fire: Beyond the Science vs. Religion Debate, Adam Frank, University of California Press, 2009 (ISBN 978-0-520-25412-1), xi + 288 pp., hb \$24.95

Emerson stated that the religion that is afraid of science dishonors God and commits suicide. Adam Frank, Professor of Astrophysics at the University of Rochester and a regular contributor to *Discover* and *Astronomy* magazines, agrees with that assessment. Writing as an 'evangelical' scientist, Frank seeks to address the supposed conflict in the relationship between science and religion. His personal experiences serve as the motivation and foundation of this title. He admits to being profoundly inspired – perhaps even religiously – by his work within the sciences. His interior responses to the practice of science have led him to read widely in philosophy, religious studies, and mythology, which is everywhere apparent in this volume. He largely argues that science and religion can both be sources of wisdom, and he sets this argument out in the nine chapters of the book now under review, some of which shall be highlighted in what follows.

No fan of the word religion, Frank tends to avoid it in this book, preferring rather to speak of 'spirituality'. In this manner, one could say that he follows the lead of William James, as James focused upon the experience of spirituality more so than the experience of religiosity. Frank uses this experience of spirituality as the point of contact with science, an experience which often leads scientists to view their experiences with the world as 'sacred'. He agrees, however, with Wilson's characterization of science as being neither a philosophy nor a belief system *per se* (p. 8). The term 'sacred' allows Frank to cut across specific religious delineations and get at the heart of what is meant by being 'religious'. So, in using the term 'sacred', Frank is referring to the character of the experience, and not to any object beyond the experience itself. After all, both spirituality and science are responses to the world's great mystery. The place that Frank begins his exploration of science as a spiritual endeavor is the narratives of mythology. An understanding of mythology as narrative, Frank deems it true, can help bridge the lacuna between (post)modern religious and scientific perspectives (p. 12). He asserts that in view of the pressures we face as a species, humanity would do well to draw from both science and religion as sources of wisdom for skillful action. Moreover, by approaching science as a way to apprehend the sacred, its practitioners may no longer see it as a mere means to an end.

In Chapter 1, which chronicles the roots of the conflict between science and religion, Frank notes that at the beginning, science and religion had a passionate marriage with one another. However, in the late Enlightenment period, science established its own codes and

norms for generating truth, which onset the separation of itself from the church. Chapter 2 covers the growing debate in the nineteenth century regarding science and design, highlighting the contributions of Paley and Darwin, respectively. Interestingly, Frank draws from Schleiermacher in Chapter 3 in order to lay out his revisioning of religion and science as a pursuit of the sacred, noting that Schleiermacher highlighted the role of experience in religion. Frank is quite right in highlighting this fact; however, Frank does not acknowledge that for Schleiermacher religious feelings were specified as the 'feeling of absolute dependence' on the deity (cf. *The Christian Faith*). Frank's 'oversight' here cannot be overlooked. Chapter 5 catalogues various scientists – Goodenough and Newton for example – that have encountered science as an expression of spiritual existence. The fifth chapter elaborates on the title of the book, characterizing our response to the world's beauty, elegance, and power as a constant fire, captured in mythology and narrative (pp. 109–11).

Part Two explores the sacred narratives in science and myth. He notes that the narratives of cosmology connect us with what James would have called religious myths (p. 145). Cosmology, he avers, was the first and most obvious domain where the intersection of science and myth became apparent (p. 168). Part Three transitions to the future, discussing the import of science, myth, and truth for the generations to come. In the epilogue, Frank summarizes his new perspective on science and religion, some points of which are worth noting. For example, *warfare* is not the only way to tell the story of science and religion, he contends. Further, religious experience is more important than doctrine when thinking about connections with science. Science, in both its practice and fruits, can manifest hierophanies (i.e. awareness of the sacred). Lastly, he contends that the common roots of both science and religious in myth can support a global ethos for the application of science in the twenty-first century.

In sum, Frank argues that science and the spiritual endeavor emerge from the same elemental experience of the world's sacred character. From that experience, an aspiration, *the constant fire*, arises to understand our predicament. Frank's title takes the religion and science dialogue in new directions. While the book is atheistic – or at least agnostic – in terms of affiliation, the practice of science as told by Frank is spiritual. It is highly recommended to graduate students in philosophy.

Bradford McCall
Regent University



Reflecting Theologically on AIDS, A Global Challenge, Robin Gill, SCM Press, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-334-04002-6), x + 208 pp., pb £16.99

The Christian tradition has an not only interesting but also fairly complex relationship with disease. For many centuries, individuals living with mental fragility were marginalized to the outskirts of towns and cities. Our fear of those people was so great that we locked them up in asylums. It has taken some time for society to respond compassionately and creatively to the challenge of cancer. There are some Christians that believe that within this disease, we might discover the mind of God as reflected in human disorder and fragmentation. Finally, the way in which churches have responded to AIDS and HIV disease is inevitably a mixture of understanding and prejudice. There have been practical, compassionate, and pastoral responses, together with a variety of theological interpretations. Some have even suggested that the disease is the judgment of God on an immoral people who fail to live within the law. We fear those who are different from ourselves and inevitably wish to protect ourselves from any possibility of contagion.

Reflecting Theologically on AIDS is one of the best collections of theological responses that I have reviewed for some time. The book and its writing have its origins in the theological workshop organized by UNIAID in Namibia in December 2003. The quality of the writing is reflected in and through the contributors understanding of the people, communities, and questions that surround HIV and AIDS. The book brings together theological reflection that is developing across the globe. AIDS and HIV disease continue to be crisis in so far as they reveal power inequalities, poverty, sexual abuse, stigmatization, and marginalization. The question for the conference and book is whether the churches are able, willing, and capable of offering an adequate theological and practical response to some of these challenges.

All of the fifteen writers work together to call for compassion '... the tradition gave us the casuistry of accommodation, precisely because the tradition is animated at its best by the virtue of mercy ... following the synoptic Jesus compassion surely should be our primary response to the challenge and tragedy of some many of our fellow human beings living with untreated HIV infection and AIDS disease today' (p. 15).

Each chapter addresses and seeks to take further the central themes of: God and creation, interpreting the Bible, sin, suffering and lamentation, covenantal justice, truth and truth-telling, the church as a healing, inclusive, and accompanying community.

The result is a fine and masterful piece of theology – a model of excellence of how to do theology in today's world.

James Woodward
Diocese of Birmingham



Anamnesis and the Eucharist: Contemporary Anglican Approaches, Julie Gittoes, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008 (ISBN 978-0-7546-6176-4), 169 pp., hb \$99.95

There have been more books about *anamnesis* than I can remember. Dix was still all the rage when I was a theological student in the 1960s. Our doctrine teacher expatiated long and deeply about the subject. It might be thought, therefore, that this out-working of a Cambridge PhD thesis, published half a century later, has slightly missed the boat. But actually it offers a helpful survey of the current state of play with regard to *anamnesis* before going on to widen the topic out most usefully.

The author, now a parish priest in London, reminds us that the opening words of the (Anglican – but others too, we know) liturgy ‘gather those present in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit’, and concludes when those same people are ‘called to obey the command “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”’. This book focuses on what happens, crucially, in between: ‘the encounter with the risen Christ’ (p. 150).

That last phrase has not been without its critics, and Gittoes’ first chapter reviews the range of the controversy *anamnesis* has caused. She briefly reviews the thoughts of notable Anglicans from the Reformation onwards, concentrating on contemporary writers. She discusses lines taken in the Anglican/Roman Catholic discussions (1970–1980) plus some of the repercussions in subsequent Anglican work; and similarly in the wider ecumenical report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* – which she follows in seeing *anamnesis* at the heart of the eucharist. She briefly discusses the work of the Roman Catholic theologian G. Loughlin, and the German Reformed writer, M. Welker. She uses the work of J. Begbie to consider interesting parallels between *anamnesis* and repetition in music. The following chapter, ‘Memory in the Anglican Tradition’, reviews classical Anglican approaches to *anamnesis* since the Reformation and acknowledges that ‘no one word or concept . . . does justice to the breadth and depth of Anglican understanding of the Eucharist’ but that ‘it is vital to acknowledge the interconnection between the Church’s social/political awareness, ethical action, participation in the Eucharist and the renewal of worship’ (pp. 47–8). A page later she offers her own belief that ‘anamnesis is fundamental to that point of challenge and encounter; presence and sacrifice; delight and cost. Within the tradition the Eucharist is variously described as a memorial of the passion, food of the Church, a prefiguring of future glory; or proclamation, praise and union with Christ. All these . . . are held together within *anamnesis*’ (p. 49).

The book then moves on with three central chapters which together contain its meat. Each opens up the topic more widely as Gittoes describes and assesses in turn the work of David Ford, Catherine Pickstock, and Rowan Williams. These are lengthy, detailed, and not uncritical discussions, and usefully provoke fertile reflections.

Gittoes uses Ford's emphasis on our ethical responsibility in relation to each other, chiefly by reference to his book *Self and Salvation*. (Ford is Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge.) Pickstock's book *After Writing* is the starting point for her discussion of *anamnesis* in relation to human memory. (Pickstock comes from the Radical Orthodoxy movement, with its roots in John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory*.) The third discussion reviews the thinking of Archbishop Rowan Williams as evidenced in some of his published works. In particular, she discusses his understanding of *anamnesis* in the Eucharist, where the community repeatedly acts as 'traitor, penitent and restored' (p. 129). There is a sense that Gittoes has kept 'the best wine until now', for while she tends to be critical of Pickstock's work, both Ford and, to a greater extent, Williams are mostly admired.

This is a useful book not only for any student of liturgy, but also for anyone who desires to think more deeply about the relationship of the Eucharist, and of remembrance more generally, to the Christian life. It is not an easy book to read, not least because the topic is not treated superficially. The discussion is often technical, but not opaque. However, 'Let the reader understand' takes on fresh meaning here: the book is marred by the odd erroneous quotation, plus a huge number of typographical and grammatical errors – some so blaring as to make one wonder whether the book was proof read.

John Armson
Herefordshire



Metavista: Bible, Church and Mission in an Age of Imagination, Colin Greene and Martin Robinson, Milton Keynes/Authentic Media, 2008 (ISBN 978-1-84227-506-1), xxxi + 278 pp., pb \$23.99

Christianity is in decline in the West. How is the church to survive, much less grow and thrive in this environment? Should Christianity retrench using an isolationist mode that disengages from the society and culture? Should it attempt to become one with the culture? Should it attempt to radically and subversively engage the culture?

To answer these questions Greene and Robinson give an overview of modernity and postmodernity, and of our current world. Greene and Robinson set forth the premise that the twenty-first century is a mixture of modernity and postmodernity – even post-postmodernity. This cultural brew of modernity and postmodernity the authors term ‘metavista’ – an evolving mixture of the past and present that is moving toward the future. This is an ‘unclaimed space’ – a ‘clearing’ (p. xxix) – ‘a cultural transition’ that is coming into being (p. 49).

The influences of modernity (seen in the work of Adam Smith, Thomas Paine, and Robert Chalmers) that remain are free market capitalism, the liberal democratic ideals of freedom and the inherent natural rights for every human being, and an evolutionary scientific view which values interconnectedness and innovation. In addition to modernity’s positives, its totalitarian and imperialistic dark sides are also viewed, as is its relegation of religion to the private sector of life.

Postmodernity, symbolized by the Matrix movies, rejects the modernist view and attempts to restore what modernity has taken from the world. The religious worldview that modernism attempted to expunge ‘has been extended a new work visa among the diverse discourses of postmodernity’. Religion is ‘an important feature on the postmodern landscape’ (p. 42).

Because religion now has a more welcome place the authors challenge Christians to engage the metavista culture with a bold and imaginative use of the Bible. The narrative of biblical stories should be used to reimage the church to the world it now inhabits. Greene and Robinson believe that there are four unfinished narrative stories that flow from the Bible – creation, Israel, Jesus the Christ, and the church. They encourage using ancient Israel as a model for the life of the modern church. *Metavista’s* view of the biblical narrative reflects the influence of the New Perspectives on Paul.

The difficulty with this approach is that, much to the authors’ dismay, the Bible is an unfamiliar, even closed, book for the majority of churchgoers much less those outside the church. Greene and Robinson believe that a large part of the reason for the Bible being a closed book comes from the use of historical criticism which ‘virtually closed the Bible for many pastors, ministers, scholars and believers alike’. *Metavista* declares ‘the historical-critical paradigm’ to be ‘bankrupt’ (p. 100). The authors of *Metavista* do not advocate a return to the ‘absurd’ literalist or fundamentalist view of the Bible (p. 95). Rather they encourage a typological and allegorical interpretation of scripture which comes from the medieval era. They believe that this approach enables the Bible to be viewed as a narrative whole, the reader to dwell in the biblical story, and to imaginatively reconfigure that story in the present age.

The question *Metavista’s* approach raises is whether this imaginative, narrative reconfiguration of the biblical story removes the biblical text

from its historical context. If so then the story being told is a new story, different than the biblical one.

In addition to the Bible, the resources the church has for radically engaging the world are church history, the current cultural context which the church needs to understand and with which it needs to boldly interact, and the explosion of global Christianity which gives the church the freedom to do things in new, diverse, radical, and counter-cultural ways. Christians are to do this in a 'fiduciary framework' which rethinks and reimagines the church's relationship to the culture in which it lives. This enables Christianity to be more of a cultural insider rather than an outsider. Christians should *be* church not simply go to church. *Metavista* sets forth a positive view of the church which counters the modernist view that religion is a harmful force in the world. The authors encourage Christians to embrace the interconnectivity of globalization and its infusion of new theological ideas. *Metavista* sees interfaith dialogue as a way of cultivating mutual friendship, respect, and trust across faith borders. Living in countercultural Christian discipleship at the intersection of the biblical story with the current global culture is the missional vision of *Metavista*.

There are many positives with this book. The book also gives rise to some concerns. *Metavista's* encouragement of a political theology seemed at odds with the book's concerns about the ties between Christianity, politics, colonialism, imperialism, and the Religious Right. *Metavista* speaks of the church as 'a political society' which is identified by 'baptism, discipline, morality and martyrdom' (p. 146). *Metavista* says that one of Christianity's challenges in the twenty-first century is its need 'to regain some genuine and serious political capital' (p. 70). Yet, it also expresses concern about wedding the church (Christendom) with the powers of the state (p. 97) The book's encouragement of a public theology is to be preferred to a political theology.

This reviewer also found little overt emphasis on saving souls through faith in Christ. There is a great deal of emphasis on social ministry, creating and building community in society, caring for the wider society, caring for the planet, gaining political and cultural influence in the world, building interchurch and interfaith coalitions, and exercising compassion. All of the above emphases are needed to counteract the modernist view that relegates Christianity to a private place outside of the public square. Social ministry should always be part of the church's mission (Matt. 25.31–40; James 1.27), but it is not the church's primary task. A missional theology also needs to clearly proclaim Christ as the Savior and Redeemer of souls (Matt. 28.18–20; Luke 24.45–8).

This book is a challenging read for anyone interested in the interaction of Christianity and culture, and for fomenting creative and imaginative ideas for outreach in this metavista world. Christian laity,

pastors, seminary professors, mission executives, as well as seminary and Bible school students should read this book. It challenges Christians to innovatively, imaginatively, radically, and subversively engage the culture with the Bible, and to use many means to accomplish that engagement – especially narrative story-telling, and social ministry. As Christians are moved by the Holy Spirit to use all the tools God has made available, the Gospel of Jesus Christ will continue to spread throughout the world. Christ promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church (Matt. 16.18).

The concerns of this book are more aptly addressed to the religious situation in Europe rather than in America which has not yet experienced Europe's dramatic religious decline. Still American Christians will gain insight from reading *Metavista* as they live in this more secular age.

Armand J. Boehme
Trinity Lutheran Church



The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, Paul Dafydd Jones, Continuum, 2008 (ISBN 9705673315), xiii + 290 pp., hb £65.00

Several labels have been used to describe Karl Barth's christology: Alexandrian and Antiochene, Apollinarian and Nestorian, modern and orthodox, and, of course, Chalcedonian. Such conflicting receptions attest to the remarkable and expansive complexity of Barth's work. Each label carries with it an assessment of how Barth has construed the human nature of Christ, particularly the status of Christ's human agency. It is precisely to this question that Paul Dafydd Jones (Assistant Professor of Western Religious Thought, University of Virginia) has set his work. Specifically, Jones aims to refute the charge that Barth's clear and resounding affirmation of Christ's divinity is accompanied by a weak portrayal of Christ's humanity and human agency. In this volume Jones aims to show that Barth's christology is biblically oriented, that it intends to maintain dynamically the complexity of human and divine agency within the center of Christ's single person, and how this arrangement is perfectly suited to be that through which God effects the salvation of the world.

The book unfolds as follows. In Chapter 1, Jones examines Barth's christology as he set it out in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*. There, Barth implemented the '*anhypostasis/enhypostasis*' couplet to describe how Christ's human nature lacked its own personal existence

but received personal existence through that of God the Son. Barth used this device as a way to frame christologically the dialectics of veiling and unveiling required by his doctrine of revelation. As well, Jones shows how Barth used the classical creedal affirmations (particularly those of the council of Chalcedon) largely as a polemical device against his liberal detractors. While Barth saw that the classical descriptions of Christ really did preserve something essential of the biblical witness, he preferred to order his own theology to the biblical pattern and form itself. He held at arms-length such terms as 'nature' and 'person'. Chapter 2 is devoted to understanding the massive shifts in Barth's theology that took place through the development of his doctrine of election as set out in *Church Dogmatics* II/2. Jones describes how Barth came to view *Gottes Gnadenwahl* (God's Gracious Election) as the eternal decision of God to 'self-constitute' in such a way as to determine his second way of being, the Son, as Jesus Christ, with a view to fellowship with humankind. This mind-bending element of Barth's theology is understood by Jones to be the ultimate ground for the divine establishment of Christ's human agency. In Chapter 3, Jones provides a lengthy examination of volume IV.2 of the *Church Dogmatics*. Here, Jones examines how Barth creatively used several scholastic theological terms in such a way as to underscore how Christ's human agency is actively established by grace and how Christ's human agency itself provides an important contribution to God's work of reconciliation. For Barth, the significance of the form of the work of Christ's human nature is in its sinless 'correspondence' to God's command. This correspondence is displayed by Barth through his exposition of the Gospel's presentation of the life of *der königliche Mensch* (the 'royal man'). Chapter 4 examines the christology of *Church Dogmatics* IV.1. Here, Jones focuses on Barth's use of the term history (*Geschichte*) to interpret the work of atonement, as well as Christ's human and divine work of free obedience to the Father unto death. Through attention to God's confrontation of evil (*das Nichtige* – 'nothingness') in his Son, Jones traces how Barth came to understand the dynamics of the atonement in which Christ takes evil into the divine life in order that it might be overcome. Christ's willing, human obedience unto death is examined by Jones through Barth's exegesis of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here, Jones is able to highlight the existential and agential elements that Barth sees at work in this most agonizing of biblical scenes, in which a 'pause' emerges between Father and Son as possibilities other than total obedience present themselves. Jones concludes the book with a series of questions and critiques, as well as an excursion into how Barth's doctrine of Christ's humanity may issue in political implications that give shape to how Christians view punishment in a democratic society.

While this volume is quite astounding in its ability to maintain focus while covering such a complex and variegated theme, there are a couple

of areas where one might justifiably quibble with Jones. Most notably is his quick dismissal of Barth's view of male and female as it comes to articulation especially in *Church Dogmatics* volume III. Why do Barth's specific remarks about christological anthropology (!), written after his supposedly watershed discovery of election, not deserve to be fully registered in Jones' otherwise comprehensive exposition? Jones makes it clear that he finds Barth's treatment of male and female to be reprehensible and a significant failing on the part of Barth to keep up with his own theological program. But are the lines of continuity between *Church Dogmatics* II and IV so disrupted that it warrants reducing the third volume to such a muted position? If so, the reason for this needs to be more firmly established. Much less significantly, Jones would have done well to refrain from including his forays into constructive political theology. He simply does not take the necessary space to develop his suggestions in a critical manner and this takes away his otherwise focused exposition of the humanity of Christ. The allergy to Barth's anthropology and the political excursions cause the reader sometimes to question where Jones' exposition of Barth stops and where his own constructive theology begins. Nevertheless, Jones' volume on the humanity of Jesus Christ in the theology of Karl Barth is perhaps the most comprehensive English volume to date on Barth's christology and it deserves recognition as such.

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The Virgin Mary, Monotheism, and Sacrifice, Cleo McNelly Kearns, Cambridge University Press, 2008 (ISBN 978-0-521-87156 3), xii + 356 pp., hb \$85.00

Kearns basic thesis is a development of Nancy Jay's argument in *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity* (1992). Kearns takes Jay's anthropological matrix and develops it theologically in relation to the role of Mary in the sacrificial traditions of Christianity and Islam. For the latter, she draws heavily upon another anthropologist, Abdellah Hammoudi, and his important work on sacrifice in the Maghreb. Kearns uses her Islamic materials to illuminate her Christian texts and substantiate her basic argument.

Kearns approach is interdisciplinary and while she makes a claim that she does not reduce theology to any other discipline (p. 18), it is difficult to discern, at least for this reviewer, what she might mean by

theology. In Part One, consisting of three chapters, Kearns presents an illuminating history of theories of sacrifice and then illuminatingly connects these theories to gender (primarily through Jay and Ham-moudi). In two subsequent chapters, she relates these theories to Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac and Mary's sacrifice of her son Jesus. Her basic orientation and hypothesis is established early on. It is the claim that there are two sorts of sacrifice: expiatory (or holocaust) and communion (or alimentary). Each has a certain gendered logic. The first requires a sacrificial object to be offered by a priesthood where patriarchal lineage is central, requiring tight control over purity in the priesthood so that lineage is preserved. The preservation tacitly undermines and overwrites the feminine genealogy of the sacrificial object (Sarah in the case of Isaac and Mary in the case of Jesus). This is the religion of patriarchy *par excellence*. What is most interesting is the high role given to Mary within the tradition of patriarchy, as best exemplified in Roman Catholicism. The second tradition of sacrifice as communion sits light on the priesthood and in certain cases diffuses it to the entire congregation, whereby gender and hierarchy are less important. Here, purity is not central, but rather an egalitarian feast, and here women might officiate in the sacrificial ritual, but concomitantly, Mary's role becomes less important.

In Part Two, Kearns inspects Mary in the four gospels. In three separate chapters she takes up a major Marian title: Daughter of Zion (Matthew and Mark); the New Abraham (Luke); and the Sorrowful Mother (John). Throughout, Kearns moves easily between traditional New Testament exegetes and postmodern theorists like Derrida and theologians like Catherine Pickstock. Her argument is that Mary in the Gospels is both subversive of this sacrificial order as well as central in keeping it intact. Mary is subversive in so much as this mother does not require a father to generate a sacred lineage and this sacred lineage does not follow an earthly father and calls into question family ties. But Mary is also taken as submissive to the will of the heavenly father: there is a presumed *fiat* to the incarnation as well as crucifixion, although Kearns notes the silence of Mary in the latter, not her assent. Hence, very quickly, orthodoxy takes this 'acquiescence' to legitimate and reinstate the sacrificial order. Kearns is sensitive to the deep ambiguities and possible trajectories within these early texts.

Part Three of the book, on Mary and the priesthood, sometimes sounds like an unwitting rehearsal of liberal Protestantism. Kearns through an exegesis of Hebrews and Revelation (ch. 7) and post-biblical materials, the Protoevangelion and the Qur'an (ch. 8), argues three important points. First, Hebrews is evidence that the expiatory sacrificial order has come to an end in Jesus Christ. Thus, the subsequent developments in the early church instituting a priesthood and an expiatory sacrificial order are profoundly unbiblical. Second, the figure of the

Bride in Revelation is associated with the alimentary, not the expiatory. Third, the post-biblical materials testify to these interesting trajectories in contrast to the Eucharistic expiatory sacrifice developed in Roman Catholicism (ch. 9).

Kearns book is rich, complex, and challenging and is impressive in its scope and the boldness of its central thesis. I have one major reservation about her argument (and on the technical level, the proof-reader needs sacking!). Jay's thesis suitably modified by Kearns acts like an iron interpretative grid. Admittedly, it is often deeply illuminating, but the structural weakness of the book is that the materials are sifted through this grid, rather than being allowed to challenge it. For example, in the chapter on the Eucharist, Kearns offers little wrestling with the primary evidence and fails entirely to engage with Aquinas' account of expiatory sacrifice as intrinsic to the alimentary-communal. It is worth looking at Matthew Levering's brilliant study of sacrifice, where he traces the division between the expiatory and the communal to the Reformation, with roots in Scotus, which implicitly challenges Kearns presumptive modernist grid of interpretation. Here, Tina Beattie's work on Mary could have helped bring in a more balanced theology. In fact, Kearns briefly discusses Beattie and overhastily dismisses her alternative approach (pp. 294–5). There is a danger of ideology, rather than theology, driving Kearns' discussion. This is not to dismiss the many trenchant criticisms of Roman Catholicism made by Kearns, also echoed by Beattie, but to see the possibility of negotiating this constructively. Only in the final pages does Kearns acknowledge the necessity of the expiatory sacrificial order without which the communal cannot exist. Only in the final pages does she acknowledge that the interpretative grid she has employed has serious limitations. This is to be commended, but it has disturbing ramifications for her apparent uncomplicated support of the celebratory and the Reformation. Nevertheless, this is an important and provocative book.

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The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology, Alister McGrath, Blackwell, 2008 (ISBN 978-1-4051-2691-5), x + 372 pp., pb \$44.95

It has commonly been said that the world at which the theologian looks and the world at which the secularist looks are one and the same. In

fact, nature can be 'read' in theist, atheist, or agnostic ways. Alister E. McGrath, Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford University, agrees. Also a scientist by training, McGrath seeks to open conversations, redirect thinking, explore new options, and lay the groundwork for a renewed vision of *Christian* natural theology. In doing so, he constructs a three part argument, which will be highlighted in what follows.

McGrath characterizes natural theology as the systematic exploration of a proposed link between the everyday world of our experience and an asserted transcendent reality (p. 2). He broadly argues that if nature is to disclose the transcendent, it must be read in certain – specific – ways. Instead of continuing with the notoriously ambiguous, conceptually fluid, and imprecise traditional definition of natural theology, McGrath herein proposes a distinctively Christian approach to natural theology. He argues that a Christian view of it provides the interpretive framework by which nature can be seen to connect with the transcendent, thus picturing natural theology as an enterprise of discernment. He argues against the view of natural theology as designating an argument directly from the observation of nature to demonstrate the existence of God, a view which was popularized in the Enlightenment and formalized by William Alston in the twentieth century. Rather, a Christian natural theology points to the God of the Christian faith, and not some abstract deity. In this, he agrees with Hauerwas who maintains that 'the God who moves the sun and the stars is the same God who was incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth' (S. Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, 2002, pp. 15–16).

Part One, composed of five chapters, considers the perennial human interest in what is perceived to be the transcendent. In spite of everything, we continue to speak about God in the contemporary culture, which attests to the divine's status as an important and meaningful concept. He illustrates the concept's persistence in supposed secular times, describing the methods and techniques that have been used to depict the significance and value of humanity along the way. In the third chapter, he discusses three recent examples of thinking about the transcendent: Iris Murdoch's Platonic perspective, Roy Bhaskar's critical realist, and John Dewey's pragmatic perspective. In Chapter 4, he highlights four ways to encounter the transcendent, seemingly arguing for a conflation of the second and fourth models: (1) ascending from nature to the transcendent, (2) seeing through nature to the transcendent, (3) withdrawing from nature into the human interior, and (4) discerning the transcendent within nature.

The second part of the book moves beyond the general quest and sets the search for transcendence within as particularly Christian context in three lucid chapters. In Chapter 6, he elaborates on the notion that nature is not merely neutral, but actually ambiguous, as God is one who

hides himself (cf. Isa 45.15). However, that God chose to inhabit the material order affirms that it has the *capability* to reveal the divine. Herein, he depicts natural theology as an engagement with nature resting on a trinitarian and incarnational ontology. Chapter 7 includes a detailed exploration of the historical origins and flaws of several families of natural theology that arose in response to the influence of the Enlightenment and thereafter continued well into the twentieth century. In response to his explorations of past depictions of natural theology in Chapter 7, McGrath sets forth his Christian approach to natural theology in Chapter 8. He asserts that nature has the capacity to be a conduit of the divine (p. 174).

Part Three is composed of four chapters and is McGrath's more constructive addition to the discussion of natural theology, offering suggestions to expand the concept of natural theology as well as its possibilities for engagement with the (post)modern world. He reconceives natural theology to involve every aspect of the human encounter with nature – its rational, imaginative, and moral dimensions. In Chapter 9, McGrath invokes the so-called Platonic triad of truth, beauty, and goodness as a heuristic framework for his proposed natural theology, reinterpreted in a Christian manner, allowing him a distinctly Christian way of beholding, envisaging, and appreciating the natural order. The tenth chapter explores the place of sense-making for a natural theology, affirming its significance, yet denying that it can 'prove' the existence of God. Chapter 11 uses the category of beauty to explore the affective engagement with nature and how that perspective can be incorporated into a revised natural theology. The book ends with a short conclusion, recapitulating the main themes of the title.

All in all, McGrath has offered the academy a treasure in this title. He largely argues that 'nature' is an indeterminate concept, that natural theology is an inescapably empirical discipline, that a Christian natural theology concerns the *Christian* God, and that a natural theology is incarnational, not dualist. Nature is herein seen to be an 'open secret' in that it is a publicly accessed entity although it is only truly understood from the standpoint of Christian faith. As such, he affirms the notion that the empirical is a legitimate means of discovering and encountering the divine. Indeed, McGrath's approach to natural theology holds that nature reinforces an existing belief in God retroactively through consonance between observation and theory.

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The Passions of Christ in High-Medieval Thought, Kevin Madigan, Oxford University Press, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-19-532274-3), 145 pp., hb £50.00

This humble essay (the body is a mere ninety-four pages) examines how several 'high-medieval' theologians – particularly Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure – struggled to engage their patristic forebears on the topic of Christ's human passions. More specifically, the author explores how the early Arians, their patristic opponents, and the aforementioned high-medieval theologians interpreted biblical texts that spoke of Christ's mutability. Author Kevin Madigan provocatively finds that 'the exegetical maneuvers that the ancient fathers needed in order [. . .] to make the scriptures sing an orthodox tune is [*sic*] then mirrored, many centuries later, by the high-medieval authors' tacit manipulation of their patristic authorities, which was intended both [*sic*] to make their patristic authorities both coherent with one another and orthodox in content' (p. 7). As to christological development, then, Madigan reveals that the problem of Christ's humanity provoked suspect interpretation extending not simply to the scriptures, but to the orthodox tradition as well. This represents a challenge to what Madigan perceives to be the reigning consensus that 'ancient and medieval christological thought are essentially in doctrinal (if not formulaic or verbal) continuity with one another' (p. 3).

The opening chapter takes up the interplay of soteriology and Greek metaphysical anthropology and theology in Arian biblical exegesis. Madigan is indebted to the landmark studies of Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Fortress, 1981) and Richard Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (T&T Clark, 1988), pushing aside, a little too easily in my judgment, the widely praised study by Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987). The author shows that the soteriological and metaphysical frameworks were validated by the Arians through their appeal to a vast array of texts, and that this scriptural evidence is what posed the biggest problem for the orthodox.

Chapters 3–7 look in detail at the patristic and medieval handling of some of the controversial passages. Lk. 2.52 states that Christ 'grew in wisdom', and thus the first concern is the patristic and medieval interaction with the challenge this text poses for their christology. Madigan observes that medieval developments in epistemology and anthropology complicated the relationship between the medieval theologians and their predecessors. In particular, Aquinas is found 'smoothing over' his divergence from John of Damascus and softening statements of Ambrose. A similar verdict is rendered in the next chapter, which

considers Christ's declaration of his ignorance of the day of judgment in Mk 13.32.

The fifth chapter takes up the issue of Christ's suffering on the cross and focuses on Hilary of Poitiers' reply in book 10 of his *De Trinitate*. Problems for the medieval Sentence commentators arise at the point where Hilary claims that Christ underwent human suffering but suffered no pain. Madigan surveys a variety of responses proffered by the medieval theologians – that Hilary retracted his statements in a then missing book of retractions, Hilary was arguing against those who thought Christ was overwhelmed in his suffering and Hilary intended to say Christ's divine nature did not suffer. He concludes as follows: 'When we compare the opinions of the real Hilary to the interpreted Hilary, it can be said (and said without exaggeration) that there is absolutely *no* substantial or essential continuity between the two' (p. 59).

The sixth chapter attends to the responses made to the question whether Christ experienced fear and sorrow in Gethsemane per Mk 14.33 while the seventh treats the need for Christ's prayer life in Mt 26.39; 27.46; Mk 15.34; and Lk. 23.46. In both, Madigan makes discoveries similar to those issued in the previous chapters. For example, regarding Ambrose's and Hilary's treatment of Mk 14.33, he finds that 'Bonaventure and Thomas bring Ambrose and Hilary together by invoking the Hieronymian concept of *propassio*. [. . .] However, it does do great violence to the thought of Ambrose and Hilary, neither of whom would have been comfortable with Jerome's notion of *propassio*' (p. 71).

Because Madigan discerns that the medieval theologians' appropriation of their pro-Nicene predecessors is superficial and contrived, he concludes that John Henry Newman's theory of doctrinal development 'simply cannot begin to do justice to the evidence' (p. 92).

There are a regrettable number of typos distracting the reader's attention from the argument at hand. I certainly cannot pretend to innocence in this regard. But some tidying remains for future editions or printings. This very minor problem gives way to a more substantial one, namely, the assumption that orthodox interpretation is valid. This is obviously important if one wants to advance the thesis that the *problematic* interpretive methods of the fathers' revisited them in the form of their progenies' interpretation of them. But doesn't such an assumption prematurely tip the argument in the direction of the thesis? Indeed, from the standpoint of the ancient fathers and their medieval sons, these interpretive methods were not corrupting but illuminative. Granted their precritical ways are peculiar for us today. But, on the one hand, as Madigan himself notes, the Arians had their share of strange metaphysical assumptions which allowed them to glean certain conclusions from texts which equally did not support the fullness of their views. On the other, there were explanations provided by the orthodox as to why

their less than straightforward readings were not guilty of interpretive misconduct. Madigan, who, it must be said, is innocent of any ideological crusade against the orthodox, may be involved in a little question-begging at this point.

To name one specific oversight in this regard, Madigan does seem to miss the role the *regula fidei* played within early orthodox confrontations with 'heresy'. He accuses the pro-Nicene fathers of 'decontextualizing' (p. 16) the scriptures. Yet, such a charge ignores the widespread conviction, since Irenaeus and Tertullian down into the fourth century, that the church's apostolic rule of faith provided the proper context for scripture's true interpretation. It would seem that one would need to reckon with this perspective before concluding the church is regularly engaged in interpretive malpractice.

Nevertheless, Madigan's study is certainly an interesting contribution to the topics of doctrinal development and christology. At minimum, it draws attention to the scandal of Christ's humanity for the orthodox tradition and identifies key places of contention in the scriptures and tradition. He does show that the high-medieval inheritors of the pro-Nicene fathers had difficulty reconciling their developed position with earlier versions. And in this, he gives insight into the precise nature of the differences. He is also correct that this should be taken into consideration when formulating theories of doctrinal development.

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The Agnostic Inquirer: Revelation from a Philosophical Standpoint, Sandra Menssen and Thomas D. Sullivan, William B. Eerdmans, 2007 (ISBN 0802803946), 331 pp., \$35.00

This book was a pleasant surprise. As I glanced over its contents to prepare reading I noted that it was going to have some of the standard arguments about belief in God and revelation: God is possible, there is reason to believe God exists, the problem of evil does not threaten this belief, there is reason to accept special revelation. Because these arguments are so readily available I was not very impressed with another book on the subject. However, as I read the book I came to the conclusion that it does much more than its authors give themselves credit for. It was this realization that made the book such a pleasant and encouraging read.

The book is aimed at the agnostic, and at correcting what it believes is a false presupposition in natural theology. It begins by asking what the agnostic wants (as opposed to a fideist). 'The philosophically inclined inquirer will not settle for anything less than a reasoned case' (p. 12). Of course, everyone believes that they have a reasoned case, even the person who claims to reject Reason has *reasons* for doing so. So what exactly is the agnostic looking for? 'How strong an argument, or reasoned case, is needed? An agnostic inquirer who hopes a good God has revealed may mark different stages of success. One hugely important stage would be for an inquirer to come to the judgment that the evidence in view renders the proposition that a good God has revealed more worthy of credence than its contradictory' (p. 13). This idea of 'credence', or 'plausibility', is crux: how can this be distinguished from personal taste or preference? If it cannot, and this sort of belief is a matter of personal preference, then in what sense can we reason and debate about it (*de gustibus non est disputandum*).

Before becoming discouraged I read further. The authors identified the false presupposition of natural theology as the belief that we must first prove that God exists and then argue in favor of special revelation. At this point in the book, they deal very thoughtfully with Kant and other important thinkers, and there is much that can be helpful in their analysis. They also do a good job of critiquing failed approaches to natural theology. However, their conclusion is that we must begin with revelation. The analogy given is that you receive a letter in which the author says he is willing to die for you. If you were asked 'is the author of this letter willing to die for you', you would say yes, meaning there is *someone* out there willing to die for you. The letter itself would serve as proof, as opposed to needing to go throughout the world asking everyone if they wrote the letter in order to support its claim.

The problem with this approach, and it is a problem that needs much more attention in this book, is that there are many different 'letters' claiming to supporting contradictory conclusions. Which revelation are we to accept, and which reject? Using their analogy, what if the letter saying that there is a being willing to die for you also says that this being is a square-circle. Would we believe then that there is someone out there willing to die for us? Or would we conclude it is a kind of hoax or fraud? There is some sense in which the authors see this problem because a good deal of the book is about how it is possible that God, a world-creator, exists. But this is just affirming the need to establish God before we can accept the credibility of special revelation, which is what the authors are arguing against.

It is in the sections about a world-creator that the book is most insightful. In these sections, the authors undersell themselves: they are doing natural theology and have within their grasp very strong conclusions, but they back off and only aim at plausibility. For instance, they

argue that something must have existed from eternity (without beginning). I believe they provide an argument that shows this to be the case, so that the only way to avoid the conclusion is to accept uncaused events. They go a step further to show that no one lives consistently with the idea of uncaused events, so that grasping at them to avoid the conclusion of something having existed from eternity is not intellectually honest. This is a powerful argument that raises questions about the ethics of belief and the culpability of ignorance. I have worked on a similar project in my book *The Clarity of God's Existence: The Ethics of Belief after the Enlightenment* and was encouraged to see these authors doing something similar.

Yet, the authors only conclude from this discussion that it is possible there is a world-creator, and therefore it is acceptable to take the claims of special revelation seriously. The reason why humans need special revelation is that it provides us with knowledge that surpasses our human capabilities. This is knowledge about the unseen world, our duties, and how to fulfill these duties. Here, a few problems emerge: if we cannot know about our duties or how to fulfill them, then we cannot be held responsible for failing to uphold them. Furthermore, the methods for evaluating special revelation (given by the authors) assume theism (a world-creator), but many purported revelations are from monistic or dualistic religions that reject the idea of creation. Consequently, we cannot know which standard of evaluation to use (monistic, dualistic, theistic) without first having settled those differences by doing natural theology.

Rather than build on their work about a world-creator, the authors conclude with a discussion of faith. Although they began the book talking about how an agnostic wants arguments, they conclude by claiming that faith is not a matter of evidence but of the will. As I suggested earlier, I was worried from the beginning that this would be the conclusion because of their claims about 'credence' and 'plausibility/possibility'. If we cannot have certainty, then at some point we must simply will ourselves to accept a position. This does seem to be true (as an if/then), but why accept the antecedent? Their work about eternal existence shows we can have certainty about some basic things. Why not build from that foundation?

Part of what happens when belief is shifted from the intellect to the will due to skepticism about certainty is that we can no longer claim that ignorance of some things is culpable (inexcusable). If we cannot know, then we cannot be held responsible to know. If, in the absence of knowledge, we must will one view or the other, then this willing cannot be culpable. It is famously reported that Bertrand Russell, when asked what he would say to God if it turns out God does exist, replied 'I would say "not enough evidence God"'. If there is not enough evidence for certainty, then unbelief cannot be inexcusable (as Paul says

it is in Romans 1:20) since there is an excuse – not enough evidence. If the goal is simply to persuade persons to believe one religion over another, then there are all kinds of nonrational ways to do this. But if the goal is to know what is clear about God, then this requires the ability to know what is clear at the basic level. I think an example of how this can be done is found in the sections of this book where the authors discuss the necessity of something having existed from eternity. This is a great start, but more needs to be done to go from there to theism.

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John Wesley's Ecclesiology: A Study in Its Sources and Development, Gwang Seok Oh, Scarecrow Press, 2008 (ISBN 978-0-8108-5964-7), xx + 301 pp., pb \$50.00

In this well-written and thoroughly researched work, Oh attempts to address two questions: (1) what ecclesial traditions and historical sources formed John Wesley's ecclesiology?; and (2) how did Wesley's ecclesiology develop throughout his life and ministry under the influence of these sources? By addressing these questions, Oh attempts to fill a lacuna in the study of Wesley's ecclesiology, namely, the lack of a comprehensive investigation of sources and development. However helpful, past studies, Oh argues, have been too one-sided, ignoring the complexity of Wesley's ecclesiology. What is needed, says Oh, is a comprehensive, integrative understanding of Wesley's eclectic appropriation of sources and the development of his doctrine of the church.

The book, a revision of the Oh's doctoral thesis, is divided into two parts. Through examination of Wesley's sermons, pamphlets, *Christian Library*, and other writings, Part One's three chapters explore the sources of Wesley's ecclesiology. Chapter 1 considers the influence of primitive Christianity and medieval Catholicism. Oh rightly argues that apostolic and patristic Christianity significantly and continuously shaped Wesley's vision of the church. As a steward of this tradition, Wesley regarded primitive Christianity as 'a standard by which to measure the faith and practice of Christianity' (p. 19). In contrast, it is difficult to show that medieval Catholicism directly shaped Wesley's ecclesiology. Indirectly, Catholicism shaped Wesley through its influence upon Anglicanism. Oh does argue that Wesley read many mystics, shared their concerns for holy living, but in general rejected mysticism.

Chapter 2 considers the Reformation tradition. According to Oh, Wesley appears to have read little of the continental reformers. The influence of Luther, Calvin, Bucer, and others comes through the reformers' injection of themes – particularly sanctification and discipline – into ecclesiology which were to have an impact on Wesley as these themes played out in Anglicanism and Puritanism. Oh rightly notes the important influence of Anglicanism's *via media*, its understanding of scripture, its sacramentalism, and its functional episcopacy upon Wesley. In many respects, Oh argues, Wesley's vision of the church was quite close to Anglicanism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Wesley's image of the Christian life and his instructions regarding its practice reflect 'not only affinity but affiliation' between Wesley and Puritan theology, ethics, pastoral ideals, and concept of the church as a disciplined community (p. 76).

In Chapter 3, Oh considers the influence of Pietism on Wesley's ecclesiology. As William Abraham notes in his forward, Oh's stress on the pietist side of Wesley is a significant contribution to Wesley scholarship. Oh presents a case for the direct influence of Johann Arndt and August Hermann Franke upon Wesley; influence of Philipp Jakob Spener upon Wesley comes through Spener's influence upon Franke. Oh points out that no direct evidence shows that Wesley read Spener's works. Wesley also critically engaged Moravian thought. Pietism influenced Wesley's reception of the order and spirit of the primitive church. His emphasis on religion of the heart and holy living, while possibly coming from the mystics, is significantly shaped by Pietism. After Aldersgate, Wesley, like the Pietists, stressed 'that the essence of the church is persons in direct relationship with God and each other, rather than primarily an institutional reality' (p. 109). Oh says Pietism's understanding of the role and training of the laity also informed Wesley's view of the church; similarities between Pietists' and Methodists' church-order is remarkable. Wesley's organic-pneumatological ecclesiology owes much to Spener and Franke; '[h]e was Spenerian in the way he saw community worked out in practice' (p. 109). Oh notes Wesley's strong connectionalism as compared to the Pietists, his greater stress on gifts of the Spirit and lesser emphasis on the priesthood of believers compared to Spener, and his criticism of Moravian quietism.

In the second part (Chapters 4–6), Oh traces the dynamic development of Wesley's ecclesiology using Albert Outler's chronological distinctions: 'early Wesley' (1703–1738), 'middle Wesley' (1738–1765), and 'late Wesley' (1766–1791).

The 'early Wesley's' ecclesiology was informed by the teachings, sacramentalism, and discipline of the Church of England. Oh highlights Wesley's debt to High Church nonjurors, particularly Thomas Deacon, for his interpretation of primitivism. The lack of Georgia

colonists' interest in his ecclesiastical primitivism caused Wesley to restrict his understanding of primitivism to the pre-Constantinian church; yet, his encounter with the Moravians in Georgia 'invigorated his primitivism with evangelical features' (p. 131). His views of ministry, according to Oh, were shaped by the theology and practical divinity of his parents. Susanna Wesley may have influenced the later Wesley's views on women preachers. According to Oh, Wesley retained a sacerdotal view of ministry until his return to England from Georgia.

In Chapters 5 and 6, Oh turns to the 'middle' and 'late' Wesley. Wesley's evangelical awakening at Aldersgate not only brought assurance of salvation but precipitated a new phase in his ecclesiological development. According to Oh, Aldersgate did not significantly alter, but, in fact, deepened Wesley's sacramentalism; he retained a sacerdotal position of the sacraments until his last days. Wesley's views on ministry did change, however. He did not radically change his view of the church after Aldersgate, yet, according to Oh, his ecclesiology through these two periods, integrally shaped by soteriology, becomes more dynamic and functional, controlled by a strong desire to preach the gospel. Soteriology governed his ecclesiology. Oh demonstrates how Wesley's view of ministry and his organization of Methodist societies adapted to his evangelical pragmatism. Chapter 6 gives considerable attention to the actions and steps for Wesley himself and Methodism. Specific consideration is given to the influence of Lord Peter King and Bishop Edward Stillingfleet on Wesley. Oh explores in depth Wesley's changing views on ordination and his ordination of two ministers in America in 1784 (and subsequent ordinations of ministers for England, Scotland, and Ireland), an action which transformed Methodism as a movement with the Church of England to an independent ecclesial body. He suggests that for the later Wesley church authority is more firmly rooted in the needs of missions than in doctrine or discipline.

Several strengths of this work can be identified. First of all, it is a first-rate piece of historical scholarship. Second, Oh's careful investigation yields a view of the catholicity of Wesley's theology. Wesley's vision of the church is a synthesis of varied sources from the whole church. The complexity of a sacramental, high-church Anglican, a pragmatic, Spirit-lead Pietist, and a disciplined-evangelical Puritan has promise of an exemplary ecumenical spirit which holds in tension the beautiful differences of Christ's body. A third strength, as mentioned earlier, is how Oh points to the way Pietist soteriology strongly influenced Wesley's ecclesiology. Yet, my one criticism is related to this strength. In Part Two, Oh arguably asserts this claim more than he explicitly demonstrates it. It seems to this reader, on this matter, there is more soil to till. In the end, this volume is highly recommended for giving us a thorough portrait of Wesley's

'truly catholic, thoroughly evangelical, and continually reforming' ecclesiology (p. 269).

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Everyone Who Acts Responsibly Becomes Guilty: Bonhoeffer's Concept of Accepting Guilt, Christine Schliesser, Westminster John Knox Press, 2008 (ISBN 0-664-23216-7), xiii + 217 pp., pb \$34.95

One of the most provocative assertions in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's later writing, and particularly *Ethics* (Fortress Press, 2005) is the claim that the life of Christian discipleship is inextricably linked with the task of bearing guilt on behalf of others. Schliesser's book on this theme is a minimally edited version of her dissertation, written under Glen Stassen at Fuller Seminary. Schliesser is also a former student of Jürgen Moltmann, who contributes the book's foreword. She begins by chronicling the scholarship on accepting and bearing guilt for others in Bonhoeffer's thought. Surprisingly, she finds few articles and no monographs dedicated to the subject. Schliesser continues by expositing and analyzing the concepts in Bonhoeffer's corpus which undergird, prefigure, or clarify his discussion of bearing guilt in *Ethics*. She proceeds chronologically, devoting a full chapter to each of Bonhoeffer's books to conclude that Bonhoeffer's Christian guilt-bearing is funded by Christological analogies for discipleship. At times, this exposition, which constitutes the bulk of the book, seems to stretch on unnecessarily, an impression compounded by a chapter which summarizes the findings of the chapter-level summaries by means of one more chronological march through Bonhoeffer's books. The highlight of the book, by far, is the final chapter in which Schliesser exposes inconsistencies and problems in Bonhoeffer's notion of accepting guilt for others.

There is much in the book to praise. First, Schliesser's thorough discussion of the constellation of concepts which underlie Bonhoeffer's thinking about guilt helpfully draws together discussions that are scattered across Bonhoeffer's entire corpus. She is particularly adept at tracing the Christological lines in *Sanctorum Communio*, *Act and Being*, and *Discipleship* (Fortress Press, 1998, 1996, and 2003, respectively) that weave together as threads of the assertion in *Ethics* that Christian self-renunciation and responsibility takes the form of bearing the guilt of neighbors precisely as the church-community, the body of Christ. As

Christ bore the guilt of the world, so Christians bear guilt on behalf of others through intercessory confession, personal solidarity, and direct action. Second, Schliesser's final chapter surely raises the major issues that any constructive work on Bonhoeffer's conception of bearing guilt must face – most notably, issues surrounding the inevitability of incurring guilt and precisely how active one's participation in guilt should be. Schliesser's conclusion on bearing guilt is cautious and measured; she suggests that bearing guilt for others is a germinal concept for Bonhoeffer (despite its deep roots in his work), one that remains unclear and inconsistent in his theology and, furthermore, claims that any radical political application of the concept is tied to Bonhoeffer's historical context.

One might venture a more positive reading of Bonhoeffer's thought at a few points. First, Schliesser affirms the propriety of bearing the guilt of others '*non-actively*' (by which she means, bearing guilt in solidarity without personally committing the wrong), but finds it problematic when guilt is accepted '*actively*' (p. 184). She is certainly right to argue that bearing guilt is a Christological concept for Bonhoeffer, but remarkably, in arguing that the 'active' bearing of guilt for others is ethically problematic, she does not raise the question as to whether Jesus' identification with human guilt should be considered 'active' identification or 'non-active' solidarity. That question is beyond the scope of her book, but I venture that for Bonhoeffer, Jesus Christ's relation to human guilt is more active than Schliesser is willing to recognize. Discipleship, following after Jesus, cannot be limited by autonomously defined conceptions of 'good' precisely because the disciple can think of no higher good than following Jesus' love for others into the task of bearing guilt on their behalf. Sinlessness and innocence in the *Ethics* are paradoxical, not straightforward concepts – which leads to a second consideration.

Schliesser underestimates the extent to which Lutheran paradox and Barthian dialectic govern Bonhoeffer's thought in the tension between, on the one hand, Bonhoeffer's rejection of the tragic (two absolute obligations cannot conflict because God's will cannot be divided), and on the other, his sense that his situation offered no blameless exit – guilt was inevitable. This is not so much an inconsistency in Bonhoeffer's thought, as Schliesser surmises, as evidence that, for Bonhoeffer, the world itself is already a paradox (pp. 177, 188). In living by God's commands in a world that contradicts God, one does not discover a golden path out of contradiction. The question of responsibility before God in a contradictory world is precisely not about sinlessness, but about freedom and obedience. The possibility that a human being might freely transgress God's command in order to love God and neighbor is not a tragic conflict of duties, but a sign that the world has contradicted God so completely that bearing guilt is often the lot of the

innocent and pure of heart. Schliesser is right to point out the tension, but wrong to attribute it to a failure to think systematically on Bonhoeffer's part. Rather, his 'systematic' understanding of the relationship between God and the world already encompasses the span of this paradox. The tension is not a failure to think coherently, but the coherence of the system in which Bonhoeffer thought.

Notwithstanding the two points above, Schliesser's work to exposit and analyze Bonhoeffer's concept of bearing guilt is a worthwhile contribution to scholarship on Bonhoeffer's thought, and certainly represents the starting point for any future discussion (whether constructive or critical) of bearing guilt for others. The book is to be commended for serious students of Bonhoeffer. The extended exposition of Bonhoeffer's corpus that comprises the bulk of the text offers the greatest benefit to the reader who has significant familiarity with that writing; however, it is not written in so prohibitively technical a manner that it would not be of benefit to a patient soul coming to Bonhoeffer for the first time. Alternately, the book may be relevant for scholars interested in the interplay between corporate and individual guilt, or in Christian ethics more broadly. In any case, Schliesser deserves gratitude for a book that clarifies and sharpens the discussion of Bonhoeffer's notion of bearing guilt for others.

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A Brief History of Spirituality, Philip Sheldrake, Blackwell Publishing, 2007 (ISBN 1-4051-1771-0), xiii + 251 pp., pb \$13.95

Perhaps in this day of increased frenetic activity where little space is left for the real leisure of reading, smaller books will become increasingly attractive to both readers and teachers?

Here is a model of excellence from one of the most competent and skilled writers in the area of Christian Spirituality today. Philip Sheldrake's work is widely known, and he is one of the few people who has secured respect both in Europe and the United States of America. His careful scholarship, clear and accessible style, and consummate skill as a teacher all bear upon the excellence of this text.

A brief history of spirituality narrates the story of Christian Spirituality from its origins in the New Testament to the present day. The book concentrates on spirituality for the most part in the Western spiritual tradition, though there are some references to Eastern Christianity.

Sheldrake offers his reader, a description of the distinctive themes of Christian spirituality and is able to discuss the historical and cultural events that changed attitudes and practices. Sheldrake introduces major writers, almost as good friends, as the ideas, images and experiences that shape that writing are discussed. His discussion of the relationship between religion and spirituality in the post modern age is particularly interesting.

This book should find its way into the hands of all those who wish to have their historical horizons enlarged. It will be a helpful way in for students but also a useful base for any course that aims to open us theology and spirituality for a beginner.

With this text, Sheldrake confirms his authority as a leading writer. I hope that other volumes in this area will be published by Blackwell.

James Woodward
Diocese of Birmingham



Christology and Science, F. LeRon Shults, Ashgate, 2008 (ISBN 978-0-8028-6248-8), x + 171 pp., pb \$29.95

F. LeRon Shults (PhD, Princeton University; PhD, Walden University) is professor of Systematic Theology at University of Agder in Kristiansand, Norway, and the author of several books. He has produced this title for the Ashgate Science and Religion Series, the aim of which is to advance interdisciplinary studies and research key themes in the science and religion dialogue. While much ink has been spilt in recent decades regarding the relation between science and religion, particular beliefs about Christ have not often been brought to the forefront of this interdisciplinary discussion. To help rectify this omission, this volume brings the specific themes of Christology into dialogue with contemporary science. In what follows a cursory review of the material shall be provided.

The book is broken into four distinct chapters, each covering a case study of sorts, with an attendant epilogue. The first chapter, 'Reforming Christology', lays the groundwork for the book, and sets forth the task that Shults seeks to achieve within the book. Herein, he asserts that reforming Christology will require the reconstruction of previous doctrinal formulations, as the church engages its particular cultural context. Bringing Christology and science together in mutual dialogue, he notes, will have disturbing effects upon many of our long-held assumptions about Christology. He proposes that we think of theology and

science as *lovers*, without the sexual innuendo, for this imagery evokes images of the loss of *control* over the other, as well as the notion that lovers respect the complete *otherness* of their beloved. Shults pictures this involvement between theology and science as being reciprocal, with philosophy playing the mediating role between the two. He asserts that all three seek to make sense of the human experience of life within the cosmos, so it is logical to join the three disciplines. In this sense, then, Shults engages in philosophical theology within this book. Also within this first chapter, Shults notes that the growing appeal of relationality in the philosophy of science has great import to modern formulations of Christology (p. 6). Moreover, the realization of the contextuality of all scientific inquiry also has great bearing upon Christology (p. 7). Shults asserts that if we use the term 'science' to refer to organized modes of contextual inquiry, then we may think of Christology as the science of Jesus Christ. Within this science of Jesus Christ, the shift from substantialist Christology to relationality provides us with the opportunity to develop a more integrative presentation of Christological doctrine (p. 13).

As a first step toward a more holistic presentation of themes in Christology, Shults has incorporated treatments of the doctrines of *incarnation* (Chapter 2), *atonement* (Chapter 3), and the *parousia* (Chapter 4) within this book as practical applications of his reciprocal mediation between Christology, philosophy, and science. Chapter 2, 'Incarnation and Evolutionary Biology', explores some of the shifts in the late modern discourse that shape the contemporary landscape in which the doctrine of the incarnation and evolutionary biology operate. He notes, for example, that many developments in this period have challenged the notions of embodied personhood that were assumed in early formulations of Christology. Herein, he rejects the explanatory power of substance metaphysics, and embraces the relational identification of Jesus with God (pp. 57–9).

Chapter 3, 'Atonement and Cultural Anthropology', explores the challenges and opportunities that emerge when one attempts to articulate the biblical tradition regarding atoning work of Jesus with contemporary scientific insights about the cultural and social dimensions of human life. Shults identifies promising new directions for the reconstructive articulation of the Christian understanding and experience of Jesus' agency in atonement, and suggests that that this task can be facilitated by attending to some of the existential concerns that the two disciplines hold in common. The fourth chapter, 'Parousia and Physical Cosmology', explores the possibility and promise of bringing Christian thinking about the eschatological experience of Jesus Christ into explicit dialogue with physical cosmology. Herein, he engages physics, quantum theory, and the sciences of emergent complexity. He notes that whereas most scientists and philosophers are hesitant to reintroduce

Platonic vitalism or Aristotelian entelechies into their theories, there is nonetheless a growing recognition of the importance of accommodating the intuition behind these ancient models into contemporary scientific developments (p. 124). He also ventures briefly into discussions regarding the promising new theories of emergence within this chapter.

Shults notes that his hope is that this book will evoke a sense of fascination of how weaving these various disciplines together can enhance our self-understanding (p. 19). I deem his hope to be fulfilled. However, I would like to critique Shults in one area: his constructive section at the end of each case study is comparatively brief. In view of such, it is neither obvious nor explicitly stated what he desires for the reader to understand as his own distinct contribution or view on each case study in question. Nevertheless, I recommend this title without reservation to scholars who have interest in the science and religion dialogue in particular, Christology in general, and particularly to those who desire to understand how these disciplines reciprocally interact with each other.

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Jesus and the Cross: Reflections of Christians from Islamic Contexts, David Emmanuel Singh (ed.), Regnum Books, 2008 (ISBN 9781 870345 651), xi + 226 pp., pb £19.99

This collection of twenty essays divided into three parts, addresses the cross of Christ in relationship to Islam. At first sight, this appears like an odd place to engage with Islam that, at face value, seems to deny that Jesus died on the cross (Sura 4.157–9). Furthermore, given the problems of Islam with the orthodox version of the doctrines of trinity and incarnation, this might also prematurely jump forward into territory that could not possibly bear fruit at present. Finally, given that currents in contemporary theology are in some turmoil about explaining the atoning value of the cross, this is an ominous starting point on intra-Christian grounds. But this collection is resolute about the positive and necessary and inevitable value of making the cross the starting point, because with one exception, all contributors believe this to be the central preaching of the Gospel. And they are of course right. This book emerges from the stable of the Oxford Centre for Christian Mission, bringing together a worldwide group of theologians to reflect on the question in a series called ‘Global Theological Voices’.

In Part One dealing with the scriptural traditions, four authors unpack a doctrine of atonement based on the sacrifice of the cross. Three do so as if reading the scriptures in their different geographical contexts made no difference to their appropriation of the gospel. This is *not* to suggest that the Bible is dependent on reading context or that its message is relative, but the lack of contextual scriptural hermeneutics gently insinuates a type of biblical positivism that is not in keeping with the contextual sensibilities of the rest of the collection. One other weakness is the lack of an essay that systematically addresses (and overcomes) the challenges to the cross as sacrifice and suffering as intrinsic to atonement that has been mounted within some Christian circles. For this we have to wait until the end section of the book (Cragg responding to Bennett). Apologetically, this does not seem very effective. Nevertheless, there is good material here especially Kenneth Cragg's (reprinted) masterly comparison of the cross and powerlessness with the Hijrah and state power. Cragg makes two contributions to the book – which is no bad thing.

Part Two is entitled 'Reflections from Contexts' and includes a historical survey with excellent essays from David Thomas and Mark Beaumont showing the intellectual vitality and rigor of some earlier debates between the two traditions, followed by engaging regional reflections from Afghanistan, Indonesia, East Africa, India, Pakistan, Egypt, and Palestine. These essays are tantalizingly short, but immensely rich and interesting. I found Jonathan Culver's piece on folk traditions in Indonesia that entail ritual sacrifice of animals for atonement fascinating. These practices seem to be based on the sacrifice of Ishmael by Abraham in the Quranic tradition. Culver shows a variety of orthodox and heterodox beliefs related to this ritual and builds upon the latter which are quite widespread. These include the idea that the sacrifice can help the person to cross the thin and difficult bridge into paradise and that the goat or bull slain would allow angels to make intercession for the sacrificer's sins. Culver uses these elements in the local tradition to find a bridge whereby the cross might be preached and thus have significance to Muslims. Hwa Yung raises the question as to whether in the Asian context 'shame' and 'honor' might replace 'guilt' and 'sin', but this very intriguing notion requires more development than is possible in a short essay.

Part Three contains 'Theological Reflections'. There are strong contributions from Ida Glaser, Rollins G. Grams, Clinton Bennett, Kenneth Cragg, and the editor. Sadly, there is little interaction with contemporary theological literature on sacrifice and atonement. Nevertheless, this is an immensely rich section with the sole breaking of ranks by Clinton Bennett, who calls into question the necessity of the cross as the means of atonement. What appears like an editorial slip is nicely rectified by the insertion of an essay by Cragg who subtly and persuasively argues

against Bennett's position and explores the complexity of the alleged Quranic 'denial'. Cragg continues to be a rich and provocative voice in this field, seeking out deep echoes in the traditions within an overarching dissimilarity. Grams also argues against abstractions in atonement theology, castigating liberalism on the one hand, and drawing upon the descriptions of God in the Quran to suggest that their fulfillment is found in Christ, the concrete particular practice of God. Glaser's essay is a powerful argument that love is the only Christian contextual response to Islam and she draws this out through her own diverse experience. Singh seeks to fit the cross within a Neoplatonic framework which moves away from the strict separation of 'God' and 'man' to suggest that this might provide a more feasible approach to preaching the cross to Islam.

As with any collection of essays, especially of such a great number in so small compass, the quality of essays is varied, and at times there is slight overlap (especially in Part Three). But the overall effect entirely shows why the three problems outlined at the start of this review that might have inhibited this collection are overcome. This is an immensely insightful and timely book, treating Islam with due respect and yet, rigorously and theologically probing its 'lack' and showing how the cross might respond to this 'lack'. Contextual theology, missiology, and historical understanding come together with skill and grace.

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The Question of Providence, Charles M. Wood, Westminster John Knox Press, 2008 (ISBN 978-0-664-23255-9), xiii + 120 pp., pb \$19.95

The doctrine of providence is back in the scholarly limelight, especially among historians and political scientists, who seem to have figured out that no other article of Christian faith has had more influence on national and international affairs. Providence is perhaps the most political of Christian doctrines. Even when it functions on an individual level to help believers make sense of personal trials and tribulations, it asks people to place the arc of their lives in bigger and broader collective trajectories. Theologians need to catch up with their social scientific colleagues by showing how providence is more than just a historical curiosity. This doctrine, however, is so comprehensive (it is a doctrine of doctrines, rather than a single doctrine in itself) that just stating its basic features can be a daunting task. There is a need, then, for an

introductory book on the theology of providence, and Charles Wood, Professor of Christian Doctrine at Southern Methodist University, has written one of the best. He manages to provide historical context, practical reflection, and constructive suggestions with brevity, efficiency, and clarity.

Wood begins his book reflecting on the purpose and function of doctrines, commenting, in Chapter 1, that a Christian who neglects the need to think doctrinally is not simply uninformed but unformed. Having faith means learning how to use doctrinal concepts in a satisfactory way. The doctrine of providence is especially important because it seeks to explain how Christians can 'understand theologically what goes on' (p. 17). That rather broad definition might itself be part of the reason why, as Wood observes with a bit of understatement, 'This doctrine has fallen on hard times' (p. xi). Perhaps providence has been given too much to do in theology, with the result that, rather than disappearing altogether, its various tasks have been subdivided and distributed to other conceptual tools. Indeed, it seems to me that theologians are as involved as ever in trying to understand what God is up to in the world, with politics and theology mixing freely in judgments about the nature and destiny of nations and the future of globalization, for example. Have we silently erased the proper name of this activity while continuing the same work under different categories? If so, that could mean that theologians want to think providentially without thinking about providence itself.

Providence is about situating the local and particular in the global and universal, so reflections on providence should always be rooted in a specific context. Wood does this in Chapter 2 with a strong reading of William Sherlock's *A Discourse Concerning the Divine Providence*, published in 1694. It is one of the strengths (or perhaps weaknesses) of this doctrine that the older theological textbooks are more clear and inspiring than anything written in the past century or two. As Wood notes, 'The seventeenth century was a boom period for the doctrine of providence' (p. 62). Wood shows that Sherlock's treatise has it all, from the basic distinction between preservation and governance to an analysis of the relations among natural, accidental, and moral causes. For Sherlock, humans have no natural rights against God, because God's governance of the world relates to the eternal ordering of things, not the immediate claims of merit and desert.

Sherlock's book went through twelve editions by the end of the eighteenth century, testimony to the power of providence as a locus for inspiring theological reflection. By the nineteenth century, as Wood shows in Chapter 3, providence became disassociated from the Trinity and thus was appropriated to the Father with little Christological or pneumatological bearing. Providence became associated with ideas about the order, harmony, and stability of the world, and once people

decided, by the twentieth century, that the world was not a very stable place, providence began to look very old fashioned.

In Chapter 4, Wood sketches out his own grammar of providence. He suggests that God's action in the world needs to be broadened to include activities like neglecting, failing, allowing, and waiting. In other words, God does more than act *on* the world. Wood is trying to figure out a new language for the way God concurs with out failures, faults, and conflicts.

Finally, in Chapter 5, Wood examines the Calhoun Commission, a 1944 report commissioned by the Federal Council of Churches, chaired by Robert Lowry of Yale, and heavily influenced by H. Richard Niebuhr. 'The report', he writes, 'contains what I believe to be the most valuable brief articulation of the Christian doctrine of providence produced during the past century' (p. 94). Nonetheless, he faults the report for its pneumatological weaknesses, a recurring characteristic of mid-twentieth century Protestant theology. He ends this final chapter with some brief reflections on the American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887–1962), whom he calls 'the most theological of American poets' (p. 112). This book is more suggestive than systematic and more eclectic than comprehensive, but it is a helpful text that would teach well in seminary classrooms. It should also inspire other theologians to gather their own thoughts about this much neglected doctrine.

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