REVIEWS

A Journey Through Christian Theology: With Texts from the First to the Twenty-First Century, 2nd edition, William P. Anderson (ed.), Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-9697-9), xxii + 454 pp., pb $39

The content of Christian theology is nothing if not complex and nuanced. Faith, in essence, may be something relatively simple; an orientation of the heart, an intention of the will, a determination of religious identity. But as soon as the person of faith takes up the Anselmian challenge to seek understanding of that faith, problems of where to start and how to proceed quickly become acute. Many easy solutions are offered, of course, and most of those are of dubious intellectual quality, short-changing both the integrity of the faith and the veracity of its supposed cognition. They result most often in misinformed fundamentalism or other variants of stifling naïveté. But for many Christian believers seeking to deepen their knowledge and understanding by becoming students of theology there are many worthy guides. This second edition of Anderson's *Journey* is one of particularly good value. It purports, in its preface, to offer a 'trusty companionship for the journey' as well as to present 'a hearty invitation' to undertake the journey in the first place (p. ix). And in an attempt to make the journey as relaxed and enjoyable as possible the intellectual demands along the way are lightened by the insertion of cartoon comment that can, at times, provide critical insight and reinforcement of a main idea by way of providing a shaft of humorous light. For some, however, they may be more of a side-line distraction, and there are times when it seems that without a deeper knowledge the point of a cartoon may in fact be lost. Still, the overall impression is of a book that deals with complex and heavy topics in a most appealing manner, and succeeding in that on the whole.

One very interesting feature is that, although the book has been written and structured in a historically developmental fashion, the preface presents an alternate format whereby the book could be read thematically. By a judicious selection of provided readings, nine discrete theological topics – Faith and Reason, the doctrines of God,

Reviews in Religion and Theology, 19:1 (2012)

Trinity, Christ, Church and Sacraments, Eschatology and Hope together with a clutch of significant other issues (in this case mysticism, feminism, and liberation theologies) – the book could be used as a foundational text in a course on systematic theology *per se* as well as a text on the history of Christian thought which is its primary orientation. Thus, as a text, it is suitable for both theological and religious studies types of teaching programs.

The book is structured into twelve parts, the first five of which effectively range over the patristic period and just beyond. Part One deals with key apostolic fathers and apologists. Part Two traverses the Arian crisis while the third part is devoted to the three Cappadocian Fathers. Then comes the fifth century Christological controversies in Part Four; and Part Five's 'Later Developments' includes St Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and John Scotus Erigena. Part Six dips into the ninth century and Part Seven ranges over some key figures of the Middle Ages, including Anselm and Aquinas but also a section on three significant women: Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, and Catherine of Siena. Beginning with Erasmus and concluding with the Anabaptists, Part Eight tracks through the Reformation Era while Part Nine provides the Roman Catholic Response with the Council of Trent. The last three parts deal with the Modern period (Kant, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Strauss, Kierkegaard, and Ritschl) and the Later Modern period which focuses mainly on select key figures of the twentieth century, ending with Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The final part, The Contemporary Period, focuses mainly on significant twentieth century movements in theology – liberation, feminist, Black liberation, and ecological. Interestingly the last entry, perhaps confusingly called 'Two Contemporary Ecclesial Responses', draws on some of the documentation to come out of Vatican II on the one hand and the 1967 Confession of Faith of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, on the other. The rationale for these two seems to be, in effect, that the decade of the 1960s was not only a time of widespread turbulence on many fronts, but that in terms of the Christian church it was something of a turning point, at least for the Church of Rome, as Vatican II amply testifies, as well as for many other churches for which the US Presbyterian effort to produce the first new confessional statement of that tradition in three centuries is something of a representative exemplar.

In any work such as this, that tries to range over the entire two millennium sweep of Christian intellectual development, decisions about what to include and what, or who, to leave aside are never easy. Many items within are obvious and needful; some a bit less so. But I do not think anything of pressing significance has been omitted in terms of topic, even if one might have liked to have seen some other names and representative contributions of their work included. The Anglican tradition, for example, is missing entirely; so too something from

Arminius and from the Arminian tradition. And there is nothing that addresses the modern ecumenical phenomenon which is as much a theological concern as it is an ecclesial activity. So the book has some limitations, clearly. But for what it does include, and in particular how it presents and deals with its subject matter, it is nonetheless most impressive. Each part begins with a helpful introductory essay and includes a very useful and illuminating timeline. Key terms are highlighted and selected supplementary readings noted. Each of the individual theological authors whose works have been included is likewise introduced then, following the excerpt, there is a follow-up reflective comment and some study questions posed. In all I find the pedagogical format helpful and reader friendly – something that will appeal in the selection of this book as a class text but which also aids the solo reader simply interested in plumbing the depths of the intellectual heritage of Christianity in a soundly guided fashion.

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★ ★ ★

Kant and Theology, Pamela Sue Anderson and Jordan Bell, Continuum, 2010 (ISBN 9-780-5670-3415-1), x + 122 pp., pb $24.95

If ever one has attempted to teach Kant to undergraduates, she well knows that a piece of elementary secondary literature on his thinking is needed, and that there exists no such piece of literature. The situation has changed with the publication of Anderson and Bell's *Kant and Theology*. With only eighty-seven pages of text (excepting notes, citation, and introduction), *Kant and Theology* may remind one of the period of life during which she became excited about philosophy in the first place. The book reads like an excellent undergraduate lecture, and will become indispensible to many scholars who teach Kant on a regular basis. In *Kant and Theology*, the central insights of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone* are rendered short, intelligible and illustrated with clear examples. Perhaps more importantly, the relationship between the ideas developed across the various texts is explained, with particular attention focused on how the delineations of one way of knowing actually open up the possibility of another.

The title of the book suggests that Anderson and Bell's introduction to Kant will be of particular interest to theologians, or at least

philosophers of religion. This may well be the case, but the accessibility of the text is such that the book should be highly recommended for any introductory class on Kant, whatever one's particular field. Even Anglo-American philosophers who must teach undergraduates will appreciate the organization, clear writing and focus on basic points of Kant's thought. The constructive vision of the book is a pleasant bonus for the professor who knows what is at stake in the authors' claims, and who may be reminded that teaching undergraduate survey courses remains a service for students who may yet participate in higher level philosophical discourse.

A note about Anderson and Bell's constructive vision is, however, in order for those readers with a developed view on Kant's work. Should one be inclined to support a two-world rather than a two-aspect reading of Kant's description of realms of knowledge, she will be infuriated with the ease with which authors advocate a two-aspect reading. Although absolutely correct that a two-aspect understanding makes Kant more palpable, more reasonable and less problematic, there remain thinkers who hold Kant must be read as having to endorse a two-world view of his philosophy. This book is perhaps not a good choice for philosophers fitting this category, although its contribution as a tool for survey may outweigh the ire it provokes.

The first three chapters of the book explain transcendental idealism, moral religion and Kant's arguments for theism, and are best used for straightforward undergraduate teaching on Kant. The fourth chapter is dedicated to traditionally Christian themes such as Christ, salvation, and evil, and illustrates the kind of Christian vision naturally issuing from a Kantian understanding of the world and human beings' place in it as knowers. The conclusion places Kant into conversation with feminist theory and hermeneutics, and readers excited about feminist critiques of autonomy as a normative category for thinking what it means to be human and/or Christian will be delighted. Especially promising is the authors' treatment of agency and pride as problematic concepts, historically used in Christianity to reinforce subservience in categories of persons for whom greater agency would be a welcome and humanizing relief. The conversation surrounding agency, autonomy and all sin as derivative from the fundamental sin of pride is a conversation ordinarily had in purely theological circles. From Valerie Saiving Goldstein and Barbara Hilkert Andolsen's seminal works on women's lack of agency and loss of self to Serene Jones's *Trauma and Grace*, the theological conversation will benefit greatly from thinking through another example of how the Christian legacy is also an explicitly philosophical one.

Kant and Theology is a welcome addition to the undergraduate classroom, and should not be missed by instructors seeking to help students identify and understand central issues in philosophy and philosophy of

religion. It is extremely well-written, clear, concise, and full of helpful examples. Its constructive vision may be warmly or poorly received, but whatever one makes of the books' constructive claims, *Kant and Theology* is a welcome and badly needed resource for undergraduate classrooms.

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★ ★ ★

SCM Studyguide: Christian Doctrine, Jeff Astley, SCM Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-334-04324-9), vi + 250 pp., pb £18.99

Astley's introductory text to theology is a masterpiece of clarity and an excellent contribution to the SCM 'Studyguide' series. The Preface tells us that works in this series are to provide 'succinct introductions' and to explore 'challenging concepts in an accessible way' thereby 'encouraging readers to think independently and interact with the text' (p. v). Astley scores top marks on all counts. Of the ten chapters that comprise this book, the first three form a sort of prolegomenon, providing a necessary background preparatory to engaging in substantive theological topics. The first asks the question 'What is Christian Theology?' (p. 1) and proceeds to discuss the nature and activity of theology as an academic subject that is yet engaged in at an 'ordinary' level by everyday non-academic Christians, as well as the meat and drink of the professional theologian. In this chapter the reader – or student – quickly encounters one of the helpful pedagogical features of the book, the use of the highlighted boxed section within the text that draws attention to key terms and themes. These are very well done, and the first provides useful definitions of, and so distinguishes between, doctrine, dogma, and theology. Issues of interpretation, authority, and doctrinal development, among others, are also succinctly and helpfully addressed. Further contextual matters such as the relationship of belief and spirituality, revelation and reason, scripture and tradition, creedal formation, and the relationship of faith and belief are canvassed in the second chapter. The third delves into issues of language – the nature, use, function and significance of religious language – in respect to doing theology, as well as the different ways of 'talking about God' (p. 51) so dealing with matters of analogy, metaphor, and models for God. With the scene well set, the remaining chapters introduce and explore major doctrinal areas. But this is no dry and dusty tome, as chapter headings themselves amply indicate.

Astley elects to begin the journey through doctrine at the point of experiential encounter thus commencing with activities unique to the church, the community of the faithful – worship, ministry, and mission. A discussion of sacramental theology thus arises naturally out of reflecting upon what is going on in these liturgical activities with which, presumably, the student of theology is already familiar. The next chapter then looks at understandings of the church as the locus of Christian belonging. Images for describing the church are discussed alongside considerations of matters such as unity and diversity on the one hand, and the marks of the church on the other. Chapter 6 comprises an engaging discussion of soteriology. An exploration of the meaning of sin and a thorough canvassing of ideas about salvation, including in particular the classic theories of ransom, sacrifice, conquest, exemplar, satisfaction, and substitution, mark this chapter out as of particular value in its succinct handling of complex issues.

Chapter 7 moves into the Christological minefield. But here Astley's pedagogical strengths triumph. I do not think I have ever come across such a clear, albeit pithy yet, because of that, sensible and helpful presentation of the myriad of options and alternatives for interpretation and theological understanding. Standard Christological 'isms', mostly heretic of course, are succinctly summarized. Outlines of the classical solutions to the dominical question – Who do you say I am? – are a godsend for the instructor of an introductory course to this most vexed arena of Christian theology. And following the classical options Astley discusses more contemporary models of Christ. The chapter concludes with an intriguing question: 'Is this the real challenge of Christology – to rewrite the doctrine of God?' (p. 153). In effect he points to an answer in the evocative title of the next chapter – 'Believing in the World: Finding God in the Mud'. Theology is sensually earthed. The realm of creation and the relation of the Creator to that are explored in the context of raising questions about the nature and extent of this relation, including a discussion of miracle and providence as denoting certain types of relationship. The chapter concludes with the problem of evil and an excellent overview of options for a responsive theodicy.

The ninth chapter delves into the doctrine of God, traversing the terms, values, attributes and so forth by which God is described and conceptually comprehended. There is an interesting section on classical theism and process theology, highlighting the conceptual shifts that have more recently taken place in thinking about God. And, of course, the distinctive Trinitarian conceptuality and doctrine comes in for appropriate close attention with, once again, very effective use made of boxed highlighted terms and definitions. Finally, in Chapter 10, the matter of hope, of projecting out from beyond the starting point in lived experience and the corpus of theological doctrine to flow from that, is

addressed. Death, eschatology and conceptual options related thereto are explored with the sensitivity and the clarity that have emerged as hallmarks of this book. Our final end may indeed be 'with the mystery of God' (p. 220) but the end of this book marks but the reader's commencement of a journey into a deeper exploration of this mystery having gained a firm grounding, orientation and compass upon which to set out. And, in the process of being so equipped the reader has been introduced to a range of excellent Christian thinkers and authors, for another of the strengths of this work is the substantial use made of apposite quotations from a most impressive selection of theologians. Thus the attentive student has not only been introduced to the range and nature of theology as a subject, but to a balanced range of classic and contemporary Christian thinkers, supported by a most comprehensive bibliography and helpful further reading section.

This book will make an excellent beginners' text – the purpose for which it was designed – but also a useful basis for more advanced discussion groups of what Astley is pleased to call 'ordinary theologians', being the non-specialist Christian thinker whether lay or ordained. And, for many ordained, this book provides a helpful refresher and a useful reference. Well done SCM.

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★ ★ ★

Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment, Margaret Barker, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-01547-1), 326 pp., pb £16.99

This book is a broad and in-depth examination of the theological and biblical resources for a Christian perspective on God's creation/earth. It is clearly Orthodox and enjoys the endorsement of the head of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. At the same time, it grounds healthy perspectives on the environment firmly in the biblical tradition, thereby bringing the Bible directly into conversation with all branches of Christianity.

Drawing on extensive resources – stretching from the biblical materials to apocryphal and non-canonical writings to the thoughts of the early church Fathers – Margaret Barker takes the reader on a journey to recover what the early church and early Christians thought about God's creation. The scope of the book is an outline of what the first Christians could have known about the status and state of the natural world, thinking as they did within the framework of theology centered on the

Jerusalem Temple and set alongside some striking parallels in today's environmental discourse.

This book is overdue on two counts: First, it makes an incomparable contribution to Orthodox theology's particular perspective on the environment. Drawing on biblical and extra-biblical texts, it weaves together the insights and themes of the ancient Jewish and Christian world – including pagan philosophers – in the process tapping some familiar Orthodox sources and revealing some unknown resources as well. Secondly, it provides the greater Christian community with Orthodoxy's contributions, potentially widening awareness and deepening the well of insights by which a Christian vision for creation and stewardship could be nourished and enriched.

A crucial part of this journey is a rediscovery and recovery of what Barker calls 'Temple theology'. That is, in the construction, maintenance, and rituals of the Temple in Jerusalem (antedated by the construction, maintenance, and rituals associated with the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting in the wilderness sojourn of the Hebrew people), she finds a creation-centered theology which broadens and balances the history-centered theology which has dominated the church for some time. Indeed, she argues that the Temple represented the creation. 'Worship in both tabernacle and temple was about the well-being of creation and human society . . . he pattern of the worship there both shaped and expressed the attitude of the worshippers toward the creation' (p. 22).

Her treatment of this theme is reminiscent of Edmund Jacob's much earlier *Theology of the Old Testament* from half a century ago in which he asserts: 'Since the Temple had exercised an attractive function which led to the crystallization of various traditions, it can be understood that piety was determined by it and became centered in its orbit.' (Translated by Arthur Heathcoate and Philip Allcock [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958], p. 259).

This piety was creation-centered, according to Barker. 'People in Jesus' time were contemplating the shape of the Jerusalem Temple and how it represented both the creation and human attitudes toward the creation' (p. 32). This view was theocentric, with God squarely at the center of the Temple in the 'holy of holies', just as God was squarely in the center of the greater creation.

One of the powerful points which she makes early in the book which would seem quite relevant to contemporary discussions of environmental issues is her distinction between *ethos* and ethics. She notes that behavior proceeds from a certain *milieu* of values and insights. Thus, what is ultimately needed is not simply a new system of ethics (although that will follow), but rather an *ethos* that is healthier toward the environment and more sustainable. For arrogance, selfishness, materialism, and consumerism are at the foundation – are the spiritual

roots – of our current ecological dilemma. The generation of excess waste, the pollution poisoning the air, land, and sea, and the depletion of natural resources are simply the symptoms of the disease. '. . . Sin caused the natural order to collapse' (p. 152). Therefore, the disease of an unhealthy, unsustainable *ethos* must be cured in order for the planet to be healed.

Further into the book, she recovers and accents several themes which can contribute to the establishment of this *ethos* and promote this healing – for example, the Jubilee Year, when debts were to be forgiven and the land was to lie fallow for a year so that it could rest; Adam as the first High Priest whose temple was the creation; the quest for Wisdom; and Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God in our midst as a reference to God's enthronement in the Temple and at the center of creation.

An additional contribution which this book makes is a very plentiful bibliography of primary sources – Christian texts from the early church Fathers and others – and of secondary sources. Also quite helpful is its index of biblical and ancient texts (deuterocanonical and pseudepigraphal) and of Jewish and Christian texts.

This book would serve well as a text for an upper division college course on religion and the environment or a seminary course on Christianity and ecology.

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★ ★ ★

A Brief Guide to the Hebrew Bible, Hans Barstad, Westminster John Knox Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-664-23325-9), vii + 229 pp., hb £19.99/$30.00

As the most important cultural and religious document in the Western world, the Bible, in this case, the Hebrew Scriptures, represents (in part) the traditions of three of the most fundamental monotheistic religious faiths the world has known; this alone gives it a natural place in the liberal arts curriculum. It was not however until after the Reformation that interest in biblical studies began to take shape, and even then the high price of books made it almost impossible for the majority of people to access its pages. For academia, Biblical Studies began with a historical process and has, in recent years, developed into a practice that utilizes all manner of hermeneutics, including philological, literary and linguistic techniques of interpretation. Such has led to a wide

interest in the study of scripture which has consequently led to much theological reflection and debate in both the pulpit and lecture theatre.

The Hebrew Scriptures developed from tradition literature formulated from a number of different genres. Written often in a pseudepigraphic style and manner that maintains an epidemiological tradition of religious beliefs, cultural values, and *sitz im leben*, which (attempts to) validate genre and theological context, its content, although sometimes appearing elusive, is an important source of reference to ancient civilizations and their religious/political beliefs and values. Despite the chronological distance that appears between them, it is therefore important to place the texts within in their context and this way not limit each to their supposed independent/interdependent parts.

In this book, Hans Barstad considers the different sections given to the Hebrew Bible, namely: the Priestly History; the Deuteronomisitic History; the Chronicler's History; the Prophets; the Poetic Literature & Wisdom Literature; and the *Novellas* of Jonah, Ruth and Esther. He aims to give each a *historical* context and offer a clear introductory premise for reading the texts, as well as challenge his readers to a form of exegesis (& eisegesis) that find meaning in a holistic rendering of the individual texts both for those contemporaneous to its composition as well as for the twenty-first century Reader.

In his opening chapter, Barstad reminds us that any association of *history* found within the pages of Hebrew Scripture does not necessarily relate, or compare, to our own rendering of the term and as such it may well not be for the purposes of recording chronology, but rather simply display a story that the authors wished to convey. Such a method of reading the text allows scholars to approach its content in a manner that appreciates its style & genre and the story it tells about the communities existent at the time of its genesis. In addition to this, he shows the reader how language, rhetoric, style, and theological themes, repeated/found throughout the scriptures display a consistency in their portrayal of Israel's existence as the Covenant people of YHWH, from their humble beginnings to their independency as a nation. While many scholars would point out that such a coherency of style suggests an element of propaganda that empowered scriptural scribes to sustain their own agenda, such a theocratic perspective can certainly not be dismissed to falsity, but instead certainly reveals something about storytelling and *Geschichte* utilized by the ancient near Eastern orators and scribes.

The ideological content of the documents within the Hebrew Bible also displays a *historical* structure that is politically and theologically motivated and which highlights the writer as an interpreter of the past therefore perhaps confirming a tradition of retrojected history, in which authors created a more powerful and ideological past for their

characters, creating healthier contemporaneity and more authoritative and influential foundation for their existence and social stratum (as the chosen people of YHWH).

The narrative of scripture is a living oral process that cannot be confined to the random musings of some arbitrary scribal tradition. Its content, albeit biased, while not perhaps historical in the way we might perhaps understand the genre, displays the background for a community's clear understanding of YHWH and the obvious and significant value such had for their worship, lifestyle, and relationships, bringing relevance to their own *sitz im leben* as well as significance for the any interested contemporary party. Such has kept the biblical texts alive and open to the variety of hermeneutics of suspicion that continue to generate interest.

Barstad cleverly considers each section of the Hebrew Scriptures in a way that not only informs but also enlightens interest. He encourages students to widen their knowledge about the spectrum of biblical interpretation & offers means of doing so, and suggest ways in which readers might perhaps re-evaluate their own ideas about the content of scripture and what it teaches us about the ancient near East and its culture. In no way does Barstad attempt to dismiss or criticize the means by which people of faith utilize scripture to support their beliefs and values, rather he offers a resource and a tool that sketches out scholarly trends for interpretation as well as an introduction that will support (new) students of scripture who wish to widen their knowledge and understanding of its content, both for the lay reader as well as the academic.

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★ ★ ★

The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation, Richard Bauckham, Baylor University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-60258-310-8), xi + 226 pp., pb $24.95

The Bible and Ecology is a greatly expanded version of The Sarum Theological Lectures given by Richard Bauckham in 2006 at Sarum College in Salisbury. It explores the Bible's understanding of humans within God's community of creation. 'Ecology' is in the title because Bauckham stresses human's interconnections and commonality with the other creatures; although contemporary ecological concerns are in the background throughout, the book's focus is on the biblical portrayal.

The book begins by reviewing what have become common objections to the Christian idea of stewardship based on Gen. 1: that it is hubristic, excludes God's continuing activity in the world, unspecific, removes humanity from living within to living above creation, and elevates Gen. 1 over the rest of the biblical witness. Whatever the good intentions of those advocating a stewardship model, Bauckham claims that 'in the context of the technological project of total domination of nature they pander to the hubristic modern aspiration to the role of gods over the world' (p. 10). Contrastingly, Gen. 1 reveals a deep ecological vision emphasizing the diversity and interconnectedness of all life (p. 15). The view that creation was made for humans finds no support in Gen. 1 (p. 15). Humans are to subdue the earth, but this is distinct from their role to have dominion over the living creatures (pp. 16–8). Bauckham takes the phrase 'to subdue the land' in Gen. 1:28 to refer to agriculture, since humans would need to farm the land for it to yield enough crops for them to fill the earth (p. 17). Gen. 2 stresses human solidarity and identification with the rest of creation; both humans and animals are portrayed as vegetarians – animal killing was absent (p. 18). Views of the relationship between animals and humans should also take into account Gen. 9 with its acknowledgement that humans can, although reverently, take the life of animals (pp. 24–5). This is a 'concession' falling below God's original ideal of vegetarianism (p. 25). Bauckham argues that although humans are given a unique role in Gen. 1:26 and 28, it will be 'misunderstood and abused' if their solidarity with the rest of creation is not emphasized (p. 28). Humans rule '*on behalf of*, but not *instead of* God' (p. 30, italics his). Particularly, humanity's relationship to animals should be one of 'caring responsibility', always recognizing our fundamental identification within – not above – the community of creation.

Moving beyond Gen. 1, which has dominated the discussion, Bauckham explores God's speeches to Job in Job 38–39. The animals listed there are 'independent of humans' and reveal God's 'sheer joy in his creatures' (pp. 50–1). The two mythical creatures in Job 40–41 represent the 'anti-God powers in creation' in both the land and sea (p. 61). Only God can control these creatures; they are presented to Job to reveal the limits of his knowledge and power. In Bauckham's discussion of Psalm 104, Matt. 6:25–33, and Rom. 8:18–23, he notes that creation is theocentric in orientation: all creation praises God, and longs for the day of its renewal. The world was not made for humans alone nor will it be redeemed for their sake only. Thus, realizing our membership in the community of creation and exercising our unique position of power in responsible care is vital.

There are, of course, limits to our responsible care. Two such areas are the wilderness and wild animals. In contrast to those considering the wilderness in the Old Testament a cursed land of evil, Bauckham

claims that the wilderness is not evil so much as uninhabitable by humans since it is a place devoid of the elements necessary for agriculture and support of human life (p. 114). Wilderness is not made for humans; it is made for other creatures. Wild nature is 'non-humanised nature'; its value lies in its 'unspoiled otherness' (p. 114). In his discussion of wild animals Bauckham addresses the utopian visions of a future in which wild animals live at peace with humans. He concludes, in view of Isaiah's vision of 'the peaceable Kingdom', that we 'cannot simply acquiesce in violence between humans and animals, any more than we can renounce attempts to promote peace, than war, in human society' (p. 125). Although God's eschatological kingdom cannot be fully realized until it comes, one can still 'anticipate' the kingdom in ways that are 'realistic and appropriate to our human limits' (p. 125). After considering wild animals Bauckham also explores humanity's relationship to domestic animals (pp. 132–40), concluding, in part, that the biblical account stresses 'caring responsibility' and compassion for one's domestic creatures, deriving from God's own care and compassion for all his creatures (pp. 136, 139–40).

In the final section, Bauckham lays out the central role of ecological issues in the biblical meta-narrative. In discussing Col. 1:15–20, the prologue to John's gospel, and Mark 4:37–41, he argues that Jesus death and resurrection is concerned with the whole creation, not solely focused on the redemption of humans (p. 158). In view of the argument of the whole book – humans are co-creatures within the community of creation – Christ's incarnation places him in solidarity not only with humans but also with the rest of creation, so that Jesus' bodily resurrection should be seen as the beginning of the entire new creation (p. 171). Bauckham views the new creation in Revelation 21–22 as an 'ecotopia' that is a 'radical transformation, but not replacement' of the present world (p. 175). This eschatological ecotopia ought to be the inspiration for the healing of human relationships with 'all other creatures' (p. 176). Thus the church's ministry of reconciliation should take into account God's whole community of creation.

A few evaluative comments are in order. First, Bauckham's focus on the community of creation and the manifold biblical support for this vision are an essential corrective to the view that the Bible supports human domination and exploitation of creatures. He is certainly right that humans are responsible for 'hideous crimes against God's creatures' (p. 147). Bauckham argues for peace today between humans and animals because this is the eschatological picture – but if this ideal is for today, does it mean that humans ought not respectfully slaughter animals? Bauckham views Adam in Eden as a farmer working the ground; if this is the case (which is debatable), nothing indicates that this feature of the Garden is part of the New Heavens and Earth. Does

it follow, then, that today we should abandon farming because it does not appear in the eschaton?

Second, without challenging Bauckham's argument that the Bible separates between living creatures and inanimate creatures – which I view as correct – it appears that this distinction has lead Bauckham to focus almost exclusively on humanity's relationship with the animals. Humanity's responsibility toward plants and soil, to take two examples, is an extremely pressing issue for which a number of biblical passages could have been fruitfully examined.

Without question the book is essential reading for anyone interested in the Bible's understanding of ecology and humanity's place in God's community of creation. The book is accessible to general readers and is an indispensable source for scholars. It should be carefully and widely read.

Tim Stone
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★ ★ ★

Risking Proclamation, Respecting Difference: Christian Faith, Imperialistic Discourse, and Abraham, Chris Boesel, James Clarke & Co., 2010 (ISBN 978-0-227-17314-5), xvii + 286 pp., pb $42.50

Audacious in its claims, lucid in its development, perspicacious in its analysis and finally limited by its own particularity, Chris Boesel contends that evangelical faith itself offers resources for ethical treatment of Christian neighbors (and the neighbor's neighbor). While concerned for all relations of Christians to any 'other', Boesel enters the ethical problem of Christian interpretive imperialism through Christian relations to Jews and Jewish faith. This is not arbitrary, for in the end, the election of Abraham is pivotal to his articulation of a Christian way of knowing and speaking 'without weapons'. That is, God's free electing activity is the ground and possibility for 'particular-elsewhere' hermeneutics.

In Part One, Boesel wrestles with whether Christian theology is inherently damaging (materially or physically) to Jews because of the church's confession that Jesus is Messiah. Noting 'postmodern analyses', Boesel suggests that all discourse is indicted in interpretive imperialism and that *ethically* the best thing we may be able to do is distinguish 'between different kinds of interpretive imperialism' (p. 18). Three types of interpretive imperialism are named. The first is the 'sectarian-particular' which *imposes* one's own particular reality upon the neighbor as though it were universal – often accompanied by

physical violence. The second is the 'universal-elsewhere', in which the particular reality of one is contextualized within a larger and higher universal, and this universal is 'located elsewhere' outside of any particularity. Third, the 'particular-elsewhere' understands and relates to its neighbors in and through its particular confession of faith but locates its speech and action outside of its own resources (namely, in the person and free decision of God 'Herself'). The 'problem' of Christian particularity is deemed a particular-elsewhere and thus a 'remedy' for the problem of material damage towards a neighbor; while the 'remedy' proposed by 'modern ethical desire' becomes, for Boesel, a 'problem' because it turns the ethical into the highest *telos* and makes it a universal that does violence to the religious self-understanding of the 'other' (which it intended to safe-guard). Boesel attempts to show the interpretive imperialism and modernist assumptions of a 'modern ethical desire' through dialogue between Hegel and Kierkegaard.

In Part Two, Boesel discusses the theological 'problem' by turning to the theology of Karl Barth. Barth's doctrine of the Word asserts: 'God speaks' is the answer to the epistemological question of method and the 'Good News' of Jesus Christ as the event of God's election is the answer to the soteriological question of content. Boesel clarifies Barth's doctrine of election by pointing out a fundamental error, namely, separating 'the divine electing decision from Jesus Christ' (p. 68). Because election is Jesus and not an either/or (double predestination) decision regarding God's grace for only some humans, Christian faith is good news to the Jews who are finally '*recipients*' of God's grace in Christ. Therefore, while the church claims 'hermeneutical' supersession of Abraham, it does not inflict 'ontological' supersession. Rather the church is in 'indissoluble unity' and shares an 'unbreakable bond of responsibility' for its Jewish neighbor that can 'never be understood to mean material harm' (pp. 112–3). This particular theological affirmation determines the ethical precisely because of God's freedom to speak which cannot be co-opted or controlled by humans (i.e. rejection of natural theology). God's speech is an already/not yet promise for which the church can only wait in hopeful expectation, and as such, it is a Word 'that addresses us from *elsewhere*' and is not 'an innate possession and possibility' of the human (p. 120).

Rosemary Radford Ruether is given as an exemplar of the ethical 'remedy' to the 'problem' of theology in Part Three. Boesel critiques Ruether on various fronts which ultimately come down to an issue with revelation and thus with the doctrine of election. For if the incarnation is a human project that 'in being *historical*' becomes 'less divine', then divine election is obviated 'as an ethical violation of the neighbor's self-expression of their own particular religious experience. What then to do with Abraham?' (p. 136). In other words, because Ruether dismisses divine self-disclosure she must also dismiss election and by

dismissing election she does violence to the Jewish neighbor's self-understanding.

Ruether's understanding 'of Jesus Christ is essentially proleptic' (p. 140). Jesus Christ is an anticipation of the ethical; the ethical then replaces Jesus as the new content of a Christian confession (p. 142). Boesel intends to reverse this paradigm. The implication is that the ethical is the one which is truly proleptic – and thus always provisional and relative. This dynamic view of the ethical means that the church and world are always 'seeking' the ethical but never quite arrive.

Ruether's 'universal-elsewhere' hermeneutic compromises the particularity of Christian and Jewish self-understanding. Boesel traces the roots of the problem to the 'subjectivity of religious truth' from Lessing through Kant and Hegel to Ruether. He concludes that this paradigm is imperialistic because it construes religious truth 'upon philosophical grounds' (p. 170) and presumes a universal vantage point 'above and beyond all religious historical particularity' which is as particular and historical as the religious truth it seeks to problematize (p. 176). 'Grounded in these modern assumptions, Ruether's remedy remedies by removing the possibility that God would or could freely act and speak in a determinative way in history as a part of history' (p. 195). To do so requires the 'death' of Abraham because it rejects election (and election means, God's free decision in Christ by which divine revelation remains free from human subjectivity).

Part Five revisits theological assumptions as a resource for the ethical in light of 'postmodern discernment' about 'the limits of a pure or universal ethical'. Deconstruction shows that 'there is always another other, which is another way of saying that there is always an interpretive imperialism; there is only a relating to the other, or to the self, through reference to something else, through another other' (p. 205). Deconstruction embraces this 'impossibility of pure grounds' so that the ethical is always a 'movement' and a 'risk of faith' (p. 204). Furthermore, according to Levinas, 'the third party is also my neighbor' (p. 214). This means that there may be times that 'in order to be just in my relation to the third, I have to in some way violate – to breach – my ethical obligation to the other [e.g., Jewish neighbor]' (p. 214) so as to prevent the 'other' from doing violence to another 'other'. Boesel asks, given the complexity of one's ethical responsibility to the 'other' and another 'other', the 'irreducible otherness of the neighbor' is complicated by 'necessary further questions. Who is my neighbor? *Which* neighbor' (pp. 215–6). Since interpretive imperialism is inescapable, 'the way of justice . . . keeps one rooted in one's own particularity, among and amidst the particularity of others' (p. 219).

Boesel then lays out a 'way of justice' determined by theological assumptions regarding a Christian way of speaking, which includes: (1) prayer; (2) personal address; (3) witness and testimony; and (4) a piece of news. As

prayer, Christian speaking is a doxological response to the Word of God which we have 'heard' in an event of revelation. As such, 'we must "constantly" ask and wait in expectation for God's Word to come again' (p. 226). As personal address, Christian faith speaks to the neighbor and 'calls the neighbor . . . to speak . . . for themselves' the 'Good News of Jesus Christ' (p. 233). As witness and testimony, Christian speech repeats what it has heard not just in the sense of contestation (personal address) but also appeal (witness), in which we stand '*alongside and with* the neighbor' as those who await an event of God's free Word (p. 237). As a piece of news, Christian speech has a definite content that is to be told. The content comes in 'creaturely form, primarily in the human person of Jesus and secondarily' in scripture and church proclamation (p. 240).

The truth of the proclamation of the Good News cannot be proven; instead, in God's own freedom, it '*speaks for itself*' (p. 248). 'This way of Christian speaking to the neighbor . . . might be considered a speaking without weapons, a 'speaking otherwise' that, while indeed describable as a form of interpretive imperialism (that causes '*offense*') stands in stark contrast to that 'knowledge' of imperialistic discourse' which obliterates (that causes material '*damage*' to) the neighbor (p. 252). Because of theological resources (i.e. election and the freedom of the Word of God as an 'elsewhere'), Christian knowing and speaking is limited 'from "going further" and becoming the rhetorically and materially damaging interpretive imperialism of the sectarian-particular or its higher, more invisible form, the universal-elsewhere' (p. 263). Boesel concludes, in fact, 'We respect difference by risking proclamation' (p. 271).

This book is an important contribution to philosophical questions about problems and remedies for Christian–Jewish relations. Boesel insightfully works out the implications of the church and synagogue's common appeal to divine election of Abraham, so that salvation is *from* the Jews and for the whole world. Those who believe Christian faith is 'Good News' for the world will be challenged to embrace the radical limits of human finitude and called upon to wait in expectation on the Word of God to speak. Those who believe theological assumptions are an obstacle to the ethical will be challenged by the complexity and complicity (and ultimately proleptic nature) of the ethical. Regardless of what one thinks about revelation, Boesel deconstructs any church which seeks to assert a sectarian identity and any ethical system which would dismiss evangelical faith under the guise that only faith is guilty of interpretive imperialism.

However, two concerns arise. First, one might ask, Is the particular-elsewhere hermeneutical paradigm only applicable to Christian faith? Or might other religions locate their ways of knowing and speaking outside of themselves and in the person of their deity (not just their sacred texts)? If so, Boesel may have given each religion a paradigm in which to ethically inhabit its own confession, but stripped each religion

of its ability to 'contest' and 'appeal' to the 'other'. That is, from the perspective of the 'modern ethical desire' this paradigm does not transcend differences but allows each group to remain entrenched in their particular identity. From the evangelical perspective, if Boesel's paradigm can indeed be generalized to other religions and is not specific to a Christian confession (a 'universal'?), then it no longer witnesses to what Barth calls 'special hermeneutics' (*Church Dogmatics*, 1/2, T&T Clark 2004, p. 472). That is, the paradigm does not interpret the world through God's Word (revelation) as the definitive and determinative reality of all interpretation. It would be helpful for Boesel to address whether this interpretive paradigm is particular to the Christian faith or universally applicable to other particular faiths.

Second, the crux of the difference between Boesel and the 'modern ethical desire' is a Barthian understanding of the subjective side of revelation, which for Barth is the 'outpouring of the Spirit' (*Church Dogmatics*, 1/2, pp. 203–454) (or, which for Lessing is a big ditch). One might ask about the lack of direct attention, in Boesel's work, to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, given Boesel's lengthy treatment of Barth's three-fold Word of God, he does not distinguish between Barth's 'objective' and 'subjective' sides of revelation, which correspond to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, respectively. It would be interesting to see if or how the Spirit's relation to Jesus in the event of revelation would influence Boesel's analysis of the 'problem' and 'remedy'.

Overall, this is a fascinating read. Maybe the church is called to risk proclamation in the tenuousness of God's promise in such a way that lets God speak for Herself. Faith seeking the ethical . . . the very idea! Boesel is an astute reader who handles his material carefully. This work deserves a broad hearing and opens up new possibilities for conversation about the relation between faith and the ethical.

Derek Knoke
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★ ★ ★

Letters and Papers from Prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John W. de Gruchy (ed.), Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-9703-7), xxiii + 596 pp., hb $60.00

Released earlier in 2010 as Volume 8 of the English translation of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (I will refer to the series as 'DBWE' and to this book as DBWE Volume 8), this book is an indispensable source on the life and thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

When I first read Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* ('LPP') in a seminar last year, I used a 400 page Simon and Schuster paperback, based upon a 1971 SCM Press edition, billed as the 'new, greatly enlarged edition', which was translated from the 1970 German *Widerstand und Ergebung* ('Resistance and Submission'). It is a fine little book that fits easily in one hand, has helpful appendices, but is light on the footnotes, especially concerning Bonhoeffer's controversial 'prison theology' (more below). I knew that LPP was going to be re-translated in the DBWE series, and wondered to what degree this limitation would be overcome. When I stumbled across Volume 16 of DBWE, *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940–1945*, I initially thought that it was the new LPP under another name. As it turns out, Volume 16 of DBWE, which should be reviewed separately, is actually 600 plus pages of *new material*, including letters before Bonhoeffer was imprisoned and correspondence among major players such British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, with the latter being a friend of Bonhoeffer from the late 1930s when both worked together on the Jewish refugee crisis. Therefore, what had been previously treated in 400 pages, in the 1971 SCM LPP, is now covered in over 1,200 pages, in two volumes of the DBWE, 8 and 16. The only drawback is that neither fits easily into one hand!

DBWE Volume 8 retains the same four-part chronological structure of the 1971 SCM LPP: (1) The Interrogation Period: April–July 1943; (2) Awaiting the Trial: August 1943–April 1944; (3) Holding Out for the Coup Attempt: April–July 1944; (4) After the Failure: July 1944–February 1945. However, DBWE Volume 8 differs from the SCM 1971 LPP in essentially three ways. First, it is nearly twice the length of the previous version, reflects additional primary source material discovered later, and contains correspondence that had been previously excluded for personal reasons. In particular, Eberhard Bethge's influence on Bonhoeffer while he was alive and also as a posthumous shaper of his legacy, have both been acknowledged. Second, Bonhoeffer's life and thought have been examined exhaustively in the intervening years, giving us a much better understanding of the historical context and his theological development. The fruits of this massive scholarly output have been incorporated into the footnotes and supplemental materials. Third, since DBWE Volume 8 is part of a larger series, it has benefited from the expertise of the editors of the German works of Bonhoeffer.

Aside from the voluminous accompanying scholarly apparatus, one of the more welcome features of this volume is the commentary, in the editor's introduction and in the footnotes, on what is called Bonhoeffer's 'prison theology'. In the spring of 1944, before the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler in July of that year, Bonhoeffer had increasingly been coming to terms with the possibility that he would not be released before the end of the war. Instead of eliciting a sense of resignation, Bonhoeffer experienced a surge of creativity, and began to write poetry

and fiction (DBWE Volume 7 contains the Tegel fiction), in addition to pushing the boundaries of theological discourse.

During this time, he had been reading and reflecting deeply on modernity, and, in a seminal April 30, 1944 letter to Eberhard Bethge, asked 'What is Christianity, or who is Christ for us today?' In this letter, and in several that he would write to Bethge into the end of the summer, he introduced several concepts that later commentators would find fruitful and vexing: a 'world come of age', 'nonreligious interpretation of Christian faith' (sometimes expressed as 'religionless Christianity'), 'the church for others', 'worldly transcendence', and 'the arcane discipline'. Each of these is discussed in light of forty years of subsequent scholarship and in light of Bonhoeffer's other works. Without giving too much away, it is safe to say that Bonhoeffer is rescued from the excesses of the 'death-of-God' theologians.

Senior Bonhoeffer scholar John de Gruchy and a team of seven translators – Isabel Best, Lisa E. Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, Nancy Lukens, Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt, and Douglas W. Stott – assumed the monumental task of taking a fresh look at the diverse material included in this volume, which includes about 175 letters, all of Bonhoeffer's poetry, and the August 1944 'Outline for a Book', another key document for understanding his prison theology. Editor de Gruchy reminds us of the challenges of translating this material, which ranges from technical theological concepts (some coined by Bonhoeffer himself), to vocabulary describing the military and judicial structure that Bonhoeffer was enmeshed in, to terminology describing the air raids – all written under the eyes of a censor. In addition to telling us a lot about Bonhoeffer, this book also sheds light on Germany from the inside, during World War II.

Because of the wealth of insight into Bonhoeffer's final years, his prison theology, and the 'color' it conveys of this important period, this book ought to be read closely by every serious Bonhoeffer scholar and purchased by every theological library. Also, every humanities library should consider acquiring this book.

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★ ★ ★

Journey to the Common Good, Walter Brueggemann, John Knox Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-664-23516-1), x + 125 pp., pb $16.95

Walter Brueggemann's fifty-year career as a biblical scholar and author has demonstrated that faith communities today need guidance in

addressing challenging contemporary questions such as poverty, consumerism, and terrorism. Brueggemann is William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament Emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary. He is considered by many to be the world's leading interpreter of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and is the author of many books. From his best-selling 1978 book, *The Prophetic Imagination*, to this most recent book about the biblical basis for economic justice, Brueggemann has combined his academic presentations and sermons to share his message. For Brueggemann, the biblical text is always the place to begin and end any analysis of current issues including economic collapse, violence and the impact of political rhetoric. For him, scripture is the place where God's voice is heard and hope is made known to us in the midst of the most devastating circumstances. This particular work was first shared as a series of lectures at Recent College. In addition, Brueggemann presented Chapter 2 with his denomination at the General Synod meeting of the United Church of Christ.

At the beginning of *Journey to the Common Good*, Brueggemann observes, 'We face a crisis about the common good because there are powerful forces at work among us to resist the common good, to violate community solidarity, and to deny a common destiny. Mature people, at their best, are people who are committed to the common good that reaches beyond private interest, transcends sectarian commitments, and offers human solidarity.' (p. 1) In his commonly known clear cut style Brueggemann boldly claims from the very first pages of the text that Americans must (re)claim commitments to the common good to rebuild from an age of terror. We can do this through neighborliness, covenanting, and reconstruction.

Brueggemann structures the book around three Old Testament/Hebrew Bible stories that he believes are essential to discerning our way forward as churches today toward the common good of God's redemption. These stories are that of the Exodus, of Jeremiah (and of Solomon) and finally of Isaiah. In Chapter 1 Brueggemann claims the exodus-Sinai narrative is a journey to the common good that is always again reperformed in communities of faith. In Chapter 2 he reiterates this argument by analyzing the contrast in Jeremiah. He writes, 'I suggest that the contrast is not from "there to here" as in Pharaoh to Sinai, but now it is a juxtaposition and a contrast that kept both options in play and continues to require decisions that are quite personal and at the same time systemic for society.' (p. 118) And finally, Brueggemann considers the book of Isaiah as 'countercultural and resisting the ideology of unconditional guarantee and the resultant denial about loss and the subsequent despair about the future.' (p. 121)

This particular text is even more meaningful, because Brueggemann adds a section that addresses the difficult issues challenging many people here and now. The book concludes with an afterword that

reflects on the themes of the book in the context of the immediate present (the Obama presidency and post-economic collapse).

This little volume speaks powerfully about the call to neighborliness as an antidote to consumerism, productionism, and anxiety in our world today. For Brueggemann the call to action is for both the church and individuals. He quickly identifies the most basic issues facing many churches: Where is the church going? What is its role in contemporary society? What difference can the church make in a world defined by chaos? He states the mission for the church, 'When the church only echoes the world's kingdom of scarcity, then it has failed in its vocation. But the faithful church keeps at the task of living out a journey that points to the common good.' (p. 32) This theme and call to the common good is carried throughout the book and the reader feels compelled to respond with action. Through neighborliness, covenanting, and reconstruction we can move toward the unity of the common good.

Only then will the church and its members 'arrive at the mountain (with Moses), chance the triad of God's joy (with Jeremiah), and move through hope to reconstruction (with Isaiah).' (p. 122)

This book will fill the preacher's soul and stretch the mind. This is not easy reading, but it does offer the serious reader a spirituality grounded journey in biblical sources that leads to an examination of both our national direction and personal choices. This text would be a good addition to any church library. Brueggemann has proved a valuable guide in his analysis while encouraging his readers to see hope in the midst of crisis.

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★ ★ ★

Creation and the God of Abraham, David B. Burrell, Carlo Cogliati, Janet M. Soskice and William R. Stoeger (eds.), Cambridge University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-521-51868-0), xii + 274 pp., hb £55/$95

Creatio ex Nihilo has held a central preface for scholarship and its understanding/appreciation of Creation since the early days of biblical and theological study. As the foundation for Abrahamic faith, it portrays a God of divine action whose free will, theodicy, grace and transcendence as *Creator* has become crucial for understanding traditional doctrine(s) which defines God's potency as being upon which all life is ontologically and fully dependent. In its metaphysical context, Creation and *Creatio ex Nihilo* establishes a contingency for *cause and effect* which,

by some default, accounts for the existence of a universe that by its very being, requires a prerequisite of (intelligent) design. For early theologians and philosophers, all of Creation was revealed by God in one *atemporal* act, an argument often used by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, to explain the ultimate and ontological divine action by which the world *was* created and is sustained. Such an argument not only speaks of the origin of the universe, but also has something dynamic to say about the causal effect of humankind's relationship with, and dependence upon/independence from the *uncaused Cause*, whose hand in creation potentially defines the aggregate of all existing things: existentially, spiritually, meta-physically, theologically, scientifically, reciprocally, (kerygmatically,) and otherwise!

In this edited collection essays, scholars consider a number of different responses to *Creatio ex Nihilo* in order to question how such a doctrine might fit into contemporary readings of scripture, its connection to science and confessional faith as well as the theological and scientific consequences and questions that naturally surface from such dialogue. Typical consequences include: the (necessary) rejection of pre-existent matter; God's relationship with humankind, as described in the Hebrew Scriptures, compared with a God who's creative power is *other* than, and independent to/from, the Cosmos; the role of human beings and the exercise of our mental apparatus in relation to the created order compared with God's hold on it as the *Sustainer* of all things existent; the concept of *cause and effect* and its compatibility with scientific theories of the *Big Bang*; the consequences of Creation being devoid of any divine interaction, such also therefore being devoid of any relationality (*Sic*), therefore separating the boundaries of faith and reason; the complimentary principles that potentially unite ultimate and cosmological questions of existence and created order; the *reductionist* problems caused and maintained by closing the mind to all scientific *realities* which limits attitudes to *Creatio ex Nihilo* and unnecessarily divorces it from scientific enquiry; the idea that *Creatio ex Nihilo* presents God as the agent of design for efficient causes, chance events and free rational agents, thereby avoiding concerns about the causal efficaciousness of God and denying creational events by ontological chance which, by its very definition, would have God as the agent of all evil; and finally the effect of *Creatio ex Nihilo* on Trinitarian structures which express the intimacy of God and the means by which the revelation of the unknown (God) is made known both cosmologically and Christologically, both in (*the Father's*) creation and in the person of Christ.

This is a challenging read that draws together arguments from a wide variety of historical, philosophical, scientific, and historical perspectives about Creation and the potential for divine action though, and by, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, which in itself is a tenet of/for all, systems of monotheistic religious belief. Effectively the confluence of Hellenistic

and biblical teaching, *Creatio ex Nihilo* is the theme by which theologians and the early church (and other monotheistic religions) defended and defined God's loving, living, and active creative power as being the active and primary & ontological cause of the universe. However, scientifically limited, such a belief does not fit neatly into the twenty-first century beliefs and values and, as such, the authors in this book aim to draw parallels throughout the sciences in an attempt to find a more congruent understanding and appreciation of *Creatio ex Nihilo* that might be more harmonious and consonant with the biblical revelation of the God of Abraham. Aquinas himself pointed out that reason itself is a demonstrative force for primary causation and, as such, does not, in itself, contradict evolutionary biology. While, in the same fashion *Creatio ex Nihilo* does not receive confirmation from contemporary cosmology, the rediscovered need for a metaphysical argument certainly pays dividends. *Creation and the God of Abraham* gives no final answer, but at it as least a step forward for our imagination and insight.

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★ ★ ★

Divine Revelation and Human Practice: Responsive and Imaginative Inspiration, Tony Clark, James Clarke & Co, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-227-17313-8), xv + 227 pp., pb £20.00

Clark's book has a long range and a short-range aim. His long-range aim is to make a fresh contribution to the conversation about the doctrine of revelation. His short-range goal is to explore the 'problematically understated' aspects of Karl Barth's doctrine of the Word of God. Two issues in Barth's work provide a context for Clark's book.

First, Clark asks whether Barth's picture of the event of revelation gives any room for responsive human participation. The capacity for the knowledge of God is a gift from God. That is something that he gives as an expression of his sovereign desire to be known by us. According to Clark, Barth's 'underdeveloped' notion of human participation opens him to the criticism that no such participation is involved in the event of revelation. It was often pointed out that 'his doctrine of revelation is so formulated that it represents an eclipse of all human forms of knowing, implying that, beyond the response of acknowledgment, there is nothing more to be said of active and creative process by which we may engage in establishing a place for human participation in revelation.' (p. 150) Out of this flows the 'insufficiently developed' emphasis on a

relationship that issues from the revelatory event. Clark states, 'it is my intention to develop an understanding of divine revelation in which the relational aspects of the knowledge of God, and the various contexts in which it is established, are more fully articulated.' (p. 47)

Second, Clark raises a question about the significance of the historical Jesus in light of Barth's statement that, 'God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog'. While the life of Jesus is important for Barth, Clark insists that, 'the point for Barth is not that the particular form in which revelation comes to humanity is arbitrary or irrelevant, but that it is not, and cannot be, in itself revelatory as 'its creaturely and phenomenal vehicle' (p. 73). He highlights Torrance's criticism that Barth's fear of subordinationism leads to a failure to develop a relational model of divine self-revelation. The historical Jesus ought to be seen as a model of an authentic human response to God. He is the blueprint for true human relationship with this self-revealing God.

Clark is not convinced that these charges that have been leveled at Karl Barth are completely accurate. He insists that Barth's account is not off-course, it is simply not satisfactory. Hence, his project seeks to use Barth's doctrine of revelation as a point of departure to articulate a fully orbed understanding of the ways a believing community could participate in the Trinitarian life of God. Towards that end he turns to Michael Polanyi's non-foundational epistemology to complement and advance Karl Barth's doctrine of revelation.

Clark brings Barth and Polanyi together via a polanyian exposition of Barth's treatment of the confessions of the church found in his Church Dogmatics I/2. This insightful move is precipitated by Clark's understanding of church confessions as a method by which communities of faith are enabled to participate in the revelation. He writes, 'The confession arises as the church seeks to articulate theological truth in the context of doctrinal conflict, by looking to the witness of scripture and seeking the illumination of the Spirit' (p. 171). In Barth's engagement with church confessions, Clark sees some parallels with Polanyi's approach to natural sciences. Two aspects are crucial here. First, Clark utilizes Polanyi's language of indwelling in his discussion of Barth's approach to confessions. Just as a scientist enters into the body of preexisting knowledge and relies on a scientific theory in order to make a new discovery, so confessions operate in the church. They are the church's lenses through which to appropriate the scripture. They are not something to look at but a means to see with. Rather than being the end in themselves, confessions are a conduit to the further end, namely engagement with the scripture. Second, a new scientific discovery, according to Polanyi always hinges on a breakthrough. The only way someone's understanding of the scientific world can be modified is when the tension of indwelling the body of scientific theory and facing the possibility of its fallibility is acutely felt. Clark writes, 'Polanyi suggests that

it is in contemplation (i.e. when we become absorbed in the realities that our theoretical understanding seeks to represent) that our theoretical grasp is relaxed. It is in this moment that we may gain a new insight into the reality with which we are engaged' (p. 169). Clark contends that Barth has a similar idea when he considers the way confessions function in the church. While engaging the scripture with confessional formulations in mind we find ourselves at times in a place where certain aspects of our confessional framework need to be revised or recalibrated.

Issuing from this Barth-Polanyi dialog, the last two chapters of Clark's book elaborate on human participation in the event of revelation. First, Clark distinguishes the epistemic participation. Jesus' first disciples learned from him by way of immersion into a shared life with him. They learned through imitation and participation. The early church picked up on that embodied mode of discipleship in the way it insisted on the two dominical commands, namely the Lord's Supper and the Great Commission. Clark is careful to note that his intent is not to develop a sacramental theology. The physical aspects of participation in the revelation 'are meaningful to us in that they draw, in symbolic association, upon bodily experiences and the body-involving knowledge-predominantly tacit-associated with them. In sustaining this emphasis, we circumvent the mistaken and misleading belief that our abstract, theoretical, or doctrinal articulation is meaningful and perhaps in some sense more pure apart from its association with such bodily "know-how" ' (p. 190).

Second, Clark emphasizes the hermeneutical participation. Following the lead of scholars like Vanhoozer and Wright, Clark envisions the engagement with the scripture in the ecclesial context as 'dramatic performance'. Faithful reading of the sacred text is understood in terms of improvisation akin to Shakespearian actors immersing themselves in the improvisation of the lost act. According to Clark, 'this model of biblical interpretation, far from being a matter of looking up right answers (or something of the sort), is a creative entering into and extrapolating from the biblical text' (p. 192). A significant component in this hermeneutical participation is imagination. Clark writes, 'In a faithful "performance" of biblical interpretation the imaginative component of the process is one in which there is a rigorous and nuanced responsiveness to the text' (p. 220).

We offer here two questions as a way of furthering a dialog with the author.

Polanyi's understanding of knowledge is based on a belief that a rational human mind can structure, synthesize, and make sense of a complex web of realities. As knowledge unfolds before us, we appropriate it and put it to use. In the process we become aware of its limited and fallible nature. Thus our appropriation of knowledge, in a way, opens our eyes to our ignorance. So we seek to refine what we

know, search for more knowledge to fill necessary lacunas, adjust our points of reference. Therefore, knowledge is never given or fixed. It is always unstable, fluid, and elusive. To search for knowledge is to always to be on the way, to be in a process of becoming.

While Polanyi's thought does fare well in the post-foundational context, those that might not be ready for this tectonic postmodern shift are bound to ask questions about its epistemological basis and practical value. William Abraham has recently argued for a canonical deposit in the church. The doctrinal formulations like the Trinity, Jesus' dual nature and the bodily resurrection that were forged in the heat of dialog and worship in the early church has had a framing and anchoring effect on its praxis. Might one wonder how the worship and life of communities of faith can be sustained if these kinds of foundational formulations were subjected to constant polanyian epistemological scrutiny.

Another question that is raised by Clark's use of Polanyi's framework has to do with the early church's practice of the Catechism which is still retained in some of the branches of the church. Education precedes the full participation. The Eucharistic table is not open for catechumens till they have grasped the basics of the faith. How might one configure the appropriation of knowledge in the polanyian sense in a way that will be meaningful for those who find themselves in this transition stage?

Overall, reading Clark's book is analogous to participation in a fabulous feast. His writing is clear and engaging. On every turn he displays a clear mastery of the subject at hand. He is well versed both in the voluminous body of work that surrounds a twentieth century giant like Karl Barth and the at times hard to grasp work of Michael Polanyi. Here is a scholar who is also a participant in the life of faith. He writes as an insider who seeks to bring clarity and depth to the church's participation with the self-revealing God. Those inside and outside the ecclesial confines will find this book accessible, informative, and enriching.

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★ ★ ★

The Dialogue Comes of Age: Christian Encounters with Other Traditions, John B. Cobb and Ward M. McAfee (eds.), Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-9751-8), 242 pp., pb $25

Written as the third volume in a series by Progressive Christians Uniting – 'an activist organization which works closely with churches'

– *The Dialogue Comes of Age* follows *Progressive Christians Speak* (a collection of position papers which address current issues) and *Resistance: The New Role of Progressive Christians* (essays which seek to redefine the relation between Christianity and American culture).

As Diana Eck noted a number of years ago in *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Benares* (Beacon Press 1993), religious diversity will be one of the key challenges facing the Christian religion in the twenty-first century. Her words were prophetic: In this current time of dynamic and unavoidable religious pluralism, how can one affirm a commitment to one particular religion of her or his choosing and simultaneously appreciate the religions to which others are committed? In the past, when geography separated, if not segregated, religions from one another, this issue was not pronounced, for one rarely encountered someone from a different religion – perhaps from a different denomination in the same religion, but hardly a foreign faith tradition. If one *did* meet people of other religious expressions, they were typically, exclusivistically, and triumphantly labeled 'heathens' or 'infidels', and subsequently, summarily, converted or enslaved or killed.

Presently, however, we frequently, inevitably, work alongside, live amidst, befriend, at times marry persons from faith traditions different from our own. Does admiring them dilute one's own particular faith? Is respecting a faithful Muslim or a devout Buddhist a betrayal of one's own religion? On its very first page, this book emphatically states 'no', and claims that 'faithfulness to Christ *leads us* (emphasis mine) to such admiration'. What follows in the book, then, is a conversation between specific Christian scholars and a number of the world's major religions – Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Indigenous American Religions.

Avoiding the affirmation of only what all religious traditions have in-common at the expense of jettisoning what is distinctive about each, and eschewing the triumphalism and exclusivism of the past, this book plots a course that, in general, proceeds in the following fashion: a brief history of each of the traditions is shared, central beliefs are noted, historical issues between that tradition and Christianity are delineated, and possibilities for a positive relationship are outlined.

The book, logically and historically, begins with Judaism, the mother religion from which Christianity sprang as an offspring, albeit a rebellious child with a distinctive interpretation of Jewish texts and unorthodox, 'heretical' claims about the figure, Jesus of Nazareth. In this chapter, Eva Fleischner, a Roman Catholic whose father was Jewish and whose mother was Roman Catholic, and whose work has been recognized and affirmed by the Vatican, takes on the complicated task of analyzing Jewish-Christian relations through the centuries. She unhesitatingly confronts the 'shadow side of Christianity', expressed especially in the theological supercessionism claim (Christianity has

replaced Judaism, and Christians have succeeded Jews as the people of God; subsequently, Jews have been rejected and cursed by God) and *deicide* charge (the Jews killed Jesus, so God has punished them in the *diaspora* and in their terrible sufferings in history). She acknowledges that Christian teaching and preaching 'provided a fertile seedbed for the Nazi genocide' (p. 43).

Thus, Christianity has an obligation to repent and to ask forgiveness for its unfair representation and dismissal of Judaism and the resultant contribution this made to the annihilation of Jews during the *Shoah*. Simultaneously, Christianity must commit itself to a rethinking of Christian theology in light of a new understanding of Judaism.

Ward McAfee, in the following chapter on Christianity and Islam, illustrates that these two religions 'have much in common and yet are worlds apart' (p. 88); he acknowledges that 'the Christian West has demonized Islam with only minor exceptions' (p. 91). After describing some important commonalities, and later paying homage to a 300-year 'golden age of interfaith cooperation and intellectual development between 900 and 1200 in Spain and North Africa', he provides a brief, adequate, and insightful history of Islam, including the prophet Muhammed, the holy Qur'an, the schism between Sunnis and Shi'ites, the expansion of Islam, and the development of Islamic mysticism in the Sufis.

He follows this with an analysis of theological similarities and differences in the two traditions, ranging from contrasting images of Jesus, to divine omnipotence and free will, to social-ethical considerations, to the rise of democracy, and to the challenge of consumerism. He describes our current, practical relationship today as 'cross pollination and conflict'. Military conflict, such as the Crusades, has characterized Christian–Muslim relations for fourteen centuries, largely due, he claims, to expansionism and to competition in proselytism. At the same time, Islamic civilization preserved the knowledge of the ancient Greeks, making it available later to Christian Europe.

For progress to occur in relations, he contends, Christians will have to resist the socialization to view all Muslims as radical extremists, to grant the centrality of the Qur'an in Muslim theology and identity, and to work to include Muslims in interfaith gatherings.

A third-generation Okinawan American, Dickson Kazuo Yagi grew up in the religious interface between Christianity and Buddhism (albeit a particular type of Buddhism, Shingon). His chapter introduces the reader to Buddhism – its basic ethical teachings, its worldview, its emergence from Hinduism as a 'heretical' sect, its focus on the life of Gautama Buddha, and its three main branches (Theravada and Mahayana, with its many schools, and Vajrayana).

Yagi specifically relates the Buddhist doctrine of 'no self' (*anataa*) to Jesus Christ, to the Apostle Paul, to St Francis of Assisi, and to the

monks on Mt. Athos in Greece. The notion of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and humility appear to link the two religions.

He also criticizes the accretion tendency of Buddhism in its adoption of Chinese ancestor worship, the largely unknown to the West Japanese persecution (1597–1855) of Christianity, Buddhism's take-over of funerals from Shinto (a religion indigenous to Japan), and the priesthood for rejecting celibacy and for making temple leadership hereditary.

Yagi sees 'engaged Buddhism' as an encouraging development. Buddhists are active in environmental, economic, human rights, anti-war, non-violence, and social justice (such as the welcoming of *dalits* or untouchables) causes.

Although the writer very personally shares the internal dialogue within himself between his Christianity and his Buddhist context and borrowed practices from Buddhism, strikingly absent is any description of the current status of the Christian-Buddhist dialogue, a dialogue in which the book's editor, John B. Cobb Jr, has himself been substantively engaged.

Ward McAfee makes an *encore* presentation in relating American Indigenous Religions to Christianity. In this chapter, he joins Jack Jackson, a Christian Native American, whose thoughts if not words have informed what McAfee shares. What is *not* shared is a recounting of the horrific, genocidal treatment of Indigenous Americans and their culture by earlier Christians. Instead, the contributions of Native American insights, values, and lessons about nature are detailed regarding the environmental crisis which the earth community now faces.

These include viewing human beings as co-inhabitants rather than as a master species, human beings as reverent toward other species (species which truly matter and have intrinsic value in themselves), human beings as attached to their locations and biocommunities, human beings as biocentric rather than as anthropocentric in their outlook, human beings as focused on the present rather than solely on the afterlife, and human beings looking at nature as a living world that humans work with and within rather than as something to be conquered and subdued.

In the process, McAfee considers the perspectives, contributions, and criticisms by Indigenous Americans such as Vine Deloria Jr (who rejected Christianity in favor of restoring ancient tribal religious traditions) and George Tinker (who is regarded as 'the principal Native American theologian of our time' and who believes that Christianity is still salvageable).

Such a dialogue between Christianity and American indigenous religion could/would contribute to a reconstruction of Christianity that centers on a respect for the land with an emphasis on salvation as sustainability. However, this seems asymmetrical to this reader –

Christianity gets, but does not give in terms of owning up to the imposition of Christianity onto indigenous peoples' religion; the assessment and dismissal of much of that religion as 'devil worship'; the forced assimilation of Native Americans which in many instances amounted to nothing less than kidnapping children and sending them off to boarding schools where they were intentionally, sometimes forcibly, acculturated; and the less-than-Christian intention of eliminating American indigenous peoples as expendable and necessary to 'progress' and expansion.

The Dialogue Comes of Age: Christian Encounters with Other Traditions would be an excellent textbook for college courses in interfaith dialogue, seminary courses dealing with ministry in the midst of religious pluralism, and adult Sunday school classes in which participants desire a history of the interactions among Christianity and other religions and a brief introduction to the history, belief systems, and major figures of those world religions.

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★ ★ ★

The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology: Narrative Readings in Romans, Corneliu Constantineanu, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-58198-3), xvi + 254 pp., hb $130

Are there social dimensions to Paul's theology of reconciliation? If so how are those social dimensions to be expressed by Christians in the larger society? These are some of the questions raised by Constantineanu's book, which is a reworking of his doctoral thesis.

Constantineanu believes that a study of the social dimensions of Paul's theology of reconciliation is necessitated by the tragic realities of the conflicts in the Balkans, 'increasing tendencies towards radical nationalism, escalating racial, ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as . . . various forms of intolerance and exclusion' (p. 1). In Constantineanu's view reconciliation has not been used by Christian communities to move them to become active 'agents of peace' in regard to the conflicts around them (p. 2). Constantineanu is concerned that the spiritual dimension of reconciliation – God reconciling sinners to himself – has been so emphasized that the social dimensions of reconciliation have been neglected in traditional Pauline exegesis.

Using a narrative analysis influenced by the New Perspectives on Paul (NPP), this book studies Paul's theology of reconciliation primarily

in Romans 5–8 and 12–15. Theologians of the NPP emphasize a 'relational, social reading of Paul' rather than emphasizing the salvation of individuals (p. 5).

The study of reconciliation is not confined to the 'four classical passages' where the Greek vocables for reconciliation (*καταλλασσω/καταλλαγη*) are found – Romans 5:1–11; 2 Corinthians 5:11–21; Ephesians 2:11–22; and Colossians 1:15–23 (p. 21). This is not a word study of the Greek vocables for reconciliation. Rather it uses narrative analysis to incorporate the story of Paul, his world-view, and his epistles into the framework of the 'larger symbolism of reconciliation' (p. 21). The study of that larger symbolism includes an examination of other concepts including peace, love, unity, welcome, friendship, and acceptance. Constantineanu believes that examining this wider context is necessary because Paul's understanding of reconciliation is 'not limited to reconciliation with God but comprises *also* an intrinsic, social or horizontal dimension' (p. 22).

An overview of modern literature on reconciliation in Paul examines the work of Vincent Taylor, Ralph Martin, Ernst Kasemann and others, After reading these works, Constantineanu concludes that reconciliation is a major theme in Paul's theology and that reconciliation is most often narrowly viewed as being vertical and individual – something 'between God and human beings' rather than having wider horizontal social implications and application (p. 39). Such narrowness stems from the fact that the study of reconciliation is traditionally based on the above-mentioned four passages in Paul. The lack of a social application of reconciliation also flows from the fact that 'the powerful and privileged' have misused Paul's writings to victimize others, justify slavery, teach the submission of women, anti-Semitism, and compliance with evil governments (p. 41).

It is thought that the social dimensions of Paul's theology avoid what has been described as the 'individualistic, narrowly religious and spiritual reading of Paul' throughout 'most of Christian history' which is a result of viewing Paul 'through Augustinian and Lutheran eyes' (p. 47). Although rejecting this Augustinian/Lutheran view, the author does not engage in any way with the works of Augustine or Luther. With one exception, the theologians cited are all from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and includes those who have recently begun to emphasize the political dimension of Paul's writings. The Roman political framework of Paul's life and his use of Roman political terminology need diligent study lest an 'apolitical reading' of Paul produce 'a false impression' of his teaching (p. 60).

The Jewish and Roman contexts which shaped Paul's life include an understanding that 'God is present and active' in the world, and that God's people should be as well – socially, politically, and spiritually (p. 60).

Paul's dramatic Damascus Road conversion and the theology of the Prophet Isaiah have directly influenced Paul's understanding of reconciliation, as has Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. Isaiah's vision of the restoration of creation, his concept of peace which includes political justice, the Spirit's role in reconciliation, and eschatological salvation are all incorporated into Paul's understanding of reconciliation. It is argued that 'political stability and social prosperity' can only be achieved on the basis of 'a right relationship with God'. As well, 'God's peace and righteousness' can only be experienced in the context of 'political stability and social prosperity' (p. 85). That perspective raises the question as to whether a Christian can have God's peace and righteousness while living in a world torn by war and strife.

The first four chapters set the stage for a narrative analysis of Romans 5–8 and 12–15. This analysis examines various aspects of the rich symbolism of reconciliation in the context of the 'story of Christ' to help the Romans see that 'unity' and 'harmony' are intrinsic parts of the reconciling gospel they profess (p. 99). The ethical aspects of righteousness, justification and reconciliation are examined. Romans is understood to be an exposition of the gospel – 'the revelation of the justice of God manifested in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Messiah' which offers the 'forgiveness of sins and salvation to all'. The gospel also unites Jews and Gentiles in Christ which is 'a sign of the new eschatological age' (p. 105). The horizontal and vertical aspects of Paul's theology of reconciliation are here tied together.

Paul's encouragements in Romans 12–15 are 'elaborations' of his teaching on reconciliation grounded in the exposition of the narrative about Christ in Romans 5–8 (p. 145). There are practical implications for the ethical interaction of Christians with one another and the world because, having been baptized and brought to faith in Christ, they are now a 'new community' a 'united body in Christ' (p. 158). The peaceful interaction of weak and strong Christians is another illustration of the practical and ethical implications of reconciliation in Christ.

Constantineanu's chapter on reconciliation in Romania is part of 'the re-emergence' of religion's positive influence 'in the social arena' of the world (p. 186). The involvement of the Russian Orthodox and evangelical churches is examined, as are their actual and potential roles in social and religious reconciliation. Although committed 'in principle to reconciliation' the churches have not always put it into social practice (p. 191). Constantineanu believes that these religious communities need to diligently encourage Romanians to live 'together in harmony and peace' (p. 203). Paul's understanding 'of God's reconciliation of the world' can enable Christians to live in obedience to Christ and in service to the world (p. 205). God's people are to 'live peaceably with all' and to interact ethically with 'the other' (p. 206).

Constantineanu's book is part of a growing trend that encourages religious people to be involved in the resolution of the struggles and conflicts of the world. This book is a scholarly work that will be found mainly in seminary libraries. It should be read by anyone interested in studying religion's role in reconciling earthly conflicts. Scholars interested in a narrative analysis of biblical texts, and in the theology of the NPP should also read this book.

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★ ★ ★

Priscillian of Avila: The Complete Works, Marco Conti (ed. and trans.), Oxford University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-19-956737-9), 344 pp., hb £95.00/$175.00

There is no doubt about it: Prof. Marco Conti's masterful translation of the works of Priscillian and his followers will be a mighty impetus for the wider interest in and the scholarly study of this notorious figure. This book is advertised as 'a complete English translation of his genuine and spurious works' (p. 12). Conti makes accessible the following texts: among the genuine works, the eleven tractates of the Würzburg manuscript, *Canons on the Letters of the Apostle Paul*, and a fragment from Orosius' *Commonitorium*; among the spurious works, *On the Trinity of Catholic Faith* and the so-called *Monarchian Prologues*.

To his translations, Conti has added a relatively brief yet very helpful introduction. He gives an outline of the Priscillianist controversy and suggests some corrections to the chronology of the events (pp. 1–5). This is followed by an analysis of the often contradictory Priscillian scholarship, highlighting especially the birth of the perception of Priscillian as 'a victim of ecclesiastical power' (p. 6), and the discovery of the anonymous Würzburg manuscript, which contains eleven tractates (pp. 5–12). Since most of the scholars who have researched or are researching Priscillian(ism) have been (less critical or hypercritical) historians of ecclesiastical affairs and religious matters, Conti rightly complains that 'the actual content of the Priscillianist literary corpus has received relatively little attention' (p. 9). Indeed, the focus of research has been on Priscillian as a scandalous individual in the 'political, social, and religious situation of late antiquity' (*ibid*). This might be a bit one-sided. Pages 14–21, in turn, provide a descriptive/analytical summary of the treatises included in *The Complete Works*, as well as further discussions of the authenticity of these works. The Introduction

ends with a characterization of Priscillian as a writer (pp. 21–5) and with an overview of the manuscript tradition and the available editions of his works (pp. 25–9).

Conti's admirable translation, as distinguished from some previous 'paraphrases' (p. v, n. 2), includes footnotes to the scriptures as well as textual variants of the Latin critical text. In English, he has chosen to follow closely and heroically the style of Priscillian's (or his followers') long and very complex sentences. For example, in *Tractate* X, which is an uncial manuscript in *scriptio continua* (!), there is a sentence which goes on and on, until finally a lacuna in a text saves the reader from even more words (pp. 145–7). Perhaps for the sake of communicating the alleged meaning of what the rather obscure texts in Latin say, shorter English sentences would have been more helpful – although it would have been riskier and closer to a paraphrase. But right now, it often takes several readings and (mental) eliminations of various parenthetic clauses before a text makes sense. It is *not* Conti, it is Priscillian!

The translations are followed by a sixty-page commentary, where Conti discusses various things: the authorship of individual texts; the identification of sources, quotes, and allusions; various problems of translations (punctuation, use of neologisms, etc.); and above all, what these texts say about the life and theology of Priscillian and Priscillianists.

I contend that one should take Conti's call to consider the *content* of the literary corpus of Priscillian very seriously. The tricky question is, of course, how one should approach Priscillian's writings, with radical suspicion or with careful trust?

If Priscillian was a heretic worthy of his death sentence by a secular court for sorcery, it might seem reasonable to dismiss his apologetic explanations. But was he a heretic in the first place? Despite the fact that Sulpicius Severus says about Ithacius, Priscillian's accuser, 'I certainly hold that Ithacius had no worth or holiness about him' (*Chron*. 2.50), much of what is known about Priscillian comes indeed from his sworn enemies, including Sulpicius' own information. Ithacius' account of things is repeated, among others, by a heresiologist Filaster, by Orosius and Consentius, and through them, by Augustine. Later Isidore of Seville, who included Ithacius among the illustrious men, mentioned the latter's book 'in which [Ithacius] shows Priscillian's hateful doctrines and arts of sorcery and disgraceful lechery, observing that the teacher Priscillian was a certain Mark of Memphis [i.e., a Gnostic], a disciple of Mani, and a most learned expert in the magic art' (*vir ill*. 15).

Consequently, the works of Priscillian are often pre-judged to be mere desperate attempts of a heretic to prove his innocence and orthodoxy. Words as *signa* are known both to hide and reveal, but for some

learned reasons, it is often contended that Priscillian's words only hide and never reveal. So, one just cannot believe what he says! Do not trust Priscillian when he says, 'We who are catholic must not be condemned' (*Tract*. II.170–1)! That's precisely what Ithacius wanted everyone to conclude. Hence also Augustine's summary, 'Swear, perjure yourself, but never betray a secret!' (*ep*. 237.3). Even when explicitly condemning Gnostic and Manichean heresies, as well as Docetism and Patripassianism, Priscillian just has to be taken as a politician who constantly speaks up against something, yet is, at the same time, guilty of this very something. However, if such reversed psychology (e.g. p. 264) is applied to all other patristic texts with equal ferocity, then the resulting interpretations – even if they get something right – would definitely go South!

Conti seems to think, quite rightly I must add, that Priscillian's extant works deserve a friendlier and fairer approach, even if much remains ambiguous, and the coherence and orthodoxy of all that Priscillian asserts cannot be simply assumed. Nevertheless, Priscillian's theology might be more interesting and even more original than is usually allowed.

In the larger anti-'Arian' Spanish context (e.g. Hosius of Cordoba, Audentius of Toledo), in which Priscillian refutes 'Binionites' (*Tract*. I.33), emphasis on the oneness of God and on the equal divinity of the Father and Son makes good sense. True, there are these supposedly 'clear' Monarchian statements (*Tract*. XI.10; and the intriguing quote of an apostle in *Trin*. 360). Yet, perhaps Priscillian's understanding of one God is Trinitarian in a rather unique way, which bursts the traditional, imposed categories of heresiologists. After all, next to the passages which emphasize the oneness of God and, allegedly, the mere nominal distinction between 'father' and 'son', one should consider the passages which presuppose the distinction between the Father and the Son with equal seriousness (e.g. *Tract*. II.47–9; *Trin*. 45–9). It may well be that just like Priscillian's dualism proves *not* to be the heretical ontological dualism (pp. 283, 298; *Tract*. X.123–31), and his assertion in *Tract*. VI.90–2 *not* to be the heretical Apollinarianism, his theology, too, proves *not* to be the heretical Monarchianism (cf. Mt 29:19 [the singular 'name'], Jn 10:30; the Johannine *Comma* in *Tract*. I.45–50 [*et haec tria unum sunt in Christo Iesu*], and Priscillian's own repeated condemnation of Patripassianism).

As usual, in the Oxford Early Christian Texts series, the texts in primary languages and in English are on opposite pages, making it a wonderful tool for scholars – only if their institutions can afford to make this pricey item available to them.

Tarmo Toom
The Catholic University of America

★ ★ ★

The Errors of Atheism, J. Angelo Corlett, Continuum, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-4411-5893-2), xxii + 250 pp., pb £17.99

The errors of Atheism seeks to do what has not yet been done in the field of analytical philosophy of religion, where the field is for the most part divided in the West between mostly orthodox Christian theists, on the one hand, and a few atheists on the other' (p. xii). These words express the intention of J. Angelo Corlett, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at San Diego State University. According to the author, orthodox traditional theism has not been able to answer all the questions raised throughout the history of Christian thought. This situation, however, does not imply a justification of atheism as a negation of the classical conception about God. Indeed, the author lays stress on what he defines to be a mistake, that is the establishment of a clear cut distinction between orthodox theism and strict atheism, for there would be some more plausible visions of God. More specifically, he supports the New Agnosticism which is the result of a deep analysis of the best arguments sustained by both theists and atheists. Therefore, it upholds a kind of Socratic attitude which is distant from a definitive response to the main questions regarding God. The outcome of that theological point of view is called by the author the 'Hybrid Minimalist Theism', that is an innovative theological version, a middle course between the religious message and the modern scientific and political conceptions. This new kind of theism includes elements taken from process and liberation theologies and rejects all those principles concerning God which are traditionally considered to be problematic. As a consequence, the acceptance of such a theology entails the opposition to the main Christian assumptions, above all the divinity of Christ. In other words, the Hybrid Minimalist Theism tries to join some basic points of process and liberation theologies into a single perspective to be deemed a more rational theology and a challenge to the simple forms of atheism. Indeed, the problem with naïve atheism consists of the dogmatic character of most of its assertions; so, the author points out that atheism commits the same error made by theism. In his mind, there are not only many theists who claim their faith without facing the problem of its rational aspects; there are also many atheists who reject any possibility about the existence of God without paying much attention to some alternative kinds of theology.

This work is divided into two parts. In Part One (pp. 27–98) the author emphasizes the most important errors of atheism. After delineating a necessary taxonomy of views on the existence of God and its denial, the author discusses 'The errors of Atheism' (Chapter 2, pp. 51–68) which

consist essentially in the superficial attitude by atheists who do not take in consideration that 'there are alternative and much more plausible conceptions of God that must be proven to be problematic prior to well-justified atheistic declaration of victory in the debate about God' (p. 56). The position held by the famous scientist Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* is part of that ingenuous atheism criticized by the author. In fact, Dawkins' atheism is related only to the Christian faith. Therefore, the discussion of Dawkins' ideas is made in order to lay stress on the major value of the New Agnosticism as an intellectual and even scientific point of view.

In Part Two (pp. 99–226) the author highlights how, taking some elements of process ad liberation theisms and incorporating them into the Hybrid Minimalist Theism, we can start a positive debate upon the problem of God and evade the unresolved questions of the traditional religion. An adequate theism should be truly rational, reject orthodox Christian theisms, renounce to Revelation as a fundamental source for God's existence, abandon the superiority of a particular religious experience, address the most important concerns facing human kind, be simple in the best way possible. These distinctive features in addition to some basic principles of process and liberation theologies bring about the tenets of a good sort of agnosticism. For instance, from a scientific perspective, 'the theist ought to be prepared to accept the most explanatorily powerful scientific theories of origins of evolution as part of demythologized theistic cosmology. This is precisely what is meant by the locution *naturalizing theism*' (p. 119).

In Prof. Corlett's opinion, to trade the contents of scriptures for a theological conception respecting the achievements of science, is necessary but not enough. What is needed, in other words, is to elaborate the nature and function of God concentrating upon political and social terms. Thus, liberation theology seems to the author to be the best arrangement to achieve his own goal as its core consists in liberating God from the basic assumptions of traditional theism in order to stress the divine justice to be made through the actions of man. The author's analysis concerns 'liberation race theisms' 'in an attempt to provide a portrait of theism that stands as a viable answer to the problem of nonnatural evil' (p. 151). Even if the liberation theologies are Christian, the liberation theism adopted by the author is philosophical as it employs those theological contents to defeat superficial atheism. Only in this way process and liberation theologies can converge in a new religious vision.

The arguments of this book are outlined with great care and the author deals with many different aspects to make his own viewpoint stronger. However, as a historian and philosopher of science and, above all, as a Catholic believer, I cannot agree with the position held by the author. My opposition is based upon some fundamental points:

why does traditional orthodox theism lack rationality? Why a clear cut distinction between reason and Revelation? Why do we have to consider the orthodox Christian notion of the nature and function of God problematic? The lack of empirical evidence is not a sound argument to state the irrational character of the Christian faith and the objections to its principles form part of that 'free will', namely an essential part of the Christian vision of a rational man made in image of God. As regards to science, as many historians have proved, modern scientific thought was born only in the Christian milieu. So, thanks to researchers who deemed the traditional God to be the focus of their conception of nature, in the Western context science started its path. Furthermore, if science is rightly considered, namely as the quantification of phenomena, it is impossible to find in its conclusions some contradictions with the orthodox Christian faith. The fact that the orthodox Christian principles survived for many centuries, the failure of all those philosophies which opposed Christendom and their impossibility to found an universal ethics, the ability of the Christian thought to remain actual in our evolving technological society, render the concept of a crisis of the traditional faith at least to be problematic.

Alessandro Giostra
Stanley Jaki Foundation

★ ★ ★

Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction, James L. Crenshaw, Westminster John Knox Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-664-23459-10), xviii + 308 pp., pb $34.95

The study of Old Testament Wisdom, started to attract considerable interest in 1981, thanks to a number of elevated theological issues which considered many of the unresolved tensions in sapiential biblical scholarship. Since this time, and particularly in the past twenty years, a vast array of material has appeared on the scene, which has opened the horizon for the study of wisdom literature, aiming to make sense of its character, formation, and expression within both the communities of the Old Testament and the ancient near East. Expressing itself in a number of different ways, wisdom advises, instructs, and questions the character and anomalies of life, (re)shaping and (reformulating) the tradition(s) and nature of family life. In such a way, wisdom literature is both experiential, offering a pragmatic guide to lifestyle, as well as a theoretical, and philosophical reflection, about its iniquities and responsibilities.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and other sapiential texts of the ancient near East, a thematic coherence addresses the search for maintenance and stability in human behavior, aiming to act as a guide that instructed, counseled and proclaimed a wisdom that would (epidemiologically) offer an observation of life, and search for knowledge, that would grasp reality and make it clear to the masses. Indeed, the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures displays the search for wisdom in a number of different guises, including: Proverbs' search for knowledge and understanding of human nature in a primeval age of tension between self-reliance and dependence on God's mercy, Job's pursuit of a just God while in the depths of despair, and Qoheleth's pursuit for meaning in a silent universe.

An analysis of the *wisdom* of Proverbs has found a fundamental principle that it was believed to secure existence and sustain the cosmos, namely, a conduct and lifestyle that would ultimately bring order and harmony from the chaos that is life. As a pedagogical collection of didactic sayings and teachings, the book of Proverbs, as a quest for knowledge and wisdom, and therefore long life and divine approval, asks what it is we owe the creator of the universe. It suggests that, without a vital relationship with God, there is no one who could possibly attain sufficient wisdom to merit the adjective *Wise*! In this way, the Lord, and even more so, fear of the Lord, is the (only) source of wisdom!

In the book of Job, we read about a search for justice and divine presence in a story that challenges the very nature of *wisdom* in a battle that questions the philosophical ruminations about innocent suffering and governance of the universe that enabled people to make *wise* decisions. The poetic structure and dramatization of the story of Job creates a narrative about innocent suffering and fight for survival against overwhelming odds, addressing fundamental questions about: human existence, disinterested piety, the reason for human suffering, and indeed whether evil is somehow bound up with God and an individual's ability to have faith in him. Such debate, common also to Mesopotamian wisdom literature, may indeed be viewed as a paradigm of (un)answered lament and a model to teach people how to respond during trials and suffering. The entire book of Job owes its inspiration and language to the sapiential tradition, and culminates in a rather clever use of literary expertise, establishing quite evidently, that true wisdom, like God, defies human reason!

Qoheleth's *chasing after meaning* led him to lack trust in God or knowledge, God having no favor for his creatures, and the enterprise of wisdom being entirely bankrupt! His search leads to a realization of five major convictions: firstly, that death cancels out everything, therefore any knowledge or advantage gained in life is lost at the end; secondly, that wisdom cannot achieve its goal, secure existence, or alter what God

has shaped because no one can truly know what God's plans are, it, therefore, not being worth wasting time attempting to tackle life's enigmas and all the more natural to reject the possibility of knowing the meaning of anything; thirdly, that God is unknowable and as hidden as his divine essence, with no place for personal relationship, however desirable (Qoheleth's prudent understanding of God's absolute power being one of a distance that questioned whether He looked upon human existence with interest or disdain); fourthly, that the world is crooked! Qoheleth had no time for his predecessors' assumptions that God is moral and the world is untrustworthy, for him, a lack of faith envelops a depressing sameness of past, present and future; and finally, fifthly, pleasure commends itself. For Qoheleth, human pleasure is but fleeting and a journey into nothingness! True enjoyment is something that God alone can bestow and not something for which we can toil – it is therefore a futile pursuit, and mostly outside of the human grasp! Such personal observations and reflections, culminating with the conclusion that *all is futile*, seem contrary to Job's hopes about the goodness and grace of God. While Qoheleth advises readers to keep the commandments, blesséd assurance is not a definite requisite or consequence!

From other perspectives, Ben Sirach teaches that, aside from the above, worship is the true expression of wisdom and that self-reliance is not as important, and less of an obligation, as prayer for divine guidance and keeping oneself pure! The Wisdom of Solomon, instead, applies a rhetoric of philosophical apologetic/treatise and didactic exhortation/eschatology, which personifies the character of wisdom, even to the point of hypostasis, in a way that, (for the first time) alludes to God as Father and in which, she, as wisdom, functions in parallel with the divine word!

It is not easy to explain the presence of revelation in wisdom literature, for reason itself seems to manage its existence without the need for faith, with the pursuit of knowledge being the opposite of a self revealing creator which, in itself, requires a Kierkegaardian leap of faith. In their search for knowledge, Israel's sages left a valuable legacy to Israelite thought which recognized the limits imposed on human reason and ambiguity, about the innate conscience and the natural order of things, as well as any potential relationship with God. In pursuing knowledge, we encounter limits at the point where ultimate issues impinge on the intellect, God (in his wisdom) certainly excelling at concealing things, and knowledge itself certainly remaining a mystery!

This is a challenging yet valuable book, expertly written by Crenshaw, in a way that provokes interest and, as such, further study. Crenshaw's academic style is informative, offering fresh insights and a depth of understanding about ancient near-Eastern culture, and their own appreciation/analysis of revelation and wisdom. While

stylistically, this is clearly not an introductory text, it is certainly a very useful resource for biblical scholars wishing to further their sapiential interests and one that I would certainly recommend to students in their postgraduate year(s) of study.

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★ ★ ★

The New Testament and Jewish Law: A Guide for the Perplexed, James G. Crossley, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-03434-2), 144 pp., pb $24.95

Crossley's book treats the main title by discussing selected Jewish nomistic topics in relation to the New Testament (NT). The subtitle refers to a series of T&T Clark. This series aims to have 'clear, concise and accessible introductions' for potentially complicated topics.

Crossley introduces his reader to the 'the New Testament and Jewish Law' in the following chapters: 1. Interpreting Jewish Law in Early Judaism; 2. Sabbath; 3. Purity and Food; 4. Divorce, 'Eye for an Eye' and Oaths and Vows; and 5. Circumcision, Family and Interaction with Gentiles. These chapters are wrapped in between an introduction and some concluding remarks. The book further contains a very small section of endnotes, a useful bibliography for those interested in further study on 'the New Testament and Jewish Law' and lastly, a general index.

Crossley traces the various topics diachronically, from the Torah, through the Hebrew Bible until post-Hebrew Bible texts, which consist mainly of Jewish sources preceding, contemporary and succeeding the NT. These Jewish sources typically include Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran writings, Philo, Josephus, and rabbinic literature. Through these texts, Crossley shows a spectrum of Jewish interpretations regarding the various topics he discussed. Time and again, for each topic, he shows how several actors in the NT, especially Jesus, lie within the spectrum of Jewish responsa. So, for example, Jesus may reflect an opinion in line with the house of Shammai over against the house of Hillel (divorce). At another instance, Jesus may side with some of the Pharisees over against the Essenes (healing on Sabbath).

In the first chapter, Crossley discusses the history of the reception of the Jewish Law. He highlights that for some Jewish groups, the law was at the epicenter of their identity. As different interpretations erupted

among various groups, clashes became inevitable. Crossley places the NT amidst a plethora of Judaisms and their diversity of interpretations of the Jewish Law.

Did the Sabbath only apply to Jews? In the second chapter, Crossley quotes Jewish texts that incite violent opposition to gentile Sabbath-observance, while other Jewish interpretation sees Sabbath-observance as a universal good. He believes these Jewish opinions to be instructive for certain Christians in Paul's letters, who, he says, did not observe Sabbath. Another range of Jewish opinion regarding Sabbath pertains to prohibited work and sanctioned exempted (Sabbatical) work. Crossley suggests that Jesus' Sabbath healings should be read within that framework.

In the third chapter, Crossley describes, in succinct and clear terms, the complex topic of ritual purity within rabbinic literature. He clearly outlines: the various levels of purity, who or what can contract them, and how they are transmitted. Besides his instructive description of purity in rabbinic literature, Crossley proposes to read NT texts such as Matt. 23:25–26 (clean outside of the cup, but inside . . .) and Mark 7:1–5 (eating with defiled hands?) in light of purity rituals, such as the immersion of utensils and the washing of hands.

Chapter 4 discusses laws for three situations that ideally would not take place: divorce, breaking of oaths, and damaging of eyes. Crossley's appeal to the debate between the houses of Shammai and Hillel on divorce is well known. Matthew's Jesus (Matt. 5:32) and the house of Shammai call divorce adultery, except in the case of sexual immorality. The house of Hillel, in contrast, considers divorce already permissible if the food is burnt. Another example of a backdrop to the NT that Crossley sketches is Jesus' rebuke of the *Qorban* pronouncement (Mark 7:11–12); namely, varying Jewish responsa existed for cases where items intended for, or belonging to others, for example, family, were consecrated (by a vow).

The fifth chapter discusses four topics intrinsically related to Jewish identity: family, circumcision, food and gentiles. Crossley argues that some seemingly unconventional NT texts relating to family can be explained partially by Jewish expositions and partially by the turbulent circumstances that affected the state of the traditional household in Galilee. Circumcision, food, and gentiles became a central topic in the NT, where Jewish-Christian relations became increasingly important.

The bulk of the NT passages focus on Jesus, a few focus on Paul. On a few occasions, Crossley places Paul or events in Paul's letters on the fringe or at odds with the spectrum of Jewish opinion – for example, in the case of Sabbath (p. 44). He also notes this in his concluding remarks (p. 117). Crossley reflects, in this regard, a common opinion in scholarship, which seems fitting for an introduction to the topic. Alternatively, however, he could have drawn a different conclusion. In the case of

Sabbath observance, he showed ample texts that place either Jewish or gentile lack of literal Sabbath-observance within the spectrum of Jewish opinion. A similar line of thinking may be followed for the Pauline texts, Rom. 14:2–3, 20–21 and 1 Cor. 10:27–29, on food (pp. 108–9). Would Crossley have taken this route, he would certainly not have exceeded the boundaries of current scholarly opinion, such as expressed by Mark Nanos.

All in all, Crossley succeeds in presenting a complex topic in clear and succinct terms. The book is well written and well organized. It requires no knowledge of ancient languages. Neither does one need to painstakingly lookup sources, since most sources are quoted in the texts. The balance between the breadth and depth of the topic makes the book an excellent resource as textbook for students who are introduced to the NT in light of the Jewish Law(s). Mostly throughout his treatment, Crossley is keen to present the trajectories of the various nomistic themes in a diachronic perspective. Yet, Crossley has wisely included a disclaimer to only want to highlight the various themes present as a backdrop to the NT. Complexities especially caused by the relatively later publication date of rabbinic literature require much more scrutiny in order to solidify or dismiss their factual relationship with the NT. Hence, if this book is to be used as textbook, it should be done so in conjunction with a treatment of the complexities of using Jewish texts, especially later rabbinic literature, as background to the NT.

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★ ★ ★

Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue, Katharine Dell (ed.), T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-21709-7), xvi + 287 pp., hb $150/£80

Originating from Papers given at the Cambridge Old Testament Seminars 2005–2008, this book reproduces some of the latest scholarly conventions regarding the ethical genres of the Hebrew Scriptures, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Targum.

By its very nature scripture itself is inherently an ethical leitmotif which, among other contingencies, looks at the characterization of, and the interaction between, God and Humankind. This relationship in itself raises interest about issues of: desire, kingship, war, anger, and justice and therefore by default, correct application of the Law. In

addition to this, it encourages us to ask questions about the contemporaneous aspects of *Sitz im Leben* of those that received it and then subsequently adopted it into their (family) values. This set of essays attempts to draw comparisons, analogies and authorial intention about the portrayal of its ethical stances and human engagement with each other, with God and, more significantly the *darker side* of God!

Beginning with an ethical consideration of the Garden of Eden story, in which questions are raised about the true nature of its context as one of consequence, post-consequence and mortality, Robert Gordan asks, among other things, what the character of God actually meant by the sure claim of death to he who eats of the prohibited tree of knowledge of good and evil. The absence of instantaneous death after eating the fruit does indeed raise doubt about the truth of God's claim and has led to the assumption by some that perhaps the *truth-teller* in the story is in fact the devious figure of the Serpent, who tempted the characters in the story to break rank in the first place, by telling them that they would not die, as in fact they did not! Gordon, counters this, by suggesting that simply expelling Adam and Eve from the garden itself would have been tantamount to death in the sense that such an absence of paradise (and access to the tree of life) would in effect result in mortality by the fact that God's providence had (to a certain extent) been removed from their midst. This story is therefore more concerned with consequence, inappropriate action and trust: by failing to follow through with their own part in the promises of God, the story of Adam and Eve paves the way for the subsequent spread of sin, and indicates at the very beginning what it means to have right favor with God.

The second chapter considers the ethics of sexual promiscuity in the character of Potiphar's wife and her role as a temptress, would-be adulteress, cause of jealousy and an ethical misconduct that led to the downfall of the character of Joseph. Convention has held that Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph and when rejected, made accusations of rape that ended in his incarceration in a prison, leading to the assumption that her cry of 'rape' was simply one of disdain that he was unwilling to sleep with her. Here however, Diana Lipton considers the idea that, rather than wanting to make Potiphar jealous, his wife was perhaps more concerned with the continuity of the family line, making use of Joseph as '*surrogate*' parent in a similar means to Judah and Tamar and Abraham and Hagar. Joseph's character is indeed defined in a sexualized manner by the indication that he was brought 'to dally' with the ladies of the house and there is some evidence to suggest that Potiphar's wife's scream (at the point of encounter) was indeed not one of rape, but rather one of ecstasy and that it was only subsequent embarrassment that led to Joseph's arrest! While this remains ambiguous, gender ethics certainly seem to suggest that there is an underlying sexualized theme found throughout this narrative that

cannot be ignored and which certainly offers an alternative theme to that which is often cited in Sunday school.

The third chapter reminds us that the Hebrew Bible, in particular the Psalms, displays the Kings of Israel as a source of perpetual interest highlighted, not least by their portrayal as figures of restoration upon whom the people of Israel have placed their hopes and fears and to whom the prophets pay particular attention in light of their conduct and behavior. The (Royal) Psalms have therefore become a source of interest for biblical ethics as a book of instruction, as opposed to (/as well as) simply a collection of worship songs, in which the King is represented as a moral exemplar of honesty and integrity, and an imitator of God and a mirror of divine perfection who is expected to be a model to his subjects and therefore to whom the people must express allegiance and loyalty. The fact that this persona is not always the case, and that monarchic morality is often contradicted by the complexities of royal rule, leads us to question the basis for the ethical rationale and the social values the texts promote, especially in cases where a King's integrity is compromised and his rule therefore undermined. In this chapter, Andrew Mein considers the role of the King as one of having *character and integrity* within royal ideology yet against which anxiety and moral contradiction are certainly apparent to royal rule. In it he uncovers the anxieties and moral contradictions that appear to be endemic to a royal administration which therefore questions a King's capacity to rule and therefore perhaps uncovers the social network that might threaten his ability to manage his relationship with his subjects as well as undermine his authority as one that (should) effectively mirror(s) the divine disposition.

The fourth chapter considers the ethics of warfare in which Janet Tollington questions the idea that YHWH, as one who is slow to anger, should appear as an initiator of *war* and a protagonist in the *amphytionic* occupation of Israel. She picks up on the suggestion by Susan Niditch that this is a war in which Israel are simply the passive bystanders, and in which YHWH himself overcomes the enemy with miraculous cosmic weapons (in order) to bring peace; as demonstrated/reconciled by the idea that YHWH wanted to keep his Covenant made with Abram years earlier. Tollington points out that, in terms of the text, this *holy* war, certainly serves the theological interests of its authors, but it also raises questions about the futility of humankind's aggression and gratuitous violence towards each other. She quite rightly asks whether or not Israel's passive involvement actually absolves them of responsibility and whether war is therefore a divinely approved method of settling justice.

The rest of the book consists of short chapters about other ethical issues found mostly within the Hebrew Scriptures, but with some references to extra-biblical literature of the Ancient Near East.

Issues include: Heilsgeschichte and the ethics of divine anger, often used as a (literary) excuse for misfortune, in terms of God's relationship with humankind and the eschatological hope they had for the future; an *ecological* reading of the biblical material that explores the text's portrayal of the interrelationships between God, human beings, and the natural world and the responsibility humankind has for the world in which they live and the prophetic call for social justice (the earth's fate being linked to human transgression); an exegetical, eisegetical, and theological reflection about the darker side of God and the reason many Jews and Christians seem so attached to the *barbaric* content of the Hebrew Scriptures which portrays a military side to YHWH in which social conduct is answerable to his comfort or wrath; the ethics of friendship and the responsibilities of family as a desirable feature of life; a reflection on the metaphorical anthropomorphized character of Wisdom in the book of Proverbs which portrays *woman wisdom* as one who brings health and prosperity to the righteous, in parallel to the *strange woman* who is said to bring bitterness and death to the those who make immoral choices; a comparison between God's actions in the book of Job and the parameters of acceptable behavior and presupposed ideas attributed to him which leads us to question whether or not God's control of the world means he is obliged to act justly; the different levels of Law found within the Hebrew Scriptures and their interrelatedness with and to the *Shema* as the principal commandment; the sociological context of family as an essential premise for ethical living as made clear by second temple sources including the Dead Sea Scrolls; the ethics of the Targumist's interpretation that deviates from the original *circumstances* of the biblical material and acts more as a didactic representation of scripture that, in the words of the Rabbis, *makes clear* the Word of God; and finally the place of YHWH over matters of death and justice and whether or not his protection extends beyond the afterlife.

This is a very thought provoking set of essays which, while requiring some background knowledge to the context of the Hebrew Scriptures (and an awareness of the existence of other texts from the Ancient Near East), will encourage readers to think more openly about means by which God is characterized in relation to the people of the ancient near East and their acceptance of religious belief and lifestyle. As Katharine Dell states in the introduction, the authors of this book certainly take a more unconventional approach to the ethical portrayal of the characters in the chosen texts, but by doing so it raises exciting historical, literary, and theological questions about what it meant to live in relationship with YHWH and the means by which each part of the relationship is expressed their connection to the other. There is no question that YHWHs involvement with the people of Israel was fundamental to (religious) lifestyle. This book simply raises the profile of ethics to help

us question what it meant to be part of this relationship, as well as ask about the authorial intention of those that wrote about it in order to hand it down to future generations.

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★ ★ ★

How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action, Denis Edwards, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-9700-6), xvi + 207 pp., pb $27.00

The slenderness of this volume understates its purview. The single question of 'how God acts' turns out to impact everything! Denis Edwards synthesizes a wide reading in science and theology to suggest how the natural sciences (in their present state) enrich biblical answers to that question: how can we talk about God activity in the created world? As a theologian in conversation with such scholars as William Stoeger (Roman Catholic) and Robert Russell (Protestant), Edwards also draws on Eastern Orthodox scholars. He offers parameters for pondering what can be said about miracles, God's relation to natural laws, their implications for a theology of redemption, the scope of God's redemptive plan, and even intercessory prayer. Unifying these themes is the paradox that God objectively and specially acts in creation, yet does not intervene – at least not from the 'outside'.

Edwards begins with the sciences, accepting from them a picture of an evolving universe in which physical, biological, and social relationships shape how it evolves. He then sets the book's tone by considering Christ's own language about divine action, in the gospels. At the core of Christian theology, Edwards reminds the reader, stands the Christ-event, comprising Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Therefore, this should also be the core of a Christian account of divine action. But the Christ-event itself shows that God does this by self-giving (Jesus vulnerable on the cross), while yet waiting on the action of creatures (think of Pilate, acting of his own will). Thus Edwards finds his thesis at the heart of the event which defines Christianity: 'while God does not intervene to overturn natural law or to coerce human freedom, God acts powerfully to achieve the divine purposes' (p. 29).

Edwards argues that God's action in creation objectively occurs at one level, although humans experience it at multiple levels. After all, God actively upholds *all* creation in ongoing existence. Without God, nothing. Here Edwards turns to Karl Rahner to detail a

subtle explanation of how God is continually present to and in creation – yet distinct from it. This divine presence is continually creative, moreover, upholding the existence of all history's regularities (including those of natural history). With God, every movement of creation is, in some sense, a special divine act. It is God who has actively given distinct existence to event, each moment. In this way God's activity is always present 'within' creation, and so God never reaches in from 'outside' to effect an event. In miracles, however, humans experience God's presence and action as if at another level; miraculous wonder points to God's presence. But given God's continual, active presence in creation, there is no reason to suppose that God acts at another level in miracles. Edwards believes that, in principle, all miracles should be explicable in terms of natural causes (what Thomas Aquinas called secondary causes). The thought is that one can respect the laws of nature, understanding them as ways of categorizing what we know about regularities in the world – but that does not make the experience of God's grace any less mysterious or marvelous. Even prayer, Edwards suggests, is open to naturalistic explanation, while God is at the same time really present and responding to the one praying. As the cause of all existence, God acts specifically, always.

The objectivity and specificity of God's action is related to the scope of the Christ-event's meaning. Drawing on the Eastern church's emphasis on what Christ's resurrection signifies for all creation, Edwards argues that this ultimate miracle need not be attributed to some act of God from outside of regular laws of nature, somehow unlike the 'usual' divine mode of action. Instead, if Christ is seen as present to creation from the beginning, the resurrection points to creation's eschatological goal, built into the fabric of secondary causes by which God accomplishes divine purposes. The apostle Paul describes all creation as yearning for future freedom in Christ (e.g. Rom. 8.19-25), implying that the Christ-event's scope extends beyond personal or human salvation. Edwards puts forward a view of redemption as 'deifying transformation'. Allowing creation autonomy by becoming vulnerable to it (remember Christ before Pilate), God gives all creation the freedom and capacity to take part in the redemptive process. Thus understanding creation's laws and processes may bring insight to theological topics. For example, Edwards suggests that scapegoating, as an insight from the social sciences, helps us understand original sin – and how God redeems creation from sin. Human societies show a genetic tendency to close ranks against outsiders, which is not inherently sinful, on Edwards' view. This tendency becomes sinful when, to solve its problems, a society makes innocents guilty, rendering them outsiders: the scapegoat mechanism. Like René Girard, Edwards describes Jesus as an example of scapegoating. But Edward adds that Jesus *challenged* the scapegoating mechanism. In being victimized, Christ

offers forgiveness, turning exclusion into reconciliation. In Christ, God objectively 'unites God's self with creation in order to heal, transform, and deify it', so being the paradigmatic promise and agent of redemption (p. 141).

This review is necessarily limited, passing by chapters on the laws of nature, the deification of matter, and the compatibility of efficacious prayer with God's acting through secondary causes. But the thesis fruitfully stimulates questions. Perhaps another time Edwards might explore how God's continual activity in creation has implications for our use of words like 'grace', and 'nature' (e.g. at p. 17). Also, his motivation for a theory of redemption arguably allows him to ignore much Psalm, wisdom, and Pauline language. Chapter 7 asserts that theologians must avoid imputing images of wrath to God. To help, he proposes a theory of 'deifying transformation' (thanks to Greek patristic authority) as an 'adequate theology of redemption' (p. 120). He supposes that all the things meant by Pauline justification, sanctification, etc., are also included in a theology of deifying transformation. But I wonder if the language of God's wrath found in the Psalms and prophets bothered Paul as much as it does Edwards.

This book will interest specialists in theology and the sciences. Perhaps more importantly, however, pastors and other teachers seeking inspiration for how to avoid the excesses of popular science-religion battles will also find nourishment in its clear prose and irenic dedication to keeping distinctive Christian practice and teaching in focus, such as effective prayer and the resurrection. This is not a book about religion in general, nor is it an exercise in philosophy of religion. Instead, it is a Christian meditation on how the current observations of the evolutionary natural sciences stimulate insights into God's relationship with creation. As food for such thought, it succeeds marvelously.

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★ ★ ★

Playing: Christian Explorations of Daily Living, James H. Evans Jr, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 0-8006-9726-X), xxi + 99 pp., pb $15

The editor's introduction notes that the book series will examine the Christian understandings of everyday experiences such as playing, shopping, and parenting and re-present them in a way that can help to 'reshape or sharpen beliefs and themes of Christian faith' (p. ix).

The first chapter examines the nature of play and ludic aspects of humanity and society. The three remaining chapters examine the relationship of play to God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit/church.

By examining the scholarship regarding play, Evans notes that human play is experimental, imitative, voluntary, and establishes social order. As part of who we are more than what we do, 'play is a constitutive and pervasive feature of human existence' (p. 10). To define the term, 'play is a set of activities or practices that occurs in the interstices between freedom and structure, between the subject(ive) and the object(ive), between creation and imitation' (p. 11). He states that the goal of this text is to examine the meaning and practice of play with particular attention to African American theological and cultural context.

As the production and criticism of literature are ludic activities, Evans spends his second chapter examining texts that have particular importance for an African American understanding of play in order to understand what it means to 'play in the dark'.

Referencing Toni Morrison, Evans points out that American literature has been shaped by the Africanist presence and that to create art and literature is to play in an atmosphere blackened by racism and blood, that is, playing in the dark. He then utilizes Joseph Conrad, Zora Neale Hurston and various writings on slavery to discuss the ability of Africans and African Americans to play in the dark.

Playing in the dark is not despair; it is connected to romance, storytelling and hope. Playful work on the part of slaves (e.g. the *shuckin' and jivin'* of the corn harvest) confused ethical boundaries. The slaves added laughter, competition, and jokes, thereby ritualizing the experience. The early church also played in the dark. They played on the field (creation), in the time of play (redemption), with the Parousia as the final buzzer.

Life is ludic; God is the architect of our field and 'the temporal context of the world is playtime' (p. 39).

'Play is an important, if not central, theme in the Bible.' (p. 45) In the Gospels we find issues of life and death, yet they are characterized as play. Evans encourages us not to be player haters for Jesus, as the player *par excellance*, was involved in several games at once. He was able to negotiate the games of society, politics, and religion. Jesus worked with the losers within the social system of honor and shame, including the shamed in the game and adding grace as a modifier. As a political player, Jesus was superior to his challengers, outmaneuvered his opponents, redefined the field of play, and claimed advantage by declaring that his kingdom was not of this world. Jesus engaged the religious game primarily by placing human value over the logic and rules of Judaism.

However, the line between playmate and opponent can be blurry, and the games that Jesus played got rough. Evans objects to the use of the term 'work of atonement', for the salvific act of Christ is ludic. As

play is paradoxical, it is and is not what it presents itself to be, atonement must fundamentally be playful in that the God-human, Jesus Christ, is the greatest paradox. The playfulness of this paradox was threatened by Christological heresies and defended by the councils.

Evans shares that the imitation and creativity of playing church as a boy freed him to build upon tradition. While imitative, play focuses on creativity and fulfillment as seen in praise. Although the church is reticent to understand itself in terms of play, anthropologists note the ludic elements of singing, clapping, dancing, and the pastor as jokester, with everyone having 'a good time in the Lord' (p. 74). Play transcends empiricism, is constrained by sin, restored by redemption and liberates one from the constraints of life.

The church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Evans relates these to the qualities of myth which are aesthetic, poetic, metamorphic, and therapeutic. Churches are often only expressing two of these notes, and restoring all four would allow the church to express itself in fuller harmony.

Play is also the primary principle of the cosmos, as reason and randomness balance form and freedom. God's creative activity should be seen in terms of play and not work. Viewing the world from the end, with Moltmann, the eschaton is also characterized by play. Scoreless and timeless, '[h]eaven is a place where the games have ended but the play never does' (p. 83).

Evans's three major chapters (2–4) are distinct and can be evaluated individually. The examination of play with regard to slavery in the second chapter is the best section of the text. It addressed the issues which Evans set out at the beginning, to examine the aspects of play with particular regard to African American culture and theology. Surprisingly little that follows this specifically addresses African American context. Unfortunately, the next chapter is the weakest. Here we have strained discussions of the nature of Jesus, simplified presentations of Jewish and Roman cultures and religions and honor/shame, and a presentation of atonement that I find hard to accept. The last chapter is a compelling analysis of the church, humanity, and the cosmos with regard to the balance of tradition and creativity.

The most significant problem in this text is that Evans's definition of play is so broad that it virtually encompasses all reality and I find it difficult (as it seems Evans does) to describe anything as other than play. Literature is play, a 'primary theme' of the Bible is play, God was playing when he made creation, creation is our field of play, time is the game clock, sin prevents play, heresy is the elimination of play, worship is play, church is play, heaven is uninterrupted play, the nature of Jesus is playful, honor/shame was a game, Jesus was a player, atonement is play, and so it goes. How Evans has defined play has made it unrecognizable to what one normally thinks of with regard to playing.

I expect that Evans's thought-provoking insights found in Chapters 2 and 4, as well as the problematic Chapter 3, could easily spark conversation and so this book seems very useful for an adult study group. I am less sure about its usefulness in the classroom.

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★ ★ ★

Evolving in Monkey Town: How a Girl Who Knew All the Answers Learned to Ask the Questions, Rachel Held Evans, Zondervan, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-310-29399-6), 240 pp., pb $14.99

Sometimes the title of a book says it all, and for author Rachel Held Evans this is most certainly the case with *Evolving in Monkey Town*. More than a simple play on the fact that she hails from Dayton, Tennessee, home of the infamous Scopes Trial of 1925, this work is truly an evolution of sorts for Evans, one in which she earnestly describes her own personal journey from a girl who thought she knew everything she ever needed to know about Christianity to someone who, despite a period of doubt and despair, came to reaffirm her faith through a process of soul searching and honest questioning. Growing up in an environment that stressed apologetics and strict adherence to a biblical worldview, Evans explains how the apostle Peter's command to 'always be prepared to give an answer' became a rallying cry, one which anticipated a world filled with the faithless who were ready to strike at any moment with questions that sought to undermine the tenets of true Christianity (p. 74). She talks candidly about how she and her fellow students at Dayton's Bryan College rehearsed their answers to these questions in classes each day, preparing to defend the teachings of Jesus in the face of those who refused to accept them. It was only when Evans found herself asking some of these very same questions that she began to wonder why, among so many of her fellow Christians, 'faith in Jesus had been recast as a position in a debate, not a way of life' (p. 220).

Evans prefaces her work by unabashedly declaring that she is 'not exactly an impartial observer', laying out a few of her flaws and weaknesses, and stating without hesitation to her readers that her views of the Bible and of Christianity in general are not intended to be objective or unbiased (p. 10). This quality is, in fact, what makes the book such an interesting read. Evans does not hold back her opinions and at times is brutally honest, both about herself and her community. She describes Dayton as 'a Galapagos Island of sorts' for different flavors of

fundamentalism, telling the larger story of conservative Christianity's current cultural shift toward insularity through the lens of her hometown, its people, and its fondness for all things religious (p. 59). The work is divided into three sections, each containing a number of brief chapters that consist of narratives and personal anecdotes illustrating her own unique spiritual journey in a place both mockingly and affectionately known as Monkey Town.

She begins with her childhood in Birmingham, Alabama and her family's subsequent move to Dayton, where she feared that, since everyone in town was a Christian already, there would be no one for her to save. The certainty she felt in her faith continued as she attended local Bryan College, a conservative Christian school which proudly advertises itself as a center of modern creationist research. During her college years she witnessed the election of George W. Bush and the surge of religious nationalism which followed the attacks of September 11, 2001. The linking of politics and Christianity, the religious justification of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 'pledges to "rid the world of evildoers" ' she saw during this time caused her to begin to seriously rethink the world around her (p. 107). She describes in vivid detail her reaction to watching a Muslim woman beheaded on television, followed by her own internal anguish over whether or not that woman would be going to hell. Events like these triggered a faith crisis for Evans, filled with torturous nights studying the Bible and questioning its inherent meaning, or whether or not it had any real meaning at all. The process she underwent in coming to terms with her questions had its various twists and turns, ranging from a trip to India working among AIDS patients to setting up a blog that helped her connect with other Christians who were experiencing crises themselves, but Evans ultimately concludes that it was these moments of doubt which inevitably salvaged her faith. The struggles she experienced, despite calling into question everything she thought she knew about God, also made her realize that doubt itself 'is the mechanism by which faith evolves' (p. 217).

One of the most intriguing aspects of Evans's work is her seamless integration of the love–hate relationship her hometown has with its rather complicated history into her own narrative. Rather than use monkey imagery and evolution motifs as a gimmick merely to attract readers, she superbly weaves in the legacy of her community, describing gospel singings at the local McDonald's, guilt-laden altar calls during Vacation Bible School, and Judgement Day houses on Halloween not as simple small-town oddities, but as integral parts of her own spiritual development, as well as that of countless others who call Dayton home. Early in the book she includes a part of the transcript from the actual Scopes Trial that has since proven particularly meaningful; namely, the embarrassing cross-examination of local hero William Jennings Bryan by Clarence Darrow concerning the literal truth

of the Genesis creation tale. Evans incorporates this segment word-for-word not for literary effect or mere nostalgia. Instead, she uses it as an allegory, a symbol of what it was that prompted the Christian community in which she had been raised, no matter what the question may be, to sit 'perpetually on the witness stand, always ready for a fight, always ready to defend itself against the world, always ready to give an answer' (p. 75). The story she tells, it seems, is as much about the heart and soul of Dayton, Tennessee as it is about Evans herself.

Those interested in contemporary American Christianity, modern evangelicalism, and modern fundamentalism will likely find this book to be an informative read. It could be incorporated well into undergraduate and graduate religious studies or southern studies curricula, and would promote a good amount of discussion in such courses. Evans's knowledge of Christian theology is evident throughout, while her ability to illustrate that knowledge through excellent storytelling also significantly increases the audience of this work. Because of its casual narrative, its colorful cast of characters, and its open discussion of a broad range of issues affecting modern Christians, *Evolving in Monkey Town* would easily be an enjoyable book for general readers, as well. Evans's personal story is an appealing one, and her own theory of evolution which she puts forth, that faith must adapt in order to survive, is a theory to which many people will undoubtedly relate.

Kari Edwards
University of Mississippi

★ ★ ★

Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments, C. Stephen Evans, Oxford University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-19-921716-8), x + 207 pp., hb £45.00

There are many, many arguments for God's existence, but the majority fall naturally into just a few categories. Why? Moreover, why are they all relatively easy for the skeptic to resist? And given their resistibility, why do so many of them continue to have great appeal? These are the questions that C. Stephen Evans aims to answer in *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God*. On Evan's view, God made us such that certain facts point us to God's existence and character: for example, the sheer fact that anything exists at all, the intricacy and beneficial order of the cosmos, the moral law, the inherent dignity of human beings. These facts are what he calls 'natural signs' – a notion that he gets from Thomas Reid. Evans quotes the *Inquiry*, where Reid says that 'nature

hath established a real connection between the signs and the thing signified; and nature hath also taught us the interpretation of the signs' (p. 32). Likewise for Evans, just as we are disposed to form true beliefs about physical phenomena based on our perceptual experiences thereof, so we are disposed to form true beliefs about God upon contemplating certain facts about the world.

These facts are available to us all – in Evans's terminology, they are 'widely accessible'. However, although God intends them to occasion beliefs about him – and ultimately relationship with him – he does not make these signs such that they demand a theistic interpretation. That we might not be coerced into belief, he allows us to (culpably) read his signs in such a way that they require no divine explanation – that is, they are 'easily resistable'. If we are receptive, though, then they can provide for us non-propositional evidence of God's existence, and even of some of his attributes. More carefully, they can, in the right circumstances, provide adequate grounds for properly basic beliefs about God and his nature.

This story provides ready answers to the questions with which we began. Natural signs are features of the world, not propositions; hence, they need to be interpreted if they are to be employed in arguments for God's existence. Because God has established only a few signs, there are only a few families of theistic argument; because of the need to interpret the signs, there is room for significant variation within each family. Since God does not want to coerce belief, he makes it easy to prefer interpretations of the signs that are not friendly to theism. The result is that, for any sign and any argument correctly based upon it, there will almost always be an 'out' available to someone who wants to avoid the argument's conclusion. However, because there really *are* natural signs, which God intends to produce beliefs about him, arguments based upon them continue to have appeal: the signs will always point to their creator.

The book begins with a brief sketch of Evans's take on the uses and limitations of natural theology. In Chapter 2, he outlines Reid's theory of signs, developing his account of signs along the way. In Chapters 3–5, he considers cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments for God's existence. He contends that each family of arguments can be helpfully understood as stemming from an underlying natural sign, the correct interpretation of which explains both the strengths and weaknesses of the family in question. In the final chapter, Evans shows how his theory of signs can be put to work by both internalists and externalists, and he clarifies the role that he takes signs to play in a general epistemology of religious belief.

I rarely struggle to find a cause for complaint, but I am struggling here. *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God* is an excellent volume, certainly among the best philosophy of religion of the last decade. Evans articulates and defends his thesis in a clear and compelling way. He has

a keen sense about how to organize and present material, making for an easy and enjoyable read. He makes all the appropriate qualifications, claiming no more for his position than the framework can support. He draws all the right connections between his view and other approaches to natural theology, making it plain how his view reconciles certain differences between evidentialists, like Swinburne, and dyed-in-the-wool externalists, like Plantinga.

Evans has been developing these ideas over the last twenty-five years; those familiar with his popular work will no doubt recognize the basic framework. However, there is still much here that is new, and the old ideas are expressed more rigorously than ever before. Although it presupposes too much familiarity with the literature to be of use in a mid-level undergraduate course, it is quite accessible for a work of professional philosophy. I would feel comfortable using it in a senior seminar, and it would be a welcome addition to any graduate course on the theistic arguments. This volume will surely be of interest to all philosophers of religion, and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

R.W. Fischer
University of Illinois at Chicago

★ ★ ★

The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community, John G. Flett, Eerdmans, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8028-6441-3), xv + 328 pp., pb £23.99/$36.00

In his *The Witness of God: The Trinity,* Missio Dei*, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*, John G. Flett suggests a revised approach to *missio Dei* theology, arguing that mission is rooted in God's being, and not a question of secondary significance. This is the groundbreaking nature of the project suggested: an inadequate understanding of mission has severe implications on how we understand God. The book is structured in eight chapters, plus a preface and includes an extensive bibliography, a helpful index and a list of acknowledgments and abbreviations. Chapter 1 and Chapter 8 function as framing chapters, representing the introduction and the conclusion respectively. The book is divided into two distinct parts, the first being the examination of the roots of *missio Dei* theology (Chapters 2–4), the second offering a constructive redefinition of *missio Dei* theology via the thought of Swiss theologian Karl Barth (Chapters 5–7).

Chapter 1 sets the tone for the whole book by introducing the main themes. Rooting *missio Dei* in the doctrine of God, Flett argues that the

strength of the term but also its major shortcoming lies in the relation to its Trinitarian basis. Karl Barth is introduced here, as he is considered as a major influence on *missio Dei* theology. Flett will later call this into question. More importantly, Barth's work will be used in the second half of the book as the main tool to reconstruct *missio Dei* theology. Furthermore, Flett argues that mission needs to be seen as core part of theology, as it belongs to the very being of God. 'The Christian community', Flett argues, 'is, as such, a missionary community, or she is not a community that lives in fellowship with the triune God as he lives his own proper life' (p. 34).

Chapters 2–4 form a unit by covering the history of development of *missio Dei* theology. Chapter 2 gives a critical history of this approach to mission, which sees it, firstly, as being rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity; secondly, as espousing a strong orientation toward the eschatological Kingdom of God; and thirdly, as arguing that the church is understood as being missionary by her very nature. As the main problem faced by *missio Dei*, Flett identifies deficiencies in its Trinitarian grounding, which separate God's being from God's act, but instead see it as reason for remaining at an anthropological level. The issue is that mission is understood as something that people *do*, not something that one *is* because of who *God is*. Chapter 3 and 4 give a historical background to the development of *missio Dei* theology, treating the origins of the development in the approach to mission in Germany in 1928–1933 (Chapter 3) and the International Missionary Council in Willingen in 1952. Consistently with the overarching theme of the book, Flett uses this historical examination to disprove the commonly held thesis that Barth had a decisive influence on the shaping of *missio Dei* theology.

In the second part (Chapters 5–7), Flett turns to an in-depth analysis of Barth's work in order to reinterpret *missio* Dei theology. Chapter 5 deals with the missionary existence of the church, arguing that, in contrast to the shortcomings detected in the first part, 'Barth posits the missionary existence of community as a necessity grounded in who God is' (p. 180). Chapter 6 consequently examines the missionary character of the Trinity. Divided into three main sections, this chapter argues for: (1) God in Himself being a missionary God; (2) the actuality of Jesus reflecting God's choosing of humanity in Him; and (3) through the witness of the Holy Spirit, overcoming the divine-human gap. These three aspects form the right starting point to overcome precisely this divine-human divide which was diagnosed in traditional *missio Dei* theology in the first part of the book. These aspects are now taken as the proper foundation of the missionary existence of the Christian community (Chapter 7).

The book concludes with the revision of *missio Dei* theology in Chapter 8. Drawing on his previous conclusions, Flett argues that assigning mission a secondary place in doctrinal questions does not only result in a dysfunctional understanding of mission, but also of theology itself.

There is much positive to be said about Flett's project. The accessible style makes it a valuable resource for pastors; simultaneously, it provides a constructive contribution to theological scholarship. A minor criticism from a translator's point of view could be made with regards to the lack of clear signposting of the revisions made in the translation of primary texts from Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. A revision, (indicated by a 'rev.' after the quotation) could stand for anything from a changed personal pronoun (e.g. p. 285, 'The community is as such . . . '), the addition of pronouns to clarify antecedents (e.g. p. 166, 'It lies in the nature . . . ') or a rewritten sentence (e.g. p. 180, 'God is and remains God . . . '), while other changes are not marked at all (e.g. p. 181, 'be the church if she is not . . . '). With regard to the content, one question might be regarding the implications of one of Flett's main theses, 'The Christian community is a missionary community, or she is not the Christian community' (e.g. p. 293). What does it mean *not* to be the Christian community? Are there, for example, soteriological consequences?

I strongly recommend this book to everyone with an interest in theology, mission, and also committed to Barth scholarship. Despite the minor limitations outlined above, Flett makes an important contribution in these areas, and it will hopefully be sparking further conversation on how to understand the theological task and how to see mission as one of its core parts.

Sven Ensminger
University of Bristol

★ ★ ★

Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets, Chris Franke and Julia M. O'Brien, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-54811-5), xii + 208 pp., hb $110.00

Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets is a compilation of essays that arose from the Prophetic Texts and their Ancient Context section at the 2006 Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting. Each essay in this volume challenges modern interpretations of violent texts in the Bible by emphasizing their original contexts. An important point in all of these essays is that they ask the question of what these texts 'do' in present and, especially, past contexts rather than asking how we might teach around them or preach them in a more tempered form.

Cynthia R. Chapman begins with an essay that studies the images of Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs and Ezekiel 23 that deal with gender roles

in violence and power. Chapman notes that in all of the reliefs, the King is shown as a hyper-masculine strongman while his enemies are naked, shamed, and penetrated – except for the women and children who are left untouched (sexually). Through this portrayal, the male enemy is feminized and exposed sexually, thus rendering him powerless. Ezekiel 23 slightly differs from these reliefs in that the female-sacred city is seen as the male enemies in the reliefs: dismembered, naked, and shamed. These images show a need in the ancient world for 'earned power' (p. 17) in war and politics.

Robert D. Haak explores the history behind the violence of Zephaniah 2, but focuses on how the twenty-first century can learn from texts such as this. Haak stresses the metaphorical nature of the texts, but the violent images are so vivid because they make the violence real for the society which it is written in/for. In light of this, we should not reject these texts, says Haak, but we should embrace them as a deterrent that highlights the consequences of our actions.

Kathleen M. O'Connor stresses the historical nature of violent texts while focusing her study in Jeremiah. O'Connor uses trauma and disaster therapy to analyze the function of violent texts in Jeremiah: through verbalizing the grotesque and gory details of the trauma, Jeremiah is attempting to help Judah come to terms with their destruction by retelling it. The language of Jeremiah is a 'survival strategy, an instrument of healing, a way to make meaning and rebuild life in a world destroyed' (p. 38). For O'Connor, YHWH acting against Judah gives them a framework through which to see the destruction while giving them someone to blame (themselves) and consequently evidences the righteousness and faithfulness of YHWH. In other words, it allows Judah to take responsibility for their actions and move forward.

Carolyn J. Sharp analyzes Hosea's imagery of violence and sexual sin in light of Reverend Jeremiah Wright's 2003 sermon 'God Damn America'. For Sharp, just as Wright focused on American history as the 'governmental marginalization and abuse of colored people' (p. 56), Hosea did so via the cartography of the land where all of the names of places in Hosea 1-2 are connected to memories of sexual sins and violence. For both Wright and Hosea, their use of harsh rhetoric does not function to promote violence, but to 'maximize the effectiveness' (p. 69) of their respective discourses.

In the same fashion, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher examines Micah 1-3 alongside the powerful rhetoric of Stokely Carmichael and his 'Black Power' discourse. The focus of this essay is on the power of their rhetoric and the emotion that it elicits from their audience. Carmichael's language was used to empower black men and women without the necessity of violence and, in the same manner, Micah 1-3, specifically 3.12 which is quoted in Jeremiah 26, empowers the farmers of

Israel, or the lower social classes in Israel/Judah. For Smith-Christopher, violent rhetoric does not beget violence, but strength.

Yvonne Sherwood maintains that the aversion to violence texts is a result of two popular readings: Liberal (focus on ethics and justice that leads directly into power and politics) and Literal (Bible as literature, like Shakespeare, and promotes 'high cultural conversations' [p. 93]). In a circumlocutious fashion, Sherwood's essential point is that we do not tackle violent texts directly. She contrasts this with twentieth century author Donald Bartheleme and poet John Donne who do not shy away from violence in culture but examine it directly. Sherwood uses the work of these two men to show that violent texts might not always be negative or instill terror, but that they might heighten faith in the audience or even be used as 'powerful effect' (p. 107) in the texts.

Julia M. O'Brien questions the date of Nahum because if the date is incorrect, then the violent texts that are assumed to be directed towards the Neo-Assyrian armies would need to be re-examined and re-appropriated. In this re-examination, O'Brien uses modern film theory to analyze the violent rhetoric in the biblical text. She uses S*aving Private Ryan* and *Why We Fight* to emphasize that the focus is on the enemies' violence, thus creating a moral justification for war, and future wars, to protect our nation. She applies these conclusions to Nahum in three ways: YHWH, as destructor of Ninevah is strong, not the Neo-Babylonian King; YHWH can topple any empire; the violent texts may be a later vantage point of the situation in Ninevah, much like Saving Private Ryan is for its audience in 2011.

Corrine Carvalho provides an intensely personal essay that exhibits her attraction to violence, whether it is violent action movies or the heroes of the Bible that we admonish who commit violent acts. She notes that it is difficult for many to imagine God as violent but it is inescapably apparent in the biblical text. For Carvalho, these texts still have God in them, and the God pictured in Is. 63.1-6 is the epitome of a loving God because he 'cares enough to be angry [and] involved enough to do something' (p. 151).

Mary Mills completes this collection with an essay examining vampiric studies as a lens through which we can view the violence in Amos. She uses the work on urban geography by Steven Pile and Molly Williamson's study of the vampire to establish her interpretation of Amos. For Mills, in Amos YHWH functions as the 'vampire in the city' that cleanses it and the violence that occurs 'performs a sanitary function' which allows for a fresh self-interpretation by the city.

Overall, this collection of essays is a wonderful contribution to the study of violence in biblical texts. That being said, a significant amount of typographical errors occur in this book. This is a minor issue because it does not deal with the content, but it is problematic in a published

work. The personal nature of the essays creates a connection between the author and reader that enhances the reader's experience. I highly recommend this book because it will do much for how people teach, preach, and read all of the violent texts in the Bible.

Mike Fightmaster
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

★ ★ ★

Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham, Russell L. Friedman, Cambridge University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-521-11714-2), viii + 198 pp., hb $85.00

Russell Friedman has succeeded in writing a book on an abstruse area of Medieval scholastic theology that is at once sophisticated and user-friendly. By distinguishing competing Dominican and Franciscan trends in Medieval Trinitarian thought, Friedman is able to construct a series of typologies to orient the non-specialist reader to the most important aspects of thirteenth and fourteenth century Trinitarian thought. At the same time, the book is not reductive or simplistic. Friedman invites the reader to examine the thought of theologians not well known even among intellectual historians. John Pecham, Peter Auriol, and Francis of Marchia are just some of the obscure figures that Friedman resuscitates in this work. Indeed, Friedman makes the claim that one cannot understand the transitions between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries without taking account of these figures, even though most of their work has never been edited or printed. Thus, Friedman does the introductory reader to the field a double service in creating an extremely readable account and in introducing one to the incredible spectrum of opinions on Trinitarian theology during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Despite Friedman's clarity, however, there is an irreducible core of scholastic language that must be mastered, and thus this book is not recommended for audiences with no exposure to Medieval philosophy and theology.

Friedman tells us in the Acknowledgements that the book began as a series of four lectures held at École pratique des hautes études in Paris in 2008, and the book preserves the basic structure of these lectures, adding an introduction and a very helpful appendix containing a summary of the basic differences between Franciscan and Dominican Trinitarian theologies (pp. 171–3). The first chapter explores the basic distinction between Dominican and Franciscan Trinitarian theologies.

Since both orders argue decidedly within the Augustinian tradition, both Dominicans and Franciscans start by acknowledging that only the Aristotelian categories of substance and relation apply to the Trinity. With Augustine, they use the category of relation to differentiate the persons from one another. But they differ in how they employ the category. Beginning with Aquinas, relation defines the opposition between the persons for the Dominicans. For instance, the Father is called Father because of his filiative relation to the Son. For Bonaventure, by contrast, the relation between Father and Son inheres because of the manner that the Father emanates the Son.

This view of the relations affects the manner in which the simplicity of God is construed. For Aquinas and later Dominicans, the relations exist in God only relatively. Compared to the essence of God, the foundation of the relations, the relations do not exist. They exist only as compared to other relations, which is to say they exist only relatively. For Bonaventure, the emanations are nonetheless constitutive of the Trinity because they grant 'primity' to the first principle or 'Proto-Father' (p. 27) who emanates both Son and Spirit. The last section of the first chapter traces the development of the Franciscan model of understanding the relations through Henry of Ghent (a secular priest rather than a Franciscan). Henry's contribution is to move the Augustinian psychological account to a central place in Franciscan Trinitarian theology.

The second chapter traces the development of the psychological analogy for the Trinity from Augustine through the fourteenth century. Friedman provides the reader with brief, readable, and conceptually clear accounts of the theories of human cognition used by these theologians, which inflect the way in which they conceive of the Trinity. This section is extraordinarily well done, and Friedman's distillation of the key points of debate here makes an otherwise impenetrable debate comprehensible for the non-specialist. In addition to well-crafted accounts of the cognition by each theologian, Friedman also provides visual aids for the cognitive process as described by Augustine (p. 55), Aquinas (p. 78), and Scotus (p. 89).

For all of these theologians, as Friedman notes, intellect and will are both involved in the process of cognition, such that these faculties can be used as a way of understanding how the emanations took place. The Son or Word is the natural or intellectual emanation of the Father, while the Spirit is a voluntary emanation. Dominicans could never really accept the psychological account except in an 'appropriated' or metaphorical way (pp. 71–2), because they thought that the simplicity of God did not allow an extra-mental distinction between will and intellect in God. However, Franciscans after Henry of Ghent, culminating in John Duns Scotus, saw the psychological model as the only way of distinguishing between the persons. Scotus recognized the difficulty in attributing a real distinction between will and intellect in God, and for

that reason he proposed what he calls a 'formal' distinction between the two, which has a status somewhere between a merely conceptual and a real account of the distinction. My one (relatively minor) complaint about this section is that Friedman often argues that Dominicans see the psychological account of the Trinity as 'metaphorical' without distinguishing metaphor from analogy. In many instances, Dominican theology allows that correspondences drawn from the created order might be appropriated directly, but analogically, to the divine essence, and therefore a bit more discussion on this point would have been helpful and illuminating.

Friedman turns in his third and fourth chapters to what he calls 'the search for simplicity' (p. 98) in the fourteenth century Franciscan theology. Friedman begins by noting that explanation by its nature introduces complexity. The more explanation a conceptual scheme provides, the more complex it must be, because distinctions must be introduced. As such, there is a tension between explanatory comprehensiveness and simplicity, and this tension obtains *a fortiori* in the case of God. Fourteenth century theologians like Peter Auriol, Francis of Marchia, and William of Ockham picked up on this tension and rejected Scotus's formal distinction between divine will and intellect, insisting upon the absolute simplicity of the divine essence. For all of these theologians, there is no way to account for the persons of the Trinity conceptually. Rather, one must rely entirely upon revelation in order to know that three persons exist.

This insistence that one 'must accept on faith alone (*sola fide*) that there are three and only three persons' (p. 127) has led many interpreters of the period, especially Etienne Gilson, to describe the fourteenth century as 'fideist'. Friedman agrees with Gilson to a certain extent, but he adds that the period can also be construed from another perspective as exceptionally rationalist. These theologians did not depreciate the intellect but 'using reason they argued for [radical simplicity] and against other competing views' (p. 168). Friedman's reading of the transition from thirteenth to fourteenth century Trinitarian theology can thus be described as 'qualified Gilsonianism'.

Friedman's account fills a very important gap in the literature on Medieval scholastic theology. Most introductory accounts are overly generalist, failing to do justice to the diversity of perspectives that emerge during the period. Specialist accounts are often too narrowly focused, and the non-specialist reader can easily get lost in the account. Friedman's work attempts to split the difference, introducing the reader to a number of unfamiliar figures while providing the most narrative, readable account possible.

Jonathan Warren
Vanderbilt University

★ ★ ★

Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies, Jennifer Glancy, Oxford University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-1953-2815-8), xi + 179 pp., hb $45

Combining textual analysis, recent work in the philosophy of embodiment and theories of practice, Glancy explores how early Christians wrote about, understood, and shaped conceptions of embodiment. Her book joins a growing number of studies about the ways Christians constructed and understood gender, embodiment, and discipleship in Christian late antiquity. Using both canonical and non-canonical Christian texts, as well as patristic and other sources for comparison, she explores a wide range of ways that Christians understood their own bodies, and the bodies of those others about whom they wrote.

The book's first chapter is largely an engagement with contemporary philosophy of the body, and its relationship to the way that we know and believe things about the world. Yet, despite the theoretical lifting that the chapter does it is also engaged with scriptural stories at several points. For instance, it uses the Gospel's portrayal of the man born blind to show how the way one understood bodies mattered to the faith. Jewish authorities understood the man's blindness to be the result of his parents' sin. Jesus read his blindness as being the site of a place where God's glory could be revealed. The chapter's primary purpose is to give a theoretical and philosophical justification for the rest of the book, and does so in a critical but helpful way.

The book's second chapter considers how Paul rhetorically positions his own body in the Corinthian correspondence. Glancy argues that Paul's Corinthian readers would not have immediately associated Paul's whipped body with faithfulness or Christian nobility. In fact, she notes that he might not have bared his scars publicly, and that perhaps observers had made them the topic of substance because they had seen Paul's body in a bathhouse or some other public setting. Weakness, not faithfulness, might have been the first thought of Hellenistically influenced audiences not fully accepting of Christianity. For Glancy, we must differentiate the kinds of hardships listed in Paul's 'hardship catalogs' and read them individually in light of their cultural significance. While surviving a shipwreck might have brought honor, enduring a beating would have brought shame. Perhaps, Glancy suggests, Paul became apologetic about his beaten body because his opponents claim the scars showed his weakness. By retelling his body as an imitation of the suffering Christ, Paul gives himself an authority he would not have otherwise had. By separating what Paul links together, we become more aware of Paul's radical juxtapositions and paradoxes. The claim for the polyvalent meaning of Paul's scarred body is conduct in

dialogue with prominent commentators on the Corinthian correspondence such as Joseph Fitzmeyer and Timothy Savage. While this chapter nuances our understanding of Paul's rhetoric and theology, it missed an opportunity. No single chapter could be a comprehensive treatment of Paul's corporeal self-referencing. However, a narrow focus on the Corinthian correspondence omits other suggestive and potentially illuminating statements. A consideration of Paul's claim in Galatians that he 'bears on his body the marks of Christ Jesus'. This is simply to suggest that Paul's rhetoric about his own body occurs in others letters, and a judicious comparative sampling would have enabled Glancy to explore the different ways he employed such language within different contexts and for what purposes.

Slave holding and its significance for the early church is the subject of Chapter 3. Here Glancy teases out a cognitive dissonance operative within the early church: on the one hand, Christians were urged to assume the position of slave in imitation of Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples, but, on the other, Christians were slaveholders. To make sense of this dissonance, Glancy draws on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, which claims that we make sense of our bodies through social matrices. Joining this notion with other concepts drawn social-scientific theories about group identity formation, Glancy argues that bodies are habituated in relation to other bodies. Knowing the social field and its array of possible actions is, then, key to understanding why in some situations bodies might act with power while in others with deference.

The fourth chapter turns to the body of Jesus' mother, Mary, and the attempts by theologians to explain her child-bearing body in relationship to theological tenants that later developed about her. Extending beyond the patristic period (which is somewhat odd given the book's title), the author convincingly argues that later depictions of the postpartum Mary reflect long-held notions about Mary's body. Such widely dispersed beliefs are on display for Glancy in the culture that shaped Renaissance art. For instance, few of the Madonna and child pictures display Mary as being tired by birth, reflecting the theological position that Mary's birth of Christ was pain free. Even artists bold enough to depict Jesus' genitalia in an effort to show his full humanity, shied away from both open depictions of Mary's and the signs of childbirth that one would expect. This paring of the hidden genitals of Mary and the visible (but, despite biblical evidence to the contrary, uncircumcised) genitals of Jesus, demonstrates how artistic depictions of Jesus and Mary reveal (consciously or not) the theological beliefs and religious practices of their creators. A final, short epilogue considers again how bodies signify in a social context, urging readers to scrutinize what is said about bodies, since bodily descriptions and representations say just as much about Christian belief and practice as do early statements of creedal orthodoxy and dogmatic theology.

This book will be of most interest to those concerned with the social nature of early Christian identity formation. The chapter on Paul deserves a careful reading by New Testament specialists. This book shows us that early Christians were involved and concerned about far more than philosophical quandaries about abstract topics; they were deeply concerned with the meaning of their bodies.

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★ ★ ★

Shopping, Michelle A. González, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-9727-3), viii + 116 pp., pb $15

Michelle González opens her book by imagining herself in a Roman Catholic confessional whispering, 'I wish I could buy Prada', even as she knows that the price of a Prada bag would feed a family of ten for a year in Guatemala (p. 1). This vignette introduces very effectively the tension between Christian morals and social justice on the one hand, and shopping, consumerism, and fashion on the other. González observes that we sometimes need to shop; that some of us like to shop; and that American culture tends to encourage excessive shopping. She seeks a Christian middle ground between uncritical consumerism and anti-material asceticism. This is a worthwhile project, but ultimately, the book disappoints.

Chapter 1, 'Shopping', lays out the issues in an introduction and five subsections. González discusses the nature of the consumer economy, which encourages appetite and possession, leaving us always wanting more. She notes that many consumer goods are not made to last, and that producers are often distant from consumers. Thus objects, people, and the natural environment all come to seem 'disposable' (p. 15), while relationships and meaningful work disappear. González then surveys some intersections of shopping with religion. A striking example is the traditional Latin American observance of the quinceañera – in earlier times a Mass followed by a modest celebration, now an extravagant party incorporating a few religious gestures. González stops short of judgment, however, noting only that extravagance may be a way for immigrants to show off their success.

Chapter 2, 'Christian Responses to Shopping', focuses on biblical texts, general spiritual issues, and Roman Catholic social teaching. González discusses ten texts under seven subheadings. Many of the texts are concerned with material goods, such as Matt. 6.25-34 ('do not

worry') and Matthew 19, the story of the rich young man. Others focus on relationships, for example, Luke 10, 'Who is my neighbor?', and Genesis 4, Cain and Abel. González emphasizes God's provision for humanity and calls for active solidarity across ethnic and economic boundaries. She then turns to general observations on 'relating to the sacred' and 'economy and environment'. Finally, she discusses Christian, primarily Catholic, social teaching. Here she focuses on the ideal of the common good and describes three major papal encyclicals on social issues – sometimes at tedious length. She also mentions, briefly and inaccurately, two other Christian views of wealth: Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and the popular 'prosperity gospel' movement.

In Chapter 3, 'A Christian Reconfiguration of Shopping', Gonzalez assays some constructive solutions. In six sections, she considers the anti-materialist strain in Christianity, discusses Augustine on original sin, and, again following Augustine, describes shopping as a form of concupiscence, which she defines as 'compulsive and pleasureless enjoyment' (p. 77). She asks about the inner life of the shopper and whether shopping is sinful, concluding that the real problems are excess, dehumanization, and mindless consumption, not shopping itself. Finally, she uses incarnational theology and theological aesthetics to frame positive assessments of embodiment and beauty.

These are significant and far-reaching issues. The questions of materialism, wealth, and possessions have surfaced repeatedly in Christian history and are especially pressing in contemporary America. González offers some interesting perspectives. One of her most forceful arguments concerns the story of the rich young man: drawing on liberation theology, she maintains that Jesus does not advocate poverty, because it is degrading and denies the image of God in humanity. Thus the rich man's problem, and ours, is not wealth but attachment to wealth. She also offers a fresh reflection on Luke 16 (the rich man and Lazarus), focusing on the distance between rich and poor in this life as well as the next. Equally interesting is her proposal, in Chapter 3, for a 'theology of fashion', which would affirm that the material world has value, and that the way we dress expresses our own values and interior life. It seems to me, though, that this theology could equally well support arguments for simplicity and frugality.

Other aspects of the book are also problematic. González never clearly justifies her choice of Catholic social teaching as a standard, noting only that it is 'one denomination's attempt' to address the issues (p. 31), and that it 'perhaps' speaks for a minority in the United States (p. 54). She might usefully have looked at additional Christian responses to commerce and capitalism, ranging from Franciscan mendicancy to Social Gospel critique. Strangely, she attributes the idea of voluntary poverty solely to 'Asian theologians' (p. 56), overlooking the

Catholic Worker tradition and many other sources. Her account of Weber misses his main point and does little to advance her argument. While she is right to question the 'prosperity gospel', her claim that it 'represents the marriage of massive American consumption and Protestant Christianity' is too broad. It minimizes Protestant diversity and dissent and does not account for the growth of this movement in the Third World.

Some terms need more precise definition. In Chapter 3, for example, González seems to treat all shopping as compulsive shopping, and to regard pathological hoarding as an outcome of shopping. More nuanced distinctions would be useful in both cases. Most puzzling is her assertion that liturgical dress is a form of fashion. Certainly the two have some purposes in common, such as adornment and symbolic expression. But fashion is transient and subjective; ritual clothing is neither.

González's conclusions are surprisingly ambivalent. On some of the most difficult biblical texts, such as the woes to the rich in the Lucan Beatitudes, she takes no firm position. In her closing comments, she asks, 'Does Jesus wants us to sell all our material possessions and live a life of destitution? I don't think so' (p. 111). But she urges only that we 'reassess' our values and possessions (pp. 92, 111). She has earlier recommended such practices as buying fair-trade food and clothing, giving more money away, and 'rethinking' our needs (p. 51). Commendable as these ideas are, none of them is particularly innovative or challenging.

The book is also marred by the author's writing. Many paragraphs lack topic sentences and conceptual unity. González misuses words – for example, 'rabid consumption of goods' (p. 14) or 'in his midst' (p. 55). She confuses 'that' with 'who', and she overuses the passive voice; both problems make her meaning unclear at times. There is much unnecessary repetition, often in virtually identical words. Inconsistencies affect her credibility: for example, on page 15, González 'vaguely remember[s]' buying books as a child, but on page 90, she 'remember[s] the thrill of going to the bookstore'. These flaws make the book awkward to read and leave an unfortunate impression of haste or carelessness.

If the text were clearer, and its inaccuracies were corrected, this book could be appropriate for study groups in Christian communities. As it is, it may be useful for stimulating open-ended meditation and reflection on shopping for those who have already given some thought to the issue, or who have additional resources at hand. The author has some provocative ideas, but she has not yet developed them thoroughly.

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★ ★ ★

The Complete Psalms: The Book of Prayer Songs in a New Translation, Pamela Greenberg, Bloomsbury, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-60819-120-8), xxvii + 324 pp., hb $26

This book is the fruit of Greenberg's deep love and appreciation of the Psalms. Those that share this love will find much of value here. Not satisfied with existing translations, Greenberg has tried to make the Psalms more accessible to Jewish and Christian lay readers by bringing out their deeply human quality.

I am a Christian who loves the Psalms and prays them daily. This translation is a good supplement to one's regular translation. While I encountered phrases that seemed unnecessarily awkward or opaque, I was also deeply moved by others when I practiced *lectio divina* using this translation.

Some may be troubled by Greenberg's choice to avoid gendered language for God. For example, she never uses 'Lord' for *Adonai*. I do not think her substitutions are contrary to the meaning of *Adonai*, and they often bring out subtleties in meaning that are cause for reflection. Nonetheless, for me, 'Lord' is an intimate form of address that carries no strong gender associations, and I found its complete absence from the Psalms left a little empty place in my heart. But unless readers are very familiar with Psalms in another translation, many may not even notice the lack of gendered language for God. And, in fact, God is still portrayed as a champion and nurturer, so those who need to experience God as masculine and feminine will still find those qualities in the Psalms. Those who are so troubled by masculine language for God that it has become a stumbling block to prayer will be the most appreciative of Greenberg's translation.

Greenberg also uses alternative words for 'sin' and 'evil'. She avoids 'sin' because she believes the word 'is caught up in ideologies of guilt, demonization, and punishment'. Well, maybe, although I do not think we should cede the word to these 'ideologies'. But it is of little concern here because the words she does choose in many cases help clarify the meaning of 'sin'. For example, in her translation of Psalm 51, one prays for God to 'erase my acts of revolt' and 'wash me from wrongfulness'. Even those comfortable using 'sin' should have no objections to these translations as they convey the essential meaning. Her reluctance to use 'evil' stems from her right desire to avoid implying that anyone was irredeemably evil. Certainly interpreting the Psalms with this sense should coincide with most Christian theology. While I do believe in evil, I did not find her translations of the idea problematic.

In many cases, she also uses alternate words for 'enemy' as well. I pray the Psalms in a country where the rule of law is not so firmly established that the poor may depend on it for justice. Thus, I am sensitive to the cries for justice found in the Psalms. Fortunately, Greenberg does not sanitize the Psalms to remove all references to human oppression or the reality that we sometimes have enemies we desire God to oppose. In fact, she understands quite rightly that the Psalms are prayers that start where we are in honesty – and this includes our own desire for justice or even vengeance. She wrestles with these desires in her translations and the outcome is sometimes quite insightful. For example, she takes the traditional translation of Psalm 137:9 'Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!' (New Revised Standard Version) and transforms it into 'One day you, too, will see your brightest future shattered against a rock'. I thought this captured the essential meaning while at the same time relieving us of literally praying for the death of infants – something very, very few of those who pray the Psalms today desire even for their worst enemies.

I found her poetry striking at times, but not at others. Take Psalm 103, for example, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul' (New Revised Standard Version) becomes 'Be wild, O my soul, for the Source of Wonder'. There is some 'wildness' in the idea of blessing God in Psalm 103 – I think she right to try to capture that. Yet . . . I am not entirely satisfied either. There are times when one might pray this Psalm in deep sorrow or fear. I prefer the more ambiguous 'bless'. On other occasions, her translation deeply moved me and her sense of the passage felt just right. For example, part of Psalm 2 she translates: 'God said to me, *You are my child. I give birth to you each day. Come to me with your perplexities and I will make people our inheritance; your possessions will extend to the ends of the earth.*' I found that this promise resonated with my spirit when I read it in her translation.

One significant quibble I have is that in her arrangement, she often has single lines alone. For chanting, lines should at least have a pair. So while a group could pray responsively from this text, it would be difficult to chant many of the Psalms together. Surely seminary libraries should acquire a copy, but I especially recommend this book for those Jews or Christians who want to pray the Psalms, either as their primary or secondary translation.

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★ ★ ★

Theology on the Menu: Asceticism, Meat and Christian Diet, David Grumett and Rachel Muers, Routledge, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-4154-9683-4), 214 pp., pb $39.95/£21.99

Following the joint effort of *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology* (T&T Clark 2008), David Grumett and Rachel Muers serve up a fascinating study on monastic attitudes toward food and its role in shaping Christian identity. Situating their work at the heart of theological concerns about climate change and responsible food production, the two scholars offer a liturgical, theological, and historical approach to flexible dietary practice and meat abstinence as a form of asceticism.

Grumett & Muers explore the anchorite diet as the most extreme form of ascetic dietary practice. Alhough the diet was not primarily concerned with animal welfare, the 'abstinence from animal flesh' could be associated with 'a sense of kinship with animals resulting from a life spent close to nature' (p. 5). This dietary practice was more concerned with the transformation of bodies as well as wider society (p. 7). Later through 'hagiography, the desert became a virtual place in which religious practices were taught and promoted among people who did not themselves inhabit that place' (p. 8). For modern tastes, the anchorite diet seems far removed from conventional standards; however, the authors claim that in this 'early period of monastic history' the monks 'enjoyed a dietary standard no more than equal to that of the surrounding populace' (p. 14). Yet the authors argue that the Christian practice of fasting did in fact have socio-economic ramifications for the wider public (p. 15). Often attached to this dietary practice is a way of seeing the 'natural order' in such a way that connects 'meat abstinence' to the reconfiguring of 'the relationships existing between humans and animals' (p. 16).

Transitioning from the desert to the city, the authors consider the Benedictine rule of diet and its wider effect on public Lenten observance. For the authors, the Benedictine's expectation of guests and a standard daily ration gives less emphasis to fasting than the anchorites – albeit the ration was merely a loaf of bread (p. 20). However, these disciplines became 'gradually assimilated into structured public observance' with the development of the church calendar (p. 22). Rather than arbitrarily enforcing Lenten observance, the social fast was 'integrated into those natural cycles, such that abstinence from red meat, poultry, and dairy products became a function of practical reality sanctified by the Church' (p. 24). This also becomes the case for public policy in Reformation England with Henry VIII (p. 28).

With Franciscan and Dominican dietary practices, Christian identity becomes detached from vegetarian mores (p. 36). As these two orders lived in urban areas and relied upon city dwellers for food, the classic dietary practices were revised (p. 49). Indeed, with the contribution of Thomas

Aquinas's 'assimilationist' philosophy, the human body's boundaries become more porous and entirely dependent on food (p. 51). In Chapter 4, the Reformation critiques of fasting are set in the context of personal choice (p. 53). The authors trace a lineage from the Lollards in England to Zwingli and Luther, and then to Calvin arguing that the Reformers considered fasting as having 'no intrinsic merit, but serves and reflects a greater end' (p. 56). The authors' genealogy moves on to post-Commonwealth England with John Wesley and his influence on the Cowherdites and the Salvation Army as important voices in early vegetarianism (p. 65). The reader is introduced to the Seventh-day Adventists and their connection to William Metcalfe and the Kellogg family (p. 68). The authors show an historical connection between dietary practice and the often overlooked spiritual tradition to which it refers (p. 71).

After surveying an historical analysis, the rest of the book focuses upon the hermeneutical issues bound up with vegetarianism. The guiding interpretive principle is that 'food rules are not the direct product of beliefs' but rather 'the frameworks of belief within which dietary practices are located develop partly in order to make sense of particular practices' (p. 72). The authors take seriously the influence of Mary Douglas as well as the categorization of living beings in the Hebrew Bible in order to recognize 'land animals as human neighbours' and that 'all creatures participate in a divinely ordered cosmos created for justice and mercy' (p. 76). This leads the authors to give greater attention to allegorical readings of food rules by reconsidering dietary practice (p. 82). The authors believe that 'food and eating are important in themselves, but also possess a wider significance' (p. 86). As the issue of scarcity becomes more apparent with food resources, the authors suggest that food is not merely an object for our consumption, but rather 'a gift intrinsically patterned by structure, boundaries and rules' (p. 87). Chapter 6 is devoted to the function of dietary practice in reinforcing doctrinal boundaries among the Manicheans, Jews, and Muslims. After the time of Augustine, 'no food was in principle excluded from the Christian diet. Rather the reason it had been killed or originally prepared as food required close scrutiny' (p. 93). With the Council of Gangra, the authors note how Christians often allowed their 'dietary practices to be determined indirectly by doctrines they deemed heretical in order to confirm themselves as doctrinally orthodox' (p. 95). The Christian tradition of animal sacrifice is often overlooked and the authors explore this notion in Chapter 7. Even though it was associated with paganism and condemned by six emperors, it still found its way into Armenian liturgy (p. 109). The papacy had to treat this issue contextually as missionaries encountered it also in Britain (p. 111). The authors argue that Christians confined 'meat eating to particular days, making slaughter visible to the community, and [had] greater regard for animal welfare' (p. 115).

For the authors, this liturgical treatment is a stark contrast to contemporary meat consumption and production practices. Here the authors summon two voices to bring their critique to bear on contemporary dietary practice. First, Rebecca West's account of the vicious cycle of land acquisition and meat consumption is an argument that non-vegetarians participate in a practice that only breeds more violence and war (p. 117). Second, Stephen Webb argues that 'to the extent that the sacrifice of Christ abolishes animal sacrifice, it calls Christians to abstain from eating meat. For Christians to act otherwise would be nothing less than to continue the crucifixion of Christ' (p. 119). Some readers may object to this theological point and so the authors leave the decision up to the reader as Christians today adhere to both vegetarian and carnivorous practices (p. 126). Yet, the authors still resist the notion that food is a private matter of choice (p. 128).

What seems to be a major philosophical issue at the heart of vegetarian practice is the assigning of an equal ontological status to both humans and animals. Unlike the rhetorical force of the authors, some readers may want to differentiate between the assembly line of a Ford manufacturer, the systematic genocide of the Holocaust, and the practices of a slaughterhouse (p. 123). However, the chief aim of this book is not merely to engender vegetarian practices in its readers, but rather to create space for hospitality, giving thanks, and commensality which allows for dietary differences at a common table (p. 139). Many theological libraries would benefit greatly from adding this book to their collection.

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★ ★ ★

The Cambridge Companion to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-521-71011-4), xiv + 461 pp., pb $32.99; (ISBN 978-0-521-88386-3), hb $90.00

Hardly any theology worth its salt today can steer clear of Immanuel Kant. His famous rejection of the ontological argument was but a small part of a much larger project of explaining how knowledge of the world depends in some way on the categories of understanding we bring to it. He consequently eschewed Descartes's radical idealism and Hume's skepticism and adopted a 'transcendental' approach that philosophers have been wrestling with ever since. As for theologians, the systematic and comprehensive character of his approach and the enormous

influence it has had on the history of philosophy have convinced them that the modern world will find it difficult to accept the epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions of their discipline unless those presuppositions are either subjected to Kant's critique or become the basis of a persuasive refutation.

After several years of reflection on how to proceed, Kant was convinced that what was needed in philosophy was 'a critique, a discipline, a canon, and an architectonic of *pure reason*'. The critique could not draw from the sciences already at hand but required an 'entirely unique technical vocabulary' (Letter to Marcus Herz, November 24, 1776). The goal of the critique would be to establish that we know informative universal principles about our experience – that is, that we have 'synthetic *a priori*' (i.e. universal and necessary yet genuinely informative rather than merely definitional) knowledge – and that such principles are absolutely indispensible for any further knowledge. Moreover, the critique would also have to demonstrate that these principles cannot give us theoretical knowledge about objects of which we have no direct experience (e.g. God and immortal souls), but that belief in such objects is justified on practical grounds.

After a historical overview by Paul Guyer, the book unfolds in three sections. The first situates Kant between rationalists like Leibniz and Wolff and empiricists such as Lock and Hume. Desmond Hogan shows that even though Kant inherited the idea of *a priori* knowledge from the rationalists, he devised a distinction between analytic and synthetic *a priori* knowledge as a criticism of them. Kenneth P. Winkler similarly shows that Kant followed the empiricists in 'deducing' the key categories and principles before elaborating his own distinction between 'psychological' and 'transcendental' deductions as a criticism of the empiricists.

The second and longest section of the book introduces the individual steps of the *Critique*, focusing first on the constructive phase in which Kant demonstrates that there is such a thing as synthetic *a priori* cognition. Again, Kant borrows a standard distinction between the 'Doctrine of Elements' and 'Doctrine of Method' before opposing it with his own 'transcendental' method. He introduces a further distinction between the *a priori* forms of intuition and the *a priori* forms of conceptualization, arguing that all knowledge of the objects of experience involves both these *a priori* forms. The errors of 'speculative' metaphysics arise from our attempt to gain knowledge of objects through *a priori* concepts alone without applying them to, or restricting them by, the representations given by our senses with their own *a priori* forms. Lisa Shabel assesses Kant's arguments for the *a priori* cognition of space and time and the claim that such knowledge can only be explained by transcendental idealism. Guyer examines Kant's deduction of the pure conceptions of understanding, Eric Watkins discusses the Analytic of

Principles and 'Analogies of Experience', and Dina Emundts reviews the 'Refutation of Idealism' that Kant added to the 'Analytic of Principles' in the second edition of the *Critique*.

Kant's 'Transcendental Dialectic' holds particular interest for theologians insofar as it is not based on the valid inferences of traditional logic but the invalid inferences made by pure reason whenever it attempts to obtain knowledge of things in themselves from the categories of understanding alone with no regard for the fact that these categories yield knowledge only when applied to sensible intuitions or the representations of the senses. This, according to Kant, is precisely the reason why traditional proofs for the existence of immortal souls and God fail: they depend on inferences made from the pure concepts of understanding alone with no regard for the limits of sensible intuition. All the arguments for the existence of God fail because they assume that if something 'conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions . . . which is itself unconditioned, also given' (p. 16). According to Kant, none of our fundamental *a priori* ideas can yield actual knowledge since knowledge always requires sensible intuition *as well as* concepts, and nothing unconditioned can ever be given in sensible intuition. In other words, nothing unconditioned can be given in space or time. This aspect of Kant's thinking is at the center of essays by Michael Rohlf on Kant's strategy for generating the idea of pure reason, Julian Wuerth's analysis of the three classes of fallacious inferences, Allen W. Wood's review of the Antinomies, and Michelle Grier's discussion of the Ideal of Pure Reason.

The third set of essays deals with the reception and influence of the *Critique*. Rolf-Peter Horstmann looks at how philosophers like Ficthe, Schelling, and Hegel resisted Kant's restriction of theoretical philosophy to epistemology. Konstantin Pollok surveys German Neo-Kantianism, and Daniel Dahlstrom focuses on Heidegger's rejection of Neo-Kantian approaches to Kant. Finally, Kenneth Westphal explores the enormous influence Kant has had on Anglo-American philosophy.

Although there are more accessible introductions to Kant, many of them are more than twenty years old and would not include the results of recent Kantian scholarship incorporated within this volume. In fact, a key point that emerges from these essays is that Kant not only has staying power but deserves to be rethought. His conviction that metaphysical speculation about the ultimate nature of reality is doomed to failure is now severely challenged by several strains of continental philosophy. And yet a renewed interest in the merits of the Enlightenment has turned him into an ally of many theists. Whatever the case, it is generally agreed that the success or failure of his project rides on his analysis of synthetic *a priori* judgments as the regulative principles governing our experience, and his corresponding claim that those principles can never be shown to have any force as constitutive of the real

nature of the world. One's agreement or disagreement with him that pure reason inevitably reaches for what it cannot grasp will entirely determine the course of one's theology.

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★ ★ ★

Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam: The Muslim Brotherhood, Ash'arism, and Political Sunnism, Jeffry R. Halverson, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-230-10279-8), 188 pp., hb $75

This book is being read and reviewed as many predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East and Africa are in turmoil due to protests against the government. Egypt is still in turmoil as this is being written even though President Mubarak has been forced to step down, and the Egyptian military is running the government. One group heavily involved in the protests leading to Mubarak's downfall was the Muslim Brotherhood. The teachings of some of its leaders are examined in this book.

Theology and Creed was written in response to the notion of the 'unthinkable' – implicit axiomatic interpretations of the *Qur'an* which reject reasoned inquiry and lead to unquestionable preconceived thought patterns and foregone conclusions (p. 1). These thought patterns helped cause the demise of the discipline of theology/*kalam* (*ilm al-kalam*) – seeking religious or theological knowledge through investigation, argumentation, and debate.

The Sunni practice of *kalam* virtually disappeared by the fifteenth century (CE) and was displaced by an anti-theological type of thought which emphasized a strict literal interpretation of *Qur'anic* texts and literal adherence to creedal statements. This came from the *Athariyya* school of Sunni thought which distrusted any use of human reason and viewed the discipline of *kalam* as 'a sinful and dangerous exercise in human arrogance' (p. 2).

The demise of *kalam* has given rise to 'Islamism' which Halverson defines as 'the marriage of Athari imposed creedalism and the modern nation state' which historically has its genesis in 1928 'with the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt . . . the "grandfather" of all Islamist movements' (p. 3).

The first chapter of *Theology and Creed* compares and contrasts the teachings of the Ash'arite and Maturidite schools of Sunni theology. The Ash'arites rejected '*taqlid* or the blind imitation of pious

predecessors' and contended that 'every individual must examine and investigate religious arguments and doctrine for themselves' (p. 21). This enabled Islamic theological scholars to participate in 'intellectual arguments' free of preconceived conclusions (p. 22). The Maturidites developed Hanafite teachings in opposition to the Atharis and Shi'ites as well as the Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. The Maturidites believed that human beings could gain knowledge of God and their obligations to him 'through reason alone (without the aid of revelation)' (p. 24).

Chapter 2 gives four reasons for the demise of *kalam*. (1) Adherents of speculative theological thought were declared to be 'heretics and disbelievers' by creedal Athari traditionalists (p. 47). (2) The boundaries separating '*kalam* (theology) and *falsafah* (philosophy)' became blurred in the Ash'arite and Maturidite traditions. (3) The rise of direct communication with God through contemplative mysticism and the ecstatic experiences of the Sufis. (4) Sunni solidarity against the teachings of the Shi'ites and the Crusaders led to emphasizing common creedal statements which reduced 'theological proofs and the intellectual efforts that produced them to fixed creedal postulates' (p. 54). The Athari traditionalists believed that the completion of Islam in the lifetime of the Prophet and his companions was to be accepted, believed and obeyed and not 'disputed or meddled with' (p. 37).

Chapter 3 analyzes the destructive marriage of 'Athari imposed creedalism and the emergence of Islamism in the twentieth century' (p. 57). Athari Islamism inevitably 'employs the coercive power of the modern nation-state' to impose as eternally binding on every society the text of the *Qur'an* with all of its seventh century limitations even though a society would lack any resemblance 'to the time, culture, people, and events of the Prophet's life'. Islamism attempts to make every society 'conform to Islamist designs' (clothing, beards) by means of the coercive and often violent power of the state (p. 64). Those who fail to conform are labeled as sinners and apostates. This Athari vision is unrealistic because of the vast diversity of various cultures, and the diversity within Islam itself.

Hasan al-Banna and Umar al-Tilmisani are two of the Muslim Brotherhood's leading thinkers. The thought of al-Tilmisani is multi-faceted and complex. He favored a constitutional democracy which would rule with Islamic '*shari'ah*' law. He rejected the idea that any 'Islamic government' would be 'authoritarian' or would be opposed 'to freedom of thought, speech, and consultation' (p. 70). His ideas are contrasted with those of 'Abdul-Wahhab, the founder of' Wahhabism which interpret *shari'ah* law in a literalistic, static, rigid, and unchanging way even though the world has changed (p. 71).

Al-Tilmisani saw the Islamic state protecting Islamic society from materialism, threats to morality, and as promoting the spread of Islam throughout the world. He and Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali rejected

rebellion against the state and participation in civil wars (p. 77). The moderation of al-Tilmisani is clearly Ash'arite in nature in contrast to the static creedal dogmatism of the Athari.

Halverson lays out his case for a more moderate understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood based on the writings of al-Tilmisani while acknowledging the Muslim Brotherhood's violent history, and the fact that many of the radical Islamist writers and movements that have come into existence began their path to radicalism within the Muslim Brotherhood. The work of al-Tilmisani and the history of the Muslim Brotherhood illustrate the 'diversity' and 'complex picture' of modern Islam (p. 84). Halverson credits al-Tilmisani with keeping 'the Muslim Brotherhood firmly on the path of nonviolence and . . . full democratic participation' with the Egyptian government (p. 91). The more radical ideas of Ayman al-Zawahiri and Sayyid Qutb are contrasted with those of al-Tilmisani.

Theology and Creed sees the Taliban as 'the product of distinctly Athari madrasas, funded and mobilized by the Wahhabite-Atharis in the Persian Gulf and their Pakistani allies' who stand in the tradition of the Kharijites who also declared other Muslims *takfir* – heretics worthy of death for failing to follow their static rigid creedal codes (p. 115). The Kharijites murdered the fourth Caliph of Sunni Islam having declared him *takfir*. The Taliban are adamantly opposed to reason and are mainly interested in the harsh and rigid enforcement of outward acts (growing a beard) rather than in what might motivate those acts in the way of belief.

All the previous chapters lead to Halverson's theoretical application of the promise of renewed Ash'arite theological discourse in Islam. He sees *kalam's* active rational theological discourse as capable of producing the vigorous reasoned Islamic liberalism necessary to help 'meet the unique challenges and needs of the contemporary Muslim world' today (p. 128).

In his final chapter Halverson writes with guarded optimism about the prospects for the revival of *kalam* in Islam today. He cites the work of several Muslim scholars who oppose the dogmatic Athari brand of Wahhabism centered in the work of Ibn Taymiyya and 'seek to revive traditional Sunnism' (p. 151). These scholars share their writings on the *Marifah* website. Halverson also expresses the hope that the Muslim Brotherhood will follow the lead of al-Tilmisani and expand on his Ash'arite perspective to show how Islamic liberalism can help to rule a country without the turmoil, bloodshed, and violence promoted by Islamist extremists like the Taliban and their Athari view of Islam.

This is a book for anyone interested in modern Islamic thought.

Armand J. Boehme
Trinity Lutheran Church

★ ★ ★

Reinhold Niebuhr and Contemporary Politics: God and Power, Richard Harries and Stephen Platten (eds.), Oxford University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-019-957183-3), xi + 260 pp., hb $110

When David Brooks of the *New York Times* asked candidate Barack Obama whether he had read Reinhold Niebuhr, and the senator replied, 'He's one of my favorite philosophers', the conversation about Niebuhr and modern politics took on a new urgency. Several political commentators used this statement to divine what an Obama presidency would or would not do; some religious analysts followed suit in their investigations of Obama's religious sentiments. Although this may have brought greater public attention to the interest in Niebuhr as a resource for political consideration, that conversation certainly did not start the 'Niebuhr resurgence'. Liam Julian points out in 2009 that the renewed interest had come to the point that a Niebuhr quotation or allusion was stock in trade for intellectuals in the first decade of the twenty-first century. But all that interest still leaves the basic question unanswered – what is the impact or usefulness of Niebuhr for contemporary politics? That is the question this book of essays seeks to address.

There are fifteen essays in the book, written by a variety of thinkers, from both the theological and political realms. While one cannot imagine a reader being equally in agreement with all of them (some are harshly critical while others laudatory), all of the articles bring worthwhile points to the table. They are trenchant, concise, vigorous, and thoughtful. This is a good book, one in which both scholars and libraries should invest.

The volume begins with an excellent essay by Robin Lovin that sets Niebuhr in the context of his critics, and the (remaining) value of his thought in the present situation. Mac McCorkle's critical reception of recent political appropriations of Niebuhr presents a fascinating examination of the pitfalls of seeing Niebuhr through a particular narrow lens. Jean Bethke Elshtain's consideration of Niebuhr's anthropological contribution to politics both focuses the reader's attention on the importance of a serious anthropology for politics, and gives the memorable moment of one Gifford Lecturer commenting upon another.

The volume then moves into a critical phase, with Ben Quash's consideration of how radical orthodoxy negatively assesses Niebuhr's contribution, and conversely how his enduring value may be in his considering the concrete realities of human existence. Samuel Wells presents a devastating critique of Niebuhr's account of pacifism and realism, attacking Niebuhr as less than Christian in generating a realism absent the Trinitarian God. Wendy Dackson reflects on Niebuhr's weak ecclesiology and suggests that it may work as an 'outsider ecclesiology', an understanding of the perspective of those outside the church. The next article expands on that focus; Stephen

Platten considers how liturgy might function in public theology, this represents a moment when Niebuhr might be used as an element from which to construct a public liturgical theology.

The book proceeds back to more positive appraisals of Niebuhr with Martyn Percy's consideration of Niebuhr's doctrine of sin and how it might be helpful in generating a more satisfactory contemporary grammar and doctrine of sin. Ian Markham then reviews Niebuhr's view of history and hope, and judges it as a helpful resource in distinguishing between a Christian model of hope, and a secular idea of utopia. Nigel Biggar takes up the question of forgiveness, and uses Martin Luther as a foil to gauge Niebuhr's place in the question – arguing for a position that exceeds the concentration on love that Niebuhr did have. Richard Harries measures Niebuhr's fascination with democracy, and questions whether it is appropriate in the modern world, considering the Islamic critique. He finds Niebuhr still to be useful, but in his cautions about democracy, rather than his defenses of it. Anatol Lieven then argues that Niebuhr's thought is crucial to the present circumstance, in his intellectual marriage of realist and progressive traditions.

The book concludes with a more evaluative tone, John D. Carlson considers Niebuhr and the use of force, and suggests that Niebuhr's categories for considering not only the justification of a war but also its advisability are an important corrective in the present post-Cold War world. Kevin Carnahan points out how Niebuhrian Christian Realism might offer a more successful theological approach for evangelicals as they seek appropriate models through which to address themselves to political power. Wilfred M. McClay evaluates Niebuhr's applicability to the issue of religious pluralism, and finds that while it seems promising, that promise is chimerical – Niebuhr's position depends upon a Christian context, and that renders his usefulness for a doctrine of religious pluralism dubious. Stephen Platten concludes the volume with an essay that binds the volume together.

While the volume works quite well, and deserves scholarly engagement, it is not without both curious choices and outright flaws. First, although the book aims to consider Niebuhr and contemporary politics, there is a distinct slant toward religious ethicists, and the corresponding softpedaling of the voice of political theorists. This is not as helpful as a balanced presentation would have been. Further, while all of the articles give a good read, some can be questioned either in methodology or conclusion. Wells's devastating critique reminds the reader of his colleague Stanley Hauerwas – basically finding Niebuhr neither Christian nor significant. That may be. But the method of the article begs the question whether the conclusion preceded the research. Taking a single article of Niebuhr's from 1940 as his manifesto on pacifism is questionable, and gives an anachronistic slant – the cautions about American imperialism Niebuhr spoke so clearly in 1952 in *The Irony of American*

History are completely absent. While Dackson's recovery of a usefulness of Niebuhr's thought on ecclesiology is interesting, it hardly can stand in place of one of the central tasks of ecclesiology – to speak to the church.

Specific criticisms aside, this volume is a solid addition to the consideration of public theology, the place of theological reflection in realpolitik, and the place of Christian realism in both theological and political circles. The clear juxtaposition of Niebuhr's thought with the contemporary context proves enormously valuable, and in both those cases where Niebuhr's thought is directly recoverable and decidedly not, the analysts have seen significant implications in this engagement. The volume adds a sourcebook of critical engagement with specific loci in the Niebuhr corpus for the interface with contemporary politics to the field, and does so in a manner both scholarly and politically relevant.

R. Ward Holder
Saint Anselm College

★ ★ ★

The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion, Peter Harrison (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-521-88538-6), xi + 307 pp., hb $85; (ISBN 978-0-521-71251-4), xi + 307 pp., pb $24.99

'The number of books and articles written during the past twenty years on the relationship between science and religion is truly amazing, and new ones are coming out almost every day'. So one contributor to this impressive collection by people engaged in this on-going debate opens his chapter (p. 278). This book, of course, is one of the throng. Is it justified?

Although the contributors differ in their approaches, all have one thing in common: they thought it worthwhile to make a contribution. There *is* a case to be argued – that science and religion are not incompatible – and in this collection, most make a valiant shot to make a respectable case. Sometimes it comes over as a struggle. As a priest and (former) research scientist, I can sympathize.

But I must acknowledge that although I did research in neurophysiology and keep a moderately active interest in the science world, I am not *au fait* with the more detailed latest developments therein – which this book excitingly covers. If I say, then, that it is not a book for the casual bird-watcher or amateur electrician, that is not in the least to demean it. On the contrary, its meat excited me, and refreshed the memory of the laboratory and what I had missed over the past forty-five years.

Non-scientists (or even scientists!) may find some of the writing heavy-going. The contributors, by ad large, dumb-down neither the

data nor the argument. But for those interested in this dialogue and disagreement (and challenge especially to, but not only to, believers) it is worth pushing on, if only because the debate is an important one for society. And it is a debate which those who hold that science and religion can cohabit have an uphill struggle to maintain. Why? Partly because science (and her offspring, technology) has made such amazing and *influential* advances in the last century. And continues to do so: excitingly and to the evident advantage of humanity. (Oh yes, I am aware there is a down-side too: but that is often conveniently hidden under the carpets of ease and apathy.)

It is also true that to make out the case for God in an exciting and secular laboratory can be a very uphill struggle. So it should be no surprise to read in this book, 'The participants in the science-religion dialogue hold views about religion that are more diverse than are their views about science, but the accounts of what science is can also vary quite widely' (p. 290).

Some of the writing is perforce technical, detailed and so obscure – probably sometimes even to the trained mind. But that is the nature of the beast: can one legitimately, with intellectual honesty, keep a foot in each of these two camps, science and religion? Many believe not, and have become, or remain, agnostics or atheists. Those that hold that one *can*, have an increasingly difficult case to make. Not that the average punter in the street worries about the advanced logic of the matter: he or she is more likely to be, consciously or unconsciously, swayed by the mood of the age, which is becoming, at least in the West, increasingly secular. (Church attendance is dropping fast, especially among the younger generation?) Will this generally pacific book reverse the trend? Probably not: its pitch will really only be accessible to those already within the debate. It is unlikely to command the attention of Mr or Mrs Average.

After an editorial introduction, the book is in three parts. Five chapters cover 'historical interactions' between science and theology; five deal with the impact of contemporary science on religion; and a final four offer a philosophical perspective.

So this admirable book is not one for someone with no exposure to scientific thinking and terminology. (Such would for ever be reaching for a technical dictionary, and probably remain bemused.) So vicars beware. Yet the book covers a key debate, if at a technical level: one of which the church remains ignorant at her peril.

John Armson
Herefordshire

★ ★ ★

Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made: A Womanist Spirituality, Diana L. Hayes, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-9757-0), xi + 219 pp., pb $22

There are days during which being a feminist, womanist, mujerista, or GLBT theologian can be a lonely and painful endeavor. One of the greatest comforts is the discovery of a liberative book which speaks to one's heart – a heart which has begun to understand Jesus as good news for all, especially the powerless and marginalized. Diana Hayes's *Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made* is one of these wonderful texts and will remind the reader that she or he is not alone in the troubling quest for justice, as well as that theology is not just allowed to be but must be a truly personal journey. Hayes combines serious, well-researched scholarship with deeply personal reflection, issuing in a book that is at once challenging but accessible, theoretically sophisticated and spiritual. *Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made* is a good choice for advanced undergraduate classes, graduate classes and anyone who receives life from liberation theologies.

Like many feminist and womanist theologians writing today, Hayes writes out of what is now an established – though recent – tradition of liberation theologies which bring sex, gender, race, class, and differing abilities to the theological table. The titles of her chapters alone may make one weep: 'Who Do Your Say That I Am?' and 'Here I Am, Send Me', for both are concrete examples of the deep and ever-dawning realization of liberation theologians that the bits of scripture and traditional phrases which are tossed around in Christian community *human beings are the location of God's revelation*. The Christian tradition and its founding figure are not just abstractions which must be stretched to bring good news and which judge all those who are not part of the establishment. They are ways of articulating the spiritual journey of every person, in this case a heterosexual, celibate, black, Catholic woman.

Hayes's journey and perspective particularizes womanist theology in the way that all liberation theologies must be particularized, and does so in ways that may reveal readers' unintentional assumptions about womanist theologians. To more fully appreciate Hayes's book, readers ought to first be familiar with the work of Delores Williams, Jacquelyn Grant and Katie Cannon, to name but a few of Hayes's predesisters. Womanist theology has come a long way – from fighting for space and legitimation to the freedom to chronicle the sins and liberative possibilities of Christianity, as well the personal journeys which reveal these truths.

Hayes is a Roman Catholic, the first category which contradicts stereotypes of womanist theologians. Far too easily do outsiders, even the white feminists critiqued by womanist theology and now largely supportive of this further development in the understanding of

oppression and liberation, imagine southern black women writing from a Protestant point of view. The book revolves around themes and topics which will be familiar to a Catholic audience, but which are also significant for members of other Christian denominations. Exemplifying the communitarian spirit which she claims arose among black slaves who in Africa never would have considered each other brothers or sisters, Hayes narrates the relationship between black southern Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. It is this relationship which she claims partly explains the nature of black Catholicism today, which she describes most vitally as black Catholic revivalism. The personalism and sensing of possible equality between previously segregated classes of person which was the Protestant response to the developing land ownership and prosperity experienced by immigrant families also affected the Catholics. Yet unlike Protestants, Catholic personalism of conversion led to a turning away from the world rather than toward it. Hayes claims that the Catholic parish mission movement is the counterpart to the Protestant Social Gospel movement, and that both derived their momentum from the evangelical personalism made possible only in a developing nation. Yet Catholicism manifested a strong isolationism against the widespread anti-Catholic sentiment, prioritizing the attainment of good in the afterlife rather than good in the here and now, and emphasizing the necessity of sacraments as the completion of what remained an incomplete personal decision for Christ. Black Catholics experienced the Catholic manifestation of personalism, but alongside the Protestant revivalism which they experienced, frequently having left the galleys to which they were relegated in Catholicism for the more emotive events taking place nearby. What this means is that black American Catholics took back the expectations of socially engaged, personal revivalism of 1800s evangelicalism to their church.

The black Catholic community today inherits and brings together the history of slavery, African ritual and sensibility, a developed appreciation for the structure of the mass and its European format and music, and the yearning for forms of worship which reflect black culture and community. One of Hayes's most eloquent contributions to scholarship is her call to the church to live up to its own standards in working against racism. Extensively quoting Paul VI on both the syncretism of African culture with Catholic culture and the need for liturgical renewal, Hayes puts out the call for the church to live up to its own highest expectations. In affirming and being informed by the black Catholic community, the church would take advantage of the insights gleaned by the simultaneous experience of suffering and oppression, with the abiding faith in the spirit which black Catholics have kept alive. The blending of African and African American tradition with Catholic ritual and sacramentality is akin to what has been allowed equally valid expression by Poles, Italians and others.

One might cite Hayes's exploration of racism and the economy as her most important contribution, for it is certainly one of the more politically charged sections of the book. As a theologian, however, one might be as moved by her description of ministry – a call to action which instantiates the ways in which the message of liberation brings people together across race, class, gender, and other potentially divided categories. Against a privileging of dualism and individualism, Hayes speaks from the subverted tradition of communitarianism and wholism which womanism shares with black, Latino/a and mujerista theologies, and which is grounded in the Gospel of John and Acts, in which community is central. While the individual-and-God mentality generates a model of ministry that is top-down, hierarchical and authoritarian, a more horizontal, community-oriented understanding of God's presence can generate ministry which works for others. Moreover, Hayes holds that every person is called to be one of God's ministers at different times in life, and that ministry is not just ministry *to* or *for* but *with*: meaning that God is present in all the creation. Hers is not a top-down model, but a vision of the egalitarian discipleship of equals with which so much liberation, feminist, womanist theology works. Hayes's description of this path reads like the best preaching, which witnesses to new understandings and calls people to new ways of life.

For those readers concerned to push the envelope of liberation, who hope to participate in bringing the good news to the marginalized, Hayes's book with be a welcome addition to the growing corpus of liberating theological work, especially womanist theology. For those who have as yet to begin understanding the presence of God in the vulnerable and in work for justice, *Standing in the Shoes My Mother Made* is a poignant call to conversion.

Aimée Upjohn Light
Duquesne University

★ ★ ★

Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions, Paul Hedges, SCM Press, 2010 (ISBN 987-0-334-04211-2), viii + 287 pp., pb $40

For Christians, adherents of other religions have long been the proverbial Elephant in the Room. Paul Hedges has done his readers a service by highlighting some significant aspects of current controversies about what Christians should believe about people of other faiths and offering his own solution. The book attempts to do much – perhaps too

much – but, in doing so, it provides a helpful immersion in its title topic: *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions.* It is part of SCM Press's Controversies in Contextual Theology Series, and as such it is a proponent of that brand of theology. Other topics in the series include feminist, political, relational, and queer theologies.

The controversy that takes center stage for Hedges is not the well-worn controversy between inclusivists, who include members of all faiths in the family of God, and exclusivists, who exclude everyone except Christians; rather, Hedges dismisses exclusivism as 'no longer a real issue' (p. 11), focusing on two successors to inclusivism: pluralism and particularism. While many classical inclusivists, such as post-Vatican II Catholics, hold that other religions find their fulfillment in Christianity, true pluralists maintain that all religions have equal validity and tend to embrace interreligious dialogue as their preferred means of discourse. Particularists, on the other hand, have affirmed the relative value of other religions while underlining their radical otherness, a degree of difference so extreme that true dialogue is impossible, as each religion can only be understood on its own terms. Members of this camp have primarily opted for the theology of religions, a sub-field within systematic theology, to address their concerns.

While affirming the dissonance between the pluralist and particularist positions, Hedges proposes a solution to the impasse between their respective emphases of radical openness and radical otherness. He perceives in Jesus himself a radical openness toward others. Hedges wants to retain this while avoiding pluralism's tendency to blur the boundaries between faiths to the point that they become indistinct. Hedges notes the downside of particularism: while many hold that all faiths demonstrate God's influence, 'the particularist does not see other religions as sources of salvation' (p. 161). Hedges insists that all faiths are salvific. A chapter on feminist insights rounds out his case; for feminist theologians focus on 'religion as practiced', facets of Christianity that resonate with other faiths while remaining resistant to relativism (p. 211). Hedges finds in the biblical themes of hospitality, syncretism, and hybridity the basis for reconciliation between pluralism and particularism. When Christians bring others into their homes, opening themselves to the beliefs of others and surrendering their own religious identities, they become their best selves and the debate is resolved.

The positive aspects of Hedges's work are clear. He attempts to bridge significant divisions, both within the Christian community and between Christians and people of other faiths. His perspective is truly global. The authors cited throughout the work represent a veritable Who's Who of theologians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Hedges is adept at identifying the ethnic, geographical, and confessional background of those whom he cites. He anticipates some objections handily. In numerous cases, Hedges provides helpful working definitions for ambiguous

terms and succinct summaries of complex ideas. His account of the significance of feminist theology is one of the best I have seen.

There are aspects of the work that are problematic. For readers whose views align completely with Hedges's, these may pose no issue; but for others, they may pose a significant impediment. Hedges asserts that radical openness is the only authentic way to approach the Christian message. As a result, he fails to bring exclusivism and classical inclusivism into conversation with pluralism and particularism. 'Constantinian imperialism [i.e., focus on doctrine,] is contrary to the spirit of the Jesus of the Gospels and the early Christian community' (p. 234). This reading of the Gospels ignores significant passages. Hedges makes Christ in his own image, contra Schweizer's warning, failing to bring into discussion teachings of Jesus that appear to affirm exclusivism and that would radically challenge Hedges's hypotheses. Had he done so and responded to them adequately, this would have significantly strengthened his case. Hedges's reading of history ignores the frequent place of key formulators of Christian doctrine, such as Athanasius, as societal outsiders. His account leaves no hint of the rich apprehension of the unknown and unknowable at the foundation of all orthodox doctrine. He defines faith as confidence in ideas, rather than as a God-relationship. Hedges appears to assume that theology is not transferable across cultures and that diversity of practice and recontextualization of doctrine implicitly constitute divergence from orthodoxy. Hedges discusses the theological implications of differences in culture without addressing differences in language. In bridging pluralism and particularism, Hedges tells us that it can be done, but fails to demonstrate that this can and should be done. Given the unwieldy scope of what Hedges attempts, that he succeeds, if only partially, is nonetheless commendable.

In addition to ideological and theological issues with which some readers might take issue, this volume possesses flaws of a more empirical nature. This is an under-edited work with frequent punctuation mistakes. That Hedges's own works constitute fifteen percent of his recommended readings smacks of self-promotion. Frequent lists with paragraph-sized entries bog down the flow of the text, while other sections seem to lack a cohesive structure. Often, paragraphs beginning with ordinal numbers form a series separated by so many pages that it is difficult to trace the development of the original thought. In some places, so many divergent sources are marshaled that it is easy to lose track of what stance the book is actually supporting. Some entire chapters seem unnecessary, such as the final chapter on the ethical implications of dialogue, which would have been better substituted for stronger supporting material for the other chapters.

Hedges purports to write this work for both an academic and lay audience. While it does, indeed, lend itself to such readers, it is more ideologically narrow than he admits. The ideal reader of this work

will be a liberal Western Protestant with at least a college education, preferably reading the book in an academic context, where moments of comparative religious shoptalk will enhance the conversation.

George Faithful
Saint Louis University

★ ★ ★

Through Us, with Us, in Us: Relational Theologies in the Twenty-First Century, Lisa Isherwood and Elaine Bellchambers (eds.), SCM Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-334-043669), vii + 263 pp., pb $25

The advent of books such as *Through Us, with Us, in Us: Relational Theologies in the Twenty-First Century* must be a shocking development for theologians and non-specialists rooted in the tradition of classical theism – the history of theological reflection primarily committed to God's immutability. Refusing the primacy of traditional speculation about God in God's self, this work edited by Lisa Isherwood and Elaine Bellchambers is comprised of many excellent essays which begin instead with the commitment to experience as our primary resource for exploring the meaning of God. Privileging praxis over theory, or experience over speculation, is not a new theological strategy. Developing this commitment through the lens of relationality *is* new, and brings together the legacy of liberation theologies and the developing relational ontology which could not have come into being without theologies of liberation. Isherwood and Bellchambers' new project is novel and important, and sure to be of interest to fans of SCM Press, which itself appears committed – through the trajectory of many of its recent publications – to progressive, liberative, and creative theologies. The book is not a good choice for introductory classrooms or beginning students in theology but is rather a text which takes for granted a high level of familiarity with recent and controversial theological trends. Should the reader be looking for an example of what one has discovered and demonstrated is going on through the use of other literature, *Through Us, with Us, in Us: Relational Theologies in the Twenty-First Century* will be an excellent choice.

One might be tempted to suggest the book would be improved by an inversion of its organization. Section I, 'Embodying Relational Theologies', Section II, 'Relationality and the Cosmos', and Section III, 'Divine Relationality', appear at first glance to be unhelpfully ordered. Yet the reader's discomfort with this approach can only signal the degree to which she is a classically trained theologian or theoretician. Frustrating

though this order may be for those looking for an immediate and totalizing explanation of what is at stake, beginning with embodiment instantiates what is important about the book. Only later, in Section III, is one given pieces which are more speculative in nature and which trace the history of debate and what is at stake in the use of relationality as a theological category and starting point.

The very first essay by Carter Heyward, a scholar who has been at the forefront of theological work throughout her career, typifies Heyward's autobiographical approach and again situates her as one of the most delightful and grounded feminist liberation theologians working today. Identifying five breaking points in her developing theological journey, Heyward takes us from concern for the individual to mutuality and beyond; even to how animals – in this case horses – help to mediate the divine. Reminiscent of her earlier work, Heyward describes God's divine whimsy and surprise at what is taking the creation so long to discover what is at root relationality.

Ursula King's marvelous essay in the section on embodiment begins to examine how little theology has thought through the concept of love, especially in recent years and specifically in feminist terms. While there has been much critique of self-sacrificial love, love has not been minded for its transformative potential, and King revisits the work of Teilhard de Chardin as well as sociologist Pitirim Sorokin in order to begin thinking its significance.

The second section of *Through Us, with Us, in Us*, on relationality and the cosmos, will satisfy those readers with an ecological bent, and is the natural outcropping of Section I on embodiment. Emblematic of the expansive, broadening direction of feminist and relational theologies, this section begins to treat climate, quantum physics and the earth. June Boyce-Tillman's 'Even the Stones Cry Out: Music, Theology and the Earth' is especially rewarding as a retrieval of music as a holistic tool and metaphor for thinking relationality.

Section III on divine relationality has the potential to most deeply satisfy readers who are anything other than specialists in relational theology. Even for scholars whose commitments are to relational epistemology and ontology, but whose training is classical or historical, Section III may come as a relief, as it is the explanation one was waiting for. Maaike de Haardt's 'Monotheism as a Threat to Relationality' does a wonderful job of reflecting on what is at stake and why so many Western theologians are adopting relational models for doing theology. In fact, it is the one essay in the collection which is to be recommended for undergraduate students and beginning theologians. De Haardt begins by describing two discoveries of dramatic and systemic abuse of daughters by their fathers, including decades of imprisonment, rape, and the birth (and death) of children who were the results of this forced incest. From the particularity and embodiment of this suffering, she

then begins to theorize the function of monotheistic, monogenerative understandings of God who holds power-over the creation and who is understood to be male. It is this God, she rightly cites, who justifies the widespread patriarchal control over and abuse in families. De Haardt then describes the impulse to and the gains to be made from rethinking God as internally relational and multi-generative. Concluding as she does that concepts, metaphors and images – even systems of them – are not themselves violent, one cannot read the essay as anything but generous toward the tradition of classical theism. Although favoring a relational model, de Haardt gives a hermeneutically generous read to the immutable God of divine simplicity, and is all the more convincing a proponent of relationality for having done so.

Jenny Daggers's essay 'Transcendence and the Refiguring of God as Male, the Absolute Same' is perhaps the most troubling piece in this otherwise solidly researched and argued collection. Although she is absolutely correct that transcendence is experiencing a contemporary resurgence – against relational models of God – several of her claims may strike the reader as problematic. First and foremost, her linking of the rise of ontologies of immanence with secularism will be quite a surprise to theologians who consider the rise of immanence-stressing theologies as the resuscitation of Trinitarianism. Far from being the result of secularism, stressing God's presence and relationality is seen by many to be a return to the church Fathers and what was intended by God's self-revelation on the cross. Similarly, Daggers's assertion that transcendence is experiencing feminist resurgence is questionable, given that she must rely almost solely on the work of Maya Rivera, whose own work must hearken back to Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir. Further, Rivera's own development of *relational* transcendence is arguably something wholly other than the transcendence against which theologies of immanence or relationality are themselves developed.

For readers who want more in the developing area of relational theology, *Through Us, with Us, in Us* will be a delightful find. For readers who are just getting up to speed on the state-of-the-debate in theology, the text will be challenging, and perhaps not appear as significant as it in fact is. That Isherwood and Bellchambers have helped to produce a collection of work which takes relationality as a starting point is nothing short of a miracle. Just twenty years ago Catherine Mowry Lacugna was still arguing for the possibility of this sort of theology in her *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. That we can now take relational theology for granted such that multiple projects exploring and instantiating its significance are available is a testament to the paradigm shift which is truly under way throughout the academy – and beyond.

Aimée Upjohn Light
Duquesne University

★ ★ ★

A Theology of Love, Werner Jeanrond, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-64692-7), xiv + 292 pp., pb $29.95

In *A Theology of Love*, Werner Jeanrond offers a generally readable and, yet, challenging examination of the concept of love by tracing the notion within Western culture, mainly through the work of Christian theologians. Jeanrond looks at sources as historically diverse as the Bible to Augustine to the present. Throughout Jeanrond's focus is on finding what the various thinkers have to say about the idea of love and how this leads to a praxis of love. The elucidation of the praxis of love is what focuses Jeanrond's work along with what makes it very interesting and compelling. For Jeanrond, love is not something strictly to be investigated as a thing or something made as much as it is an action built around thorough reflection – a praxis. He argues that a praxis of love will adequately deal with conflict, difference, and otherness through an attempt at love built upon the everyday, mundane experience of belonging. He says that he 'seeks a new world order where all human beings can respect God's otherness as well as each other's otherness and actively explore God's gifts of creation, reconciliation, and community' (p. 44). The goal of his text, then, is to offer an account of love through various Christian sources on what it means to engage in love 'in order to advance our understanding of this praxis [of love] and its demands on our lives today' (p. 9).

The way that Jeanrond goes about exploring the nature of love is through an historical study. The reason that he takes an approach that builds upon the history of the idea of love is because he is aware that all thinking on love is a product of the person's time and place and is within a certain history prevalent in the West. Apart from a chapter devoted solely to St Augustine, Jeanrond moves through many of the major thinkers of Christianity by grouping them together in broad umbrella chapters. So, for example, in his exploration of the concept of love from the Middle Ages into the Reformation, he works to understand how the praxis of love worked to shape the subject as one who loves. Through this approach, he is able to situate the various thinkers and their thoughts on love within a culture and society which allows him the opportunity to examine how these play a role in how people construct the idea of love. Consistently, he examines these thinkers with the question of praxis in the background, searching for a theory that puts their concepts of love into practice. So, again returning to the example of the chapter on the Middle Ages, Jeanrond shows how the theory of love in this context did two things: first, it gained an emphasis upon the subject and his or

her desires in loving while; second, it also narrowed the conception of love to within a strictly Christian worldview that was almost entirely dealing with soteriology. Jeanrond, then, gives an account in each chapter of how his reading of the historical time eventually comes to view love in a way that leads to the next historical conception, not in an Hegelian teleological way, but in a way that is modifying and rethinking what it means to love through the ongoing conversation of theology.

The last parts of the text are an examination of various concrete locations and institutions of love. The previous chapters detail the history of the idea of love to the point of the current context. These last chapters explore how these previous ones have laid the theoretical groundwork for an examination of the institutions and locations where the praxis of love is engaged. In this part of *A Theology of Love*, Jeanrond mainly focuses on institutions and locations that are universally agreed upon to be places of love, like the family and marriage and the church. Within these examples he is able to explore how each is a place where one gets to put love into practice through the learning that takes place as to how one is to love from within the institution. He even deals with issues of chastity and celibacy within these chapters. For Jeanrond the goal of love in all of these institutions is the encounter that comes with belonging and anything that takes away from this – whether celibacy or sex – keeps one from engaging in the praxis of love. Thus, for him, whether one is married or chaste, has children or remains celibate, is in the church or not, the goal is to remove those things that keep one from encountering the other and overcoming otherness and difference.

Jeanrond's text is, overall, a very good introduction into the kind of thinking that one would need to do in order to come to a theology of love. He is focused quite explicitly on Western notions, but this is due more to his area of expertise than a non-awareness of other forms of thinking. Also, he writes in a very agreeable, easily understood way. This makes the text adequate for a large audience; thus, not only academics, but many seminary and graduate students – along with a number of people in pastoral roles – will find this text very helpful. However, this is also a limitation as Jeanrond tends to gloss over some of the more trenchant problems in both the history of love and within the institutions of love that he chooses to examine. On the whole, though, this text is recommended for its style, substance, and ability to make people reexamine how it is that they approach such an important topic within religion as what it means to participate in the act of love.

Nathan Crawford
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★ ★ ★

Bonhoeffer and King: Their Legacies and Import for Christian Social Thought, Willis Jenkins and Jennifer M. McBride (eds.), Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-6333-9), xiv + 302 pp., pb $25

Among the giants of the twentieth century of Christian social thought stand two figures whose legacies are among the most praised and the most contested: Martin Luther King Jr, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This edited volume by Willis Jenkins and Jennifer McBride brings together reflections from various theologians and practitioners on how these two figures might be read together 'in relation to basic questions in Christian social thought' (p. 6), toward the end of aiding communities seeking to appropriate the social legacies of these men. Luminaries such as Emilie M. Townes, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Larry Rasmussen offer their reflections on the common problems addressed by King and Bonhoeffer, looking at how the distinctly different theologies of these two men might yield new answers to familiar problems.

The book proceeds in four sections: (1) historical appropriations of King and Bonhoeffer; (2) King and Bonhoeffers' theological grounds for solidarity and resistance; (3) cultivating communal spaces for putting King and Bonhoeffer's work into action; and (4) practices of peace gleaned from Bonhoeffer and King. The four sections are fairly equal in length, with each chapter approximately ten to fifteen pages, allowing for the volume to provide reflections from a broad range of voices. For as many contributors as the book has, there is surprisingly little overlap with regards to content, allowing for discussion of topics as wide ranging as gender roles in Bonhoeffer and King (Rachel Muers), martyrdom in their theologies (Craig J. Slane), political order and law (Jean Bethke Elshtain), and practical tactics of peacemaking in Bonhoeffer and King (Glen H. Stassen). In many ways, the breadth of the volume makes it suitable as a supplemental text for ethics courses, containing discussion on issues ranging from racism to social ecology to war.

The book arises out of a 2008 joint meeting of the Martin Luther King Jr Consultation and the Bonhoeffer: Theology and Social Analysis groups of the American Academy of Religion. As such, it draws together two distinct sets of concerns and thinkers, producing at times fruitful cross-disciplinary ethical and theological discussions. By incorporating both Bonhoeffer and King scholars, as well as ethicists and practitioners whose work has been centered elsewhere, light is shed on Bonhoeffer and King which is sometimes muted in discussions among specialists. Raphael Warnock's essay is exemplary in this

regard, bringing pastoral experience from Ebenezer Baptist Church (King's own church) to bear on the question of how to preach Bonhoeffer and King.

The various chapters, as is common with edited volume, are written with a varying degree of accessibility. Some chapters might be fruitfully read by the non-specialist, while others require a certain level of familiarity with either the writings of Bonhoeffer and King, their theological traditions, or both. The selection by Richard W. Willis Sr. on the pastoral task and prophetic messages, for example, centers on the practicability of Bonhoeffer and King's legacy. By contrast, the contribution by Bonhoeffer scholar Charles Marsh, which narrates historical developments in Bonhoeffer and King's thought, is informative of their comparative biographies, but assumes too much for those without a theological background to find helpful.

In terms of its subject, the book is without peer, in that it brings together two ethical legacies which continue to trouble and encourage Christian ethics, and in bringing them together, draws out many of their similarities. Both King and Bonhoeffer were engaged in resistance to their own governments in times of war, informed by their theological vision of humanity as unified in Christ. Both King and Bonhoeffer addressed issues of racism in their contexts, speaking powerfully against white privilege in Germany and America. For both Bonhoeffer and King, Christ was at the center of any understanding of activism. Despite their vast difference in social location, the work of Bonhoeffer and King contain startling overlap and grist for conversation.

One of the dangers of comparative works such as these, however, is downplaying the strong theological dissimilarities between Bonhoeffer and King. Happily, the bulk of the essays avoid this pitfall, devoting space in most cases to what distinguishes Bonhoeffer and King. Craig Slane's work on the martyrdom of King and Bonhoeffer is exemplary in this respect, as is Stephen Hayne's essay on the appropriation of theological legacies. At times, however, the discussion of their differences is relatively limited and insufficient; in M. Shawn Copeland's essay, for example, discussion of their differences encompasses two pages of a twelve-page essay. Similarly, in Emilie Towne's essay, tends toward reducing Bonhoeffer and King to instances of a singular tendency to 'disrupt the status quo of their time in their reliance on a strong communitarian ethic' (p. 15), with no discussion of the particularities of either King or Bonhoeffer.

The flaws present in works such as those of Copeland and Townes are in part due to the limitations of space, as each essay is approximately twelfth to fifteen pages, and within the larger scope of the work, relatively minor. When reckoning with two prolific authors, comparisons within such limited parameters are by their nature largely suggestive

and provocative rather than programmatic, inspiring, and awakening rather than systematic. None the less, the volume provides numerous excellent jumping-off points, not only for further discussions of comparative ethics, but for how familiar theological legacies might be re-interrogated for new depths and new prophetic words to our age. The editors, Jennifer McBride and Willis Jenkins, are to be commended for compiling a work with such a wide range of contributors and insights.

Myles Werntz
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★ ★ ★

Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial, Michael P. Jensen, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-52628-1), x + 214 pp., hb $130

A recent, fascinating development on the theological landscape has been a renewed interest in martyrdom and its theological significance. Historical studies by such scholars as Elizabeth Castelli, Daniel Boyarin, Robin Darling Young, and Brad Gregory probe how the martyrs' stories as a discourse of suffering and death shaped early and medieval Christianity. Theological explorations of the contemporary significance of martyrdom have been offered by Craig Hovey, Tripp York, and Chris Huebner. To the latter group Michael Jensen contributes a compelling work on how martyrdom is not a surrendering of one's identity but an active reception of one's identity in Jesus Christ.

The book can be divided into three parts. Following an introductory chapter, Part One is comprised of the book's second chapter. Jensen engages the account of identity and personal authenticity proffered in the work of philosopher Charles Taylor and novelist Salman Rushdie. Jensen concludes that these non-theological accounts of identity have difficulty accommodating the conception of selfhood conditioned by martyrdom. These non-theological accounts would find the martyred self inauthentic (Taylor), if not destructive (Rushdie).

Part Two is the heart of Jensen's argument. In Chapters 3–6, Jensen masterfully uses T.S. Eliot's martyrial drama *Murder in the Cathedral* to frame an argument for a Christian understanding of authentic selfhood informed by Christian martyrdom. In particular, the four temptations (security, power, patriotic action, and honor) presented to Archbishop Thomas Beckett in the first act of Eliot's play present alternative ways of

living that claim to be more virtuous and attractive than the self-narrating of martyrdom.

The first temptation presented to Thomas, which Jensen identifies as intensified in the work of Martha Nussbaum, is a nostalgic vision of a life of simple pleasures in 'the company of familiar and comforting faces'; a safe, secure life within the given limits of existence (pp. 47, 49). The martyr stands counter to this version of the human situation by giving up the assumption of being in control and the desire to seek security. The martyr's faith involves a rupture between new life in Christ and the old self, directing her longing towards the supreme good – God – thereby challenging the temptation to long nostalgically for her identity in the past. Looking forward, the martyr resists the human attempts to secure a kind of consolation which Christ refused, and witnesses to the radical insecurity of earthly things. The martyr's security is eschatological, a hope which gazes toward the ascended Christ expecting his return (pp. 69–72).

The second temptation of Thomas is submission to and collaboration with the political powers. Thomas is tempted to cooperate with royal rule for the pragmatic sake of the common good. Jensen identifies a similar, contemporary temptation for religious citizens to take their place in the 'public square' and work for the common good, provided they speak and act in non-theological ways; 'that they observe a "certain submission" ' (p. 79). This temptation is associated with the democratic philosophy of Richard Rorty. In response to this temptation, Jensen argues that martyrdom has never been the declaration of 'the illegitimacy' of state rule and the positing of an alternative (p. 83). Announcing that all authority in heaven and on earth has a single source, martyrdom enacts the belief that authority on the earth is dually mediated – the ruler has the commission to judge, whereas the disciple has been commissioned to witness (p. 83). The martyr continually reminds the ruler that his power and authority to rule is not self-established but originates with the sovereign God, thereby exposing the contingency of the ruler's claim to the absolute authority.

Thomas' third temptation is to form an 'allegiance between church authority and a baronial group against the crown' for the sake of the possibility of greater freedom and power for the Archbishop and the church (pp. 99–100). The temptation for Thomas, expressed contemporarily by Roger Scruton's philosophy, is to make for oneself an identity through action according to some ideal, in this case, a patriotic ideal of the common good. Obedient to divine narration, the Christian martyr's self-understanding impels her to loyally resist the creaturely structures of power, witnessing to the ultimate power and trustworthiness of God, while also resisting sedition against the ruling authority, or seeking to facilitate regime-change in the hope of a better, alternative government.

The fourth temptation presented to Thomas is to understand the very act of martyrdom as the self-narration of a will-to-glory. In other words, the martyr is tempted to make himself a spiritual hero, exercising 'rule' from the grave in that 'his glorious memory will exude a spiritual power to shape history' (p. 133). However, like Christ in Gethsemane, the martyr offers his will obediently to God's purposes and power. He acts in solidarity with Christ, glorifying God, not himself. By not grasping for honor, the martyr exposes 'the triviality' of human honoring (p. 156). As a truly honorable person in the eyes of God the martyr may be shamed, ridiculed, condemned, and tortured by human society, doing so not for his own glory but in order to witness to the grain of the universe in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

If Part Two attempts to define martyrdom negatively (what it avoids), Part Three positively describes an understanding of self-identity rooted in martyrdom. Specifically, Jensen examines two basic ideas of the narrative logic of martyrdom: temptation/trial and providence. These two themes overlap and converge in the story of Christ. It is the ' "eternal patience" – the *providentia dei* revealed and enacted in the passion and resurrection of the divine Son – that is the mark of the martyred self' (p. 14). The Christian martyr is vindicated not because of her courageous virtue but rather because she places her trust in God's providence, consummated in Jesus Christ.

Jensen's book is a significant contribution to the recent theological literature on Christian martyrdom. Through his interpretation of scripture (the extent to which he scripturally argues for a martyrial vision of Christian selfhood is most impressive), a theological reading of the early Christian martyriological tradition, and his ingenious use and insightful reading of Eliot's play, Jensen successfully retrieves the discourse of martyrdom for an account of Christian selfhood. While he acknowledges that literal martyrdom is a possibility latent in Christian existence, martyrdom should also be considered a form of ascesis that calls Christians to situate one's existence in the world so to (re)narrate the radically new way of life that God has wrought in Christ's kenosis. The only issue I have with Jensen's argument is the omission of a discussion of embodiment, since embodiment is a significant dimension of contemporary discussions of selfhood. Martyrs give their bodies to condemnation, violence, and death. How should an understanding of the martyr's self-narrating of identity include a discussion of embodiment? In placing their *bodies* on the altar of this world in order to glorify God, how do the martyrs narrate an identity of kenotic vulnerability as a fragile temple of God's Spirit?

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★ ★ ★

On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene: Unpublished Lectures and Sermons, Ernst Käsemann, Roy A. Harrisville (trans.), Rudolf Landau and Wolfgang Kraus (eds.), Eerdmans, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8028-6026-2), xxi + 326 pp., pb $30/£19.99

Having initiated the so-called 'new quest' for the historical Jesus in direct response to the work of Rudolf Bultmann, and written substantial works on Pauline theology, Ernst Käsemann is undoubtedly one of the twentieth century's most important and influential biblical scholars. This volume is a collection of hitherto unpublished essays by Käsemann, consisting of both academic lectures and sermons given between the years 1975–1996. It presents a Käsemann whose main themes and theological insights will be familiar to the reader of his other works, yet whose voice takes on a different tone and style due to the nature of the essays as both more informal and pastoral in style.

The book begins with 'A Theological Review' that was presented by Käsemann at the celebration of his ninetieth birthday. This short autobiography tells the story of Käsemann's upbringing and his time as a student studying under famous scholars such as Erik Peterson, Rudolf Bultmann – his eventual *Doktorvater* – and Adolf Schlatter, and then, perhaps the most interesting part of the review, Käsemann's discussion of his work while a pastor in the mining city of Gelsenkirchen and leader in the Confessing Church, which resulted in his being detained by the Gestapo. Out of necessity, Käsemann keeps the review short, covering his life until only his early thirties; and yet, this inside look into Käsemann's personal, academic, and political development alone justifies the price of the book.

The main bulk of the book is split into two parts. The majority of the thirteen essays that constitute Part One, 'Biblical Essays', are dedicated specifically to Paul and the Synoptic Gospels. Thematic essays cover topics such as God's righteousness, justification, freedom, and anthropology in Paul, and the Kingdom of God and the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospels. Three essays are devoted to interpreting Galatians 1.1-3.29. Here, as in his other writings, Käsemann's stress on the importance of God's apocalyptic liberation of humanity from the powers in the event of Jesus Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection fills the pages. Käsemann often speaks negatively about the gentrification of Christianity due to its white, middle-class makeup; and against this influence, time and time again, Käsemann insists that the message of the New Testament is about 'the Nazarene' who 'has appeared in the midst, has descended into the earthly inferno and

takes to himself the victims of demons, and those who protest and demonstrate against inhumanity, revealing mercy and salvation to the poor' (p. 122).

Part Two, 'Church Conflicts', is fifteen essays originally written to form a sequel to Käsemann's *Kirkliche Konflikte*, volume one. These essays are more thematic in nature – although a handful are still on specific passages. Apocalyptic liberation is stressed here as much as in Part One, although Käsemann now stresses more the church's duty in spreading God's reign throughout the earth through acts of kindness, and emancipation to those enslaved, whether spiritually or politically. Luther's emphasis on a god being whatever we place our trust and hope in features prominently – and thus, unsurprisingly, Käsemann targets the 'gods' that he sees the church putting its faith in, be it white, middle-class morality or political order. To quote Käsemann: 'what the church of Jesus Christ should be in our world is a resistance movement of the exalted Lord against all who make God's creation a prison for anyone, near or far, a playground for their selfishness, vanity, and lust for rule' (p. 277).

We are greatly indebted to editors Rudolf Landau and Wolfkang Kraus, and Eerdmans' Publishing for making these essays available to the public. Furthermore, translator Roy Harrisville is to be commended in his attempt to retain Käsemann's punchy, provocative style, an endeavor in which I believe he is successful. Käsemann is more and more becoming a figure – the initiator of this movement, the advocate of this style of theology – rather than a scholar and theologian whose writings deserve the utmost attention. Hopefully this volume will lead scholars and students of the New Testament, and laypeople as well – the book is not written in a technical style – to the wealth of Käsemann's theological writings, which proclaim with this book that 'on the way of Jesus' disciple, one is continually lead beneath the cross and from there indelibly marked' (p. 214).

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★ ★ ★

Twentieth-Century Theologians: A New Introduction to Modern Christian Thought, Philip Kennedy, I.B. Tauris, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-84511-956-0), xvi + 368 pp., pb £17.99/hb £54.50

Twentieth-Century Theologians: A New Introduction to Modern Christian Thought by Philip Kennedy offers a rare and accessible overview

of the most influential theologians within a century that witnessed an unprecedented amount of both human suffering and progress. With clear and concise prose, this book includes helpful summaries of the lives and theologies of select twentieth century theologians. The list includes the prominent and classic figures such as Harnack, Barth, Tillich, Rahner, and Moltmann. In an impressive manner, the text also covers less frequently discussed thinkers such as D. Day and M. Daly. Even more importantly, Kennedy takes great care to offer a global theological perspective throughout the last century by discussing the theology of the Rainbow Spirit Elders of the Aboriginal people, Mercy Amba Oduyoye of Ghana, and Tissa Balasuriya of Sri Lanka. This book serves as a useful resource for the classroom as well as the everyday reader who wishes to gain a greater understanding of theology throughout the past century. With an inclusion of Roman Catholic, Jesuit, Anglo-Catholic, and Protestant thinkers, this book does not emphasize any specific Christian tradition. Those who possess little to no theological education will appreciate Kennedy's indispensable definitions of the most common theological terms weaved throughout the chapters as well as the short glossary at the end.

Kennedy's main project is to set these theologians within the context of the war, famine, disease, and brutal hardship that was all too familiar to the twentieth century. The harsh realities in which they lived deeply impacted their theology. This influence, Kennedy believes, reveals a trend throughout all the works of the theologians discussed. His thesis is clearly stated: 'the greatest theologians of the twentieth century were the most negative' (p. 11). This negativity surfaced in two ways. First, the theologians of the twentieth century were apophatic in that they believed God could only be described using negative propositions. God can only be understood by what He is not rather than what He is. Second, theologians of this time period were 'acutely aware of the bleak and harrowing negativity of human (and animal) suffering' (p. 11). Theologians who found the most reception were those most concerned about the suffering of their time period while simultaneously offering a modest account of one's ability to speak about God. Keeping these two directions in mind, Kennedy evaluates each theologian in the proceeding chapters through this specific lens of negativity in relation to statements about God and humanity.

While much ink has been spilled concerning the theologians of the twentieth century, few books emphasize the particular events within their lives. Kennedy notes that his book intentionally offers 'an impression of the *kinds* of people who articulated theologies in the twentieth century, and the *historical circumstances* that *determined* the ways they spoke . . . texts are always tinctured by their contexts'

(p. 306). This book is not only theological but also biographical. In every chapter, Kennedy offers helpful insights into the lives of each theologian before accessing their theology and key works. As such, this book properly understands that the events and actions of each individual theologian are directly and explicitly connected to their beliefs. This holistic account helps readers to gain a fuller grasp of each theologian discussed. On a minor note, while each chapter contains such an all-encompassing picture of various theologians, they are not altogether random and disjointed. Upon a cursory glance, most might assume that *Twentieth-Century Theologians* is an assortment of separated essays. However, Kennedy subtly inserts crucial transitions and informed remarks that aid the reader in piecing together a narrative of twentieth century theology.

There is only one criticism necessary to mention. Kennedy's 'working hypothesis' of this book is to boldly argue that the greatest problem for theology is human suffering (p. xi). In the third sentence of the preamble, Kennedy ironically writes that 'a theologian is someone who tries to talk about God – always without success' (p. vii). Rather than highlighting the inability of theology to adequately speak about its object and content – the Triune God – Kennedy prefers to maintain that the essential problem for theology is to give an answer for the abused, neglected, and suffering people within the world. Despite this position, Kennedy fails to argue how this is a particular problem for Christian theology in particular rather than all religion in general. Kennedy goes further to warn that in order for theology to be relevant, it must attend to the issues of suffering and injustice that plague humanity. If any theology is 'indifferent to the poor' then it will be 'irrelevant to God as well' (p. 315). Kennedy is right to emphasize the importance of suffering and injustice to the Christian God as witnessed in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the Holy scriptures. However, these concerns are a consequence of theology rather than a condition for its existence. Otherwise, there would be nothing particular about the Christian religion. If the essential concern of theology is human suffering, it cannot rightly be called theology but rather 'theodicy', 'apologetics', or 'anthropology'. When the *primary* task of a discipline is to speak about human beings, it cannot claim to be theology. If theology is to remain true to its definition, it must always stay concerned with tending to what God has said about Himself. Even though one might disagree with Kennedy's basic presuppositions regarding the nature of theology, every reader will find both challenge and benefit from his unwavering concern for the suffering of humanity.

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★ ★ ★

An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations, Edward Kessler, Cambridge University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-5217-0562-2), xviii + 243 pp., pb £17.99

Introducing such an explosive topic Dr Kessler is to be congratulated on the amazing objectivity of his reporting. His accounts are factual, avoiding rhetoric and judgmental assessments. It is a clear, fair, and eirenic presentation, leaving the reader to draw the conclusions. The problems and possibilities of Jewish-Christian relations today can be approached only with a clear view of the historical background, which is itself a minefield.

After a succinct *Introduction*, the minefield begins with the title of the second chapter, 'The New Testament', for one of the problems running through the history is whether a new testament supersedes the older. What, in Christian eyes, is the status of the Jews? Are we still the Chosen People? Is the Law still valid as a covenant? Paul holds that the Jews are dead branches, cut off from the vine, and branches once dead can never be grafted back into the vine. Yet Paul insists that Israel will finally be saved.

A further major problem of the New Testament is that the gospel passion accounts are 'not just a defence of Jesus' innocence but also a prosecution of the Jews' (p. 40). In the following chapter on patristic literature the situation worsens, for in this literature there is no real debate with Judaism; a Jew is 'at best an opponent, at worst a monster' (p. 46), reduced to the diminished state of a witness to the truth of the gospel the Jews had rejected. This situation hardened with the passage of time, issuing in sporadic persecution throughout the middle ages, despite repeated attempts by Popes to protect the Jews. The record of Christian anti-Semitism is factually retraced from the blood-libels, massacres and expulsions of medieval England to the Dreyfus case without exaggeration – indeed, with moderation: for instance, the financial motives which often lay behind persecutions are barely mentioned, and the Russian pogroms of the late nineteenth century are distinctly underplayed. Kessler even excuses some of the worst excesses; he points out that Chrysostom's violent language merely mirrors the conventions of the time, and that Chrysostom uses identical phrases against other, Christian opponents. Hardly any reply to these attacks can be heard from the Jewish side, for fear of retaliation, although there are occasional lively debates. More might have been made of these famous Christian-Jewish Disputations, such as that of Nahmanides at Barcelona in 1263.

One fascinating light in this dark picture is the chapter on the comparison of biblical exegeses of scholars both Christian and Jewish; it

centers on the Sacrifice of Isaac, a passage both important and puzzling in both traditions (pp. 83–91). There is some convergence, both in written texts and in artistic representations, although also different emphases. The Jewish humor of the dialogue between God and Abraham in Genesis Rabbah is very different from the rich typological theology of the Christian considerations. More of this research would have been valuable, both on individual biblical texts and in method, for example, the debt of scholastic theologians, such as Aquinas, to Rashi, Rambam and the Jewish tradition, touched on in pages 112–3. In the other direction, how and by what route did Jewish exegetes of the thirteenth century adopt the four senses of scripture finally crystallized in Christianity by the Venerable Bede?

Notwithstanding such glimmers of light, the story leads inexorably to the Shoah – a term free of the unsuitable religious connotations of 'Holocaust', for which Kessler apologizes, but which he continues to use. The shameful details are passed over with due reticence, for Kessler is more concerned with its effect on current relations. He contents himself with saying that the record of Pius XI and XII is 'hardly a positive one' (p. 134), while reserving final judgment till the archives are made fully available. He points out some positive moves by the Christian churches, although also noting that the mindset of some older German theologians seems to have remained unchanged even after the War. He draws back from the frequently expressed view that the Shoah makes nonsense of any theological view of history, but gives only a brief mention of the attractive alternative on page 143. Can Israel not be viewed as the Suffering Servant of the Lord, still bearing witness to its vocation as the Servant?

In reading the chapter on Zionism and the State of Israel it is essential to remember that the subject of the book is Jewish-Christian relations, not Israel or Zionism and world-politics. This focus must be clearly observed, for Israelis and Jews are not the same thing. Although the figure is given that one-third of all Jews now live in Israel, the policies and behavior of the Israeli government, even in matters of diplomatic courtesies and tax-exemption for Christian religious sites, are at most tangential to Jewish-Christian relations.

More important are the fundamental questions of replacement theology or supersessionism and the issue of mission and conversion. If supersessionism is built into Christianity (especially by the Letter to the Hebrews), despite Paul's insistence on the eventual salvation of the Jews, what is the answer? In a rare expression of personal opinion Kessler himself opts for the solution that there are two Peoples of God (p. 174). Others might opt for one People of God with differences; this, I think, is the solution envisaged by the 2001 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, frequently quoted in the book. It is clearly stated in Catholic doctrine that Jewish faith is already a response to God's

revelation, which means that Judaism and Christianity are partners, although perhaps not 'equal partners' (p. 184). This leaves Christians with two crucial interrelated questions: (1) How can Jews who reject Christ as the Savior be saved by Christ? (2) What of the Christian mission prescribed by Matthew 28.19? Does the command to baptize all nations extend to the Jews? Should a Christian be glad to see the conversion of a Jew to Christianity?

This book does not give the answers, but it helps the concerned reader to struggle towards the answers with an informed background.

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★ ★ ★

Preaching in an Age of Globalization, Eunjoo Mary Kim, Westminster John Knox, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-664-23369-3), xv + 168 pp., pb $24.95

Recognizing the changing context of modern listeners, Eunjoo Mary Kim suggests the need for a new paradigm in preaching that accounts for globalization – a context in which diverse people share common space. She seeks to move preaching away from 'speaker-oriented' approaches and toward sensitivity to diversity by employing a theology of humanization. Preaching from theology of humanization focuses on homiletical theory and practice which helps 'make and keep human life human in the world' by creating space for the other in the act of preaching.

Chapter 1 reviews pertinent literature and suggests that other works have not sufficiently accounted for 'a worldwide web of interconnectedness'. While appreciative of Tubbs Tisdale's contextual work, it 'presupposes that each congregation, as a unique subculture, is an integrated, unified whole' and therefore does not hold up to 'postmodern challenges' of particularity in globalized world (p. 7). And Nieman and Rogers do not 'propose a single method of cultural analysis' because 'no general strategy reaches all listeners' (p. 12). But their 'postmodern meaning of culture' does not 'struggle to identify the unity and harmony among diverse subgroups' (p. 13). However, a 'transcontextual method' honors particularity and recognizes 'interdependent relationships' shared by diverse people.

In Chapter 2, Kim explores how the global context effects revelation. 'The search for truth should be an ongoing conversation . . . because the locus of God's revelation is beyond our boundaries' (p. 21). An insightful analysis of the nature and effects of globalization follows, namely:

neoliberal capitalism, cultural diversity, global climate change, and the advancement of information technology. These four phenomena 'have made the world an extraordinarily complex and yet singular place, with a set of potentially disturbing "flows" and "reflexivity" ' (p. 41). The result is the need for preachers 'to interpret, shape, and help congregations' be faithful to their particular mission and yet live in solidarity with the wider world (p. 42).

Chapter 3 offers a theology of humanization for preaching, noting that it 'must be a public theology and not exclusively a church theology' (p. 44). Thus, one's beliefs should be permeable, for God is present and working within and yet beyond the particular congregation. Making room for the 'other' in one's own faith allows preachers to mediate 'the Christian message more faithfully' and also helps 'listeners broaden and deepen their understanding of the truth' (p. 44). A theology of humanization calls for liberation from de-humanizing forces; communal processes for constructing an inclusive community; solidarity with the otherness of humans and nonhuman creatures; and 'the politics of God' which engage other religions and communities in conversations for justice and peace (pp. 44–54). Preaching from a theology of humanization will seek to form a shared identity; will nurture apperception to discern de-humanizing forces; will consist of a strategic plan for a team-approach to sermon preparation and delivery (pp. 54–63).

Transcontextual hermeneutics, Chapter 4, treats the text and context as 'others' who challenge our prejudices. Three hermeneutical methods for reading 'through and beyond otherness' are proposed. First, an 'interpathic approach' seeks 'to enter the other's world'. This can be done by 'performing' the text with others while preparing a sermon (pp. 70–3). Second, a 'communitarian reading' reads the text in 'an interpretive community . . . in which participants share their identities and life experiences' (pp. 73–7). Third, a 'paradigmatic interpretation' reads the 'Bible as a paradigm' for humanization (pp. 77–80). This hermeneutical approach embraces globalization but reads 'to reform globalism into a globalism of justice and peace' (p. 85).

Chapter 5 deals with 'negotiating diversity' through 'the rhetoric of appeals'. Kim acknowledges that transcontextual preaching is 'a matter of rhetoric' (p. 88). However, she finds 'Aristotelian rhetoric, with its system linking ethos, pathos, and logos', to be 'a direct mode of persuasion'. The concern is that 'persuasion without considering diverse perspectives among the listeners can trigger defensiveness or create a feeling of threat' which makes listeners resistant to the preacher's witness (p. 89).

'The rhetoric of appeals is about working through differences rather than trying to make another person into someone like the preacher' (pp. 90–1). Kim reluctantly allows the term 'persuasion' to be used for the rhetoric of appeals, saying that it should mean a 'persuasion to

consider' (p. 91). Like conversational preaching (i.e. Atkinson Rose), the rhetoric of appeals 'is concerned with "mutuality, equality, connectedness, and intimacy" with the listeners', but it is distinct in that it seeks to offer more than a 'wager' or 'proposal' (p. 92).

A rhetoric of appeals seeks to 'attract' listeners 'by appealing to their aesthetic dimension' (p. 92). By presenting divine beauty, the listeners 'may be stimulated to live an aesthetic way of life' which is ultimately inclusive of difference while faithful to particularity (p. 98). In order 'to make a vivid impression on' the listeners, Kim suggests the use of angles (point of view), common ground, plotted movement, symbolic language and tonality of speech (pp. 98–104). A kaleidoscope provides a metaphor to image how we might embrace movement and plurality while maintaining the unity of a 'single' pattern. The book concludes with four sermons that illustrate transcontextual preaching (pp. 111–48).

While one senses appreciation for the 'turn to the hearer' in homiletics, the theological foundation for her approach would serve as a critique of elements of the New Homiletic. However, despite this alternative foundation, many of the homiletical strategies for Kim's paradigm are components of the New Homiletic – indirection, parables, the use of images to replace de-humanizing images, symbolic language, metaphor, poetics, point of view, and plotted movement (pp. 59, 77–8, 90, 98–100, 102, 141). The difference, it seems, is that indirection, parables, etc., are not 'located' in the person of the preacher who manipulates the congregation toward her own preconceived notion of 'transformation' but are instead rooted in beauty (aesthetics). However, given how postmodernity exposes the imperialistic nature of all discourse, one might ask how what she proposes is, in practice, different from the New Homiletic. It would have been helpful to address this question explicitly given the practical similarities.

This work invites a conversation about theoretical and theological foundations for negotiating difference (which makes room for the 'other') from which to explore the *use* of language – despite the imperialistic *nature* of language. Furthermore, one might even suggest that practical theology has its own internal 'logic of practice' which has resources for the very challenges Kim insightfully articulates.

Regardless, Kim is right. We live at an intersection of various perspectives. How will preachers negotiate difference in an interconnected world? What theological and hermeneutical lenses will serve God's mission in the world? No doubt, her keen analysis of globalization from a transcontextual perspective discloses many of the challenges facing those who seek to witness to their particular faith. And yet in spite of this, she is not pessimistic. For in respecting diversity, she continues to search for ways preachers might transcend it for a world in which human life can be humane.

Not a superficial practical theology, this book treats deeply and systemically the complex issues and yet remains accessible to most readers. As such, it could be used for local church pastors, professors of preaching and seminary students.

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★ ★ ★

Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, on Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings, Peter King (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-521-00129-8), xlii + 267 pp., pb £16.99

This collection of Augustine's works, edited by Peter King, Professor of Philosophy and Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto, forms part of the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. In the *Introduction* (pp. ix–xlii), following a very brief biography, the editor highlights 'Augustine's intellectual development' (pp. x–xvi); in that section of the book the main steps of his learning have been pointed out. It is well known as Augustine's dissatisfaction with Manicheism and Skepticism, and the influence exerted by Neoplatonism, opened the way to the adoption of Christianity, occurred in 386. Augustine deemed the Christian doctrine to be the only right philosophy able to 'offer solutions to problems that pagan neoplatonism was not able to solve' (p. xiv). While the conversion led him to write some works about the relationship between Christian revelation and philosophical questions, after becoming a priest his reflection concerned doctrinal aspects for the most and those problems were discussed by Augustine with philosophical method. This collection of translated writings deals with grace and will, namely two essential points in Augustine's thought as 'the difficult task of reconciling free will with God's grace occupied Augustine for much of his life' (p. xvi). The editor continues his introduction by showing the main contents of the translated works upon which Augustine's vision on will and grace is founded.

Augustinian ethics is a synthesis of Greek and Christian philosophical traditions. Furthermore, we can establish that the whole of Augustine's philosophy is based upon ethics as the intellectual dimension of man culminates in God as the Absolute Truth. In clear opposition to Manicheans, Augustine considers evil as a lack of good, and it cannot be taken as a reality in itself: 'I was neither completely willing nor completely unwilling. So I struggled with myself and was put to fight by myself. This fight indeed took place while I was unwilling, yet it did

not point to a nature belonging to an outside mind, but rather to a penalty belonging to my own (. . .) they (the Manicheans) think that two evil natures and two evil minds conflict in a single person, in which case what they usually maintain – that one is good and the other evil – will not be true; or they will be converted to the truth and will not deny that, when someone deliberates, a single soul is wavering between diverse will' (*Confessions* 8.10.22–8.10.23). Each creature, although to be considered inferior to God, is positive just as a creation by God himself; therefore, evil is a consequence of the divine gift of free choice. In any case, evil is not the origin of the world and we cannot admit in it an unlimited power: 'So too, when eternity offers delight above and the pleasure of temporal good keeps us below, it is the same soul willing the one and the other, although not with a whole will. And so it is torn apart by this weighty vexation as long as it prefers the former on account of truth but does not discard the latter on account of its familiarity' (*Confessions* 8.10.24). According to the supreme Divine design, Christ's redemption is just the solution for that human condition. God is omnipotent and omniscient, but his unlimited foreknowledge does not cancel free will. Thus, each man is fully able to make a free choice in every moment of his life. Therefore, an integration of will and grace is required to make a right choice of the good. Augustine, in order to reply to Pelagius' heresy, strongly affirms that free choice can direct his intention to good or evil, and grace cannot predetermine our actions; in other words, we can accept or refuse Christ's grace. So God lets man act freely as no one can be saved without his own assent. Humankind is at the apex of creation; that is to say, man is the only creature able to act without the necessary influence of his physical impulses. Will is just the ability to act without the necessary compulsion of desires 'so that what we are bidden is to take away from the weight of unlawful desire and to add to the weight of charity, until the former vanish and the latter be perfected' (*Ep*. 157.2.9).

In Augustine's mind, God's grace is essential to achieve happiness and wisdom. The fundamental role played by grace is part of man's relationship with God and Christ's saving function is the core of the divine covenant with human beings. So free will and grace are necessary conditions to gain the moral wisdom in our life. The adhesion to Christ's Word makes man's free will, namely a lower freedom (libertas minor), to be a higher freedom (libertas maior), that is an anticipation of the holy condition in the eternal life. In other words, our freedom originates from God and culminates in Him. To refuse Christ's Grace implies the refusal of that divine illumination which allows our rational faculty to understand the true sense of life. Thanks to the light of Grace, man ascends to God's dimension. Thus, it is part of that divine illumination through which human beings can share God's universal design: 'what lifted me up towards Your light was that I knew myself to have a

will as much as I knew myself to be alive. Thus whenever I was willing or unwilling with regard to something, I was completely certain that none but myself was willing or unwilling' (*Confessions* 7.3.5). Only the acceptance of Christ's message allows man to create that *City of God* in which only the divine graced love founds the heavenly community.

The relevance of Augustine's philosophy is not questionable at all. Notwithstanding all the progresses made by the modern antropological disciplines, the Augustinian vision of man is still deemed to be a milestone and the actuality of his responses to the main existential questions is a clear instance of their greatness. That is a good reason to read his works and appreciate Prof. King's edition, a suitable issue for students interested in that aspect of Augustine's thought.

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★ ★ ★

Male Confessions: Intimate Revelations and the Religious Imagination, Björn Krondorfer, Stanford University Press, 2010 (ISBN 0-8047-6900-1), xi + 298 pp., pb $24.95

In his most recent book on men and masculinity, Björn Krondorfer, Professor of Religious Studies at St Mary's College of Maryland, turns his attention to the literary form of the male confession. Krondorfer chooses four confessants as conversation partners for the project: Saint Augustine, Jean-Jasques Rouseau, Michel Leiris, Calel Perechodnik (a Jewish ghetto policeman during World War II), and Oswald Pohl (a Nazi war criminal and Catholic convert). The most significant interlocutor, however, is the author himself, for throughout the study, Krondorfer inserts short, italicized 'confessions' of his own. The unique style and organization of the book represents an interesting experiment, for the authorial voice dances between intensely personal 'revelations' and the familiarity (and safety) of academic prose. This tension is ultimately what makes the book both interesting and successful.

Male Confessions, Krondorfer writes in the *Introduction*, is about men who are 'trying to give an honest account of themselves' (p. 2). A written confession, or *confessiography*, is an 'attempt at giving testimony to oneself and (imagined) others, an act of becoming a public witness to one's intimate self' (p. 72). Krondorfer, it is important to note, does not argue that confession is distinctly male – although patriarchal power and privilege makes it appear so – but rather, that writing in a confessional mode is a 'gendered activity'. Krondorfer believes that male

confessions are both compelling and important because they reveal potential resources for resisting and even deconstructing imbalanced or oppressive ideals of masculinity. Throughout the book, the author attends to the question of whether male confessions 'reinscribe' social norms or whether they offer resources for resistance to the 'fiction of stoic masculinity' (pp. 98, 134). Krondorfer explores this question through eight chapters separated by three interludes on mirrors, testimony, and tears.

For obvious and significant reasons, the growing field of men's studies participates in a complex and sometimes conflicted relationship with feminism. Has not history been one long investigation of the 'male experience'? Krondorfer admits in summary that male confessions 'suffer from narcissistic fantasies, solipsistic gazing, patterns of blame and self-loathing, misrepresentations of women, and other protective and deceptive devices to facilitate a discourse on the male body' (p. 63). For this reason, at minimum, the exploration of male interiority must always remain cognizant of how even the privilege of the literary form itself has been deprived from women throughout the ages. Further, Krondorfer problematizes the historical dualism that conceives of the female and male body as antithetical, arguing instead that the male body 'is as permeable and liquid as a women's body (except for menstruation, lactation, and the fluids of childbirth)' (p. 63). It is striking that the common failure to 'reflect on the body as a *male* body privileges the male experience as normative' (p. 84). Krondorfer argues that although the male body is always *in* a confessional text, it is rarely *present* as 'a consciously gendered body' (p. 80). Rather, there is a '*non-absence*' of the male body, a spectral influence resting between presence and absence (p. 80). A careful reader of male confessions will become attuned to the problem of the non-absent body by exploring with what is revealed and what remains veiled in male confessional writing (p. 223).

Early in the book, Krondorfer admits that the four areas of men, religion, gender, and confession are each 'complicated and highly contested' terms and that he does not seek 'to clarify . . . definitional authority' for any of them (p. 3). He intends a fluid use of terminology that will be free from debates about method, which are beyond the scope of the present study. At times, however, this results in a lack of clarity for the four terms, particularly with regard to gender. Additionally, while we cannot expect an author to do everything, *Male Confessions* lacks a sustained focus upon what the confessional mode looks like in the contemporary media-saturated societies. It is not that this theme is missing *per se*, but that it could be fruitfully expanded to engage the social-ethical implications of various manifestations of public confession today. In the first part of the book, Krondorfer warns of modern media's 'new coerciveness in the name of individual

freedom and sexual liberation' (p. 57), and the Internet is treated, though briefly, in conclusion. For instance, Krondorfer writes, 'On the Net, there is seemingly no limit to phantasmic self-representation' (p. 236). Internet confessions, on his account, can be understood as a 'hybrid' of oral and written forms. He warns that the evolving technology is a 'seductive and coercive power', the full implications of which are still unknown (p. 236). Krondorfer thus makes a compelling and pertinent connection to our networking age, but leaves this reader, at least, frustrated that more was not done on the theme. Perhaps the passing concluding comments are the seeds for a future work on present forms of the confessiographical tradition.

Male Confessions is well suited for students and scholars of cultural studies and religion.

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★ ★ ★

From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology, Sang Hyun Lee, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-9668-9), xvi + 200 pp., pb $24

As the late modern era advances, the scope of Christian vision in the increasingly globalized theological marketplace has experienced a corresponding expansion. With Christian theology being confronted by Eastern epistemologies, efforts to welcome Asian voices, Christian or otherwise, into the Western theological discourse have been deliberate and, in some qualified measure, commendable. It is unsettling to note, however, that as Asian thinkers have found a home in the theological West, their diasporic counterparts have continued to be underrepresented. While a number of explanations can be posited as to why explicitly Asian American theologies have been few, with the progressive evolution of postcolonial studies (with its talk of hybrid identities, border transgressions, and cultural negotiations), Asian American theologians have come upon a theoretical language through which they can create theologies for their unique contexts. Sang Hyun Lee's *From a Liminal Place*, while harboring no overarching postcolonial agenda, borrows heavily from this recent programmatic trend in Asian American theology, while simultaneously avoiding postcolonialism's predilection for esoteric theory-speak, grounding his work instead in a more traditional foundation, that is, theologies and theological motifs more classical in bent. Although Lee's Asian American agenda, then, is typical of his contemporaries, the theologies he employs in moving

toward a genuine Asian American theological expression are largely untried.

Lee's theological *prolegomena* rests in the assertion that God is liminal, that is, in 'the situation of being in between two or more worlds' and thus 'located at the periphery or edge of a society' (p. x). For Lee, God is a God of structural transgressions; this notion is clearly extant in God's Trinitarian activity (namely the Father's giving of his divine self to the Son) and the Son's self-emptying in the incarnation event (the Son, of course, who himself was a liminal, marginalized Galilean). From this, Lee concludes that if God's economic activity does in fact describe his immanent nature, God must be liminal in his Godself.

What is the significance, however, of God's liminality and how does it relate to the Asian American Christian's condition? Responding to these questions is the task of Lee's greater enterprise. First, Drawing directly from the work Victor W. Turner, Lee states that liminality produces a trifold effect: (1) liminality's indeterminate nature creates a spirit of openness to the new; (2) liminality's divorce from structural boundaries allows for a spirit of *communitas*, that is, intimate, unself-conscious, egalitarian relational encounters; (3) liminality generates sensitivity to the marginalized condition of the oppressed that produces the capacity to constructively critique centrist powers through prophetic acts. All of these attributes are on display, Lee suggests in Chapters 2–4, both diachronically in Christ's ministry and synchronically in God's Trinitarian nature. Lee spends his fifth chapter making particular mention of the liminal nature of Christ's atoning work. He writes that Christ's death on the cross, in addition to acting as a payment for sin, was a moment of 'infinite' liminality that produced a corresponding 'infinite' *communitas*, a fellowship capable of embracing all of fallen creation. Alternatively stated, a liminal moment occurred on the cross when Christ, abandoned by his disciples, forsaken by God, and in a self-emptied state, left his divine pedestal to open up a new liminal space of reconciliation. This reconciliatory space, Lee posits, is open to all of humanity – particularly for the marginalized, regardless of gender, race, or socioeconomic status – who dare transgress the boundary between humanity's fallen sinfulness into Christ's forgiveness and reconciliation. Liminality is a constituent force within God's redemptive nature.

Second, Lee relates God's liminality to the Asian American condition. Through a brief outline of the Asian American experience in Chapter 1, Lee concludes that Asian Americans exist liminally – not truly at home in Asia or America and interstitially outside of any dominant social structure. It is on account of this liminality that Asian Americans are in a strategic position to emulate and carry out the liminal work of the Trinitarian God. Lee here draws from Jonathan

Edwards, suggesting God's purpose for creation and history is to temporally 'repeat' the Godhead's actualized internal life of liminal intra-Trinitarian fellowship in the material world. Strategically speaking, then, Asian Americans, unlike most mainstream Americans, are uniquely situated to perpetuate the divine activity of liminality as their social condition mirrors Trinitarian social life. It is at this point, from Chapters 6–8, that Lee further explores the intersections of Asian American identity and Christianity, as well as sets forth a desired social and ecclesial praxis oriented around Asian American liminality. This includes increased egalitarianism and concerted efforts to practice intentional liminality by extending opportunities for ecclesial and racial reconciliation and *communitas* – a notion Lee covers further in Chapter 9. Then, after a brief eschatological meditation on human participation in God's reconciliatory work in Chapter 10, Lee concludes his book by exhorting Asian American Christians to embrace their peripheral positions within society, as well as the concomitant possibility for liminal creativity, and to pursue reconciliation in all facets, even with their oppressors.

Lee's *From a Liminal Place* is a unique theological composition. As previously mentioned, much of contemporary Asian American theology has either (1) rejected traditional theology as a intrinsically unjust and in need of deconstruction or (2) occupied themselves with reformulating traditional doctrines in a more redemptive and inclusive light. While there is much to commend in these reconstructive processes, such theologizing often requires many lay Asian American Christians to make theological leaps they might not be comfortable with, especially considering conservative nature of most Asian American churches. Lee, however, maintains his contemporaries' desire to see justice and the right to self-determination granted to the Asian American community, yet manages to do so while remaining theologically conservative. Lee, in this sense, has written an Asian American theology for the Asian American church as it stands today, not simply for the academy or more liberal leaning Christians. For this he is to be lauded. His ability to collate traditional theologies for the sake of a progressive theological task is impressive and his writing is crisp and concise. While this brief volume is not without its minor impediments (one would like to see Lee work out a more robust, specific, and consistent atonement theory), *From a Liminal Place*'s central thesis, that God is liminal and calls Christians to repeat his liminality in creation, institutes a new sense of fellowship and solidarity between the Judeo-Christian God and his marginalized Asian American followers.

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★ ★ ★

The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach, Michael Licona, Intervarsity Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8308-2719-0), 718 pp., pb $40

Books on the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus continue to abound in popularity, not only within the scholarly community of theologians, but also among educated readers who are unafraid to ask themselves the deep seated questions concerning the foundations of their faith. Perhaps no other subject related to Christian origins has been discussed more than Christ's historical resurrection from the dead.

Michael Licona's *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* contributes to this already well-ploughed field by expounding upon the philosophical methods that professional historians have generally employed in attempting to retrieve the shape of the past. According to Licona, 'So how does my research differ from previous treatments? In the pages that follow I will investigate the question of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection while providing unprecedented interaction with the literature professional historians outside of the community of biblical scholars on both hermeneutical and methodological considerations' (p. 20). Because biblical scholars seem to be ignorant of the philosophical methods used by secular historians, Licona's opening discussion in the philosophy of history and historiography constitutes his greatest contribution to the field of resurrection studies.

Licona discusses the extent to which the past is knowable, how historians gain access to the past, the importance of bias when reconstructing the past, the role of consensus, who must shoulder the burden of proof, and the point at which historians are epistemically warranted to make a plausible inference to certain hypotheses. Licona's reason for introducing these components of historical method is to help readers understand their own assumptions and methods when analyzing the relevant historical evidence.

Not only is there a personal factor that encumbers the historian in her study (e.g. she may not have the necessary skills, be ignorant of vital evidence, and allow bias to affect her), but there are radically divergent thought patterns, concerns, and communication systems embedded in other cultures and times that impede her investigation as well. Although this may lead one to believe that it is impossible to know anything about the distant past, Licona assures his readers that this is simply not true. Professional historians continue to do their work; what they do works; and although they must deal with probabilities, this by no means entails that historical knowledge is impossible. In fact, the constant rewriting of history is based on the assumption that we can

know something about it. Historians *qua* historians, *can* successfully transcend sociocultural and other conceptual frames of reference by projecting their minds onto the landscape of the past to retrieve something informative about it.

The remainder of the book is concerned with gathering the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection and the various positions that skeptical scholars such as John Dominic Crossan, Geza Vermes, Gerd Lüdemann, Michael Goulder, and Pieter Craffert have taken. According to Licona, none of these scholars' explanations can be responsibly filtered through generally established historiographical principles. Instead, Licona opts for the resurrection hypothesis, which he holds is the best explanation of the available evidence.

Although Licona has undoubtedly produced one of the best apologetic defenses of Jesus' resurrection, other scholars have focused their energies on the importance of developing the virtues to justify basic Christian faith. In this view, a salubrious, virtuous person will be more likely to come into contact with truth than those who rely on the intellect alone. It is unfortunate that Licona does not exploit the importance of the virtues given the failures of modernism and its dream of achieving a purely neutral perspective when assessing competing worldviews. Scholars who are sensitive to the postmodern critique argue that the attainment of objective truth is the consequence of authentic subjectivity. Another similar downfall consists in Licona's lack of reference to personal experience. What makes belief in the resurrection plausible for persons living today? Christ was not merely resurrected 2000 years ago; he is said to be the living Lord of today. Notwithstanding these minor glitches, Licona's book is a storehouse of valuable information about the current state of resurrection apologetics. Recommended for every thinking Christian who has ever wondered about the plausibility of his or her faith.

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★ ★ ★

From Political Theory to Political Theology: Religious Challenges and the Prospects of Democracy, Péter Losonczi and Aakash Singh (eds.), Continuum, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-4411-8744-4), xxv + 201 pp., pb $34.95

During his state visit to Britain in September 2010, Pope Benedict XVI expressed concern at the increasing marginalization of Christianity,

even in nations noted for tolerance, arguing that religion is a guarantee of, rather than a threat to, authentic liberty. The unexpectedly positive reception which his words received in the British media indicated a certain resonance with contemporary anxieties. Against this background, this collection of thirteen essays represents a welcome contribution to an increasingly salient area of scholarship.

The editors have crafted a volume elegant in structure and logical in narrative flow. The first section comprises four chapters on liberal political theory and the space and role assigned to religion therein. The central thinkers here are Rawls and Habermas, with Gábor Gángó's chapter on Hannah Arendt offering an intriguing, if somewhat dissonant, counterpoint.

Sebastiano Maffettone makes a spirited defense of John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* as a framework within which religious belief can be accommodated. In setting out the main arguments in favor of (and some of the main objections to) the 'overlapping consensus' and the discipline of 'public reason', his essay provides an excellent launch-pad for the rest of the volume. Indeed, his salutary reformulation of Rawlsian liberalism as fundamentally a question of reciprocal respect, whereby citizens 'must take into consideration what other citizens can reasonably understand' (p. 21) seems less exclusionary than other formulations of this criterion and allows greater latitude to religious citizens who wish to appeal to ideas of natural law and the common good.

Eszter Kollár's essay focuses on one particular objection to the 'overlapping consensus', pointing up the apparent paradox between prohibiting the resort to religious or comprehensive doctrines in the public arena, while asking citizens to affirm this consensus on moral grounds from within those very same doctrines (p. 23). Her nuanced argument for the practicability (and necessity) of this locates the *moral* defense in the conception of the person. Although the conception of the person here invoked is unmistakably Kantian, it provides sufficient area of commonality to command agreement from religious citizens, at least those of Abrahamic faiths. While religions with radically different conceptions of the person might still find this problematic, the debate has at least been moved beyond the snare of secular-liberal circularity.

Daniele Santoro continues the interrogation of the feasibility of the Rawlsian equilibrium, focusing on its potential fissiparousness when hard cases of reasonable disagreement arise. Invoking both republican aretaism and the Kantian idea of 'reflective judgment' (thereby nudging Rawls closer to Habermas?), he cogently argues that virtues such as reciprocity, truthfulness, open-mindedness, and commitment to the public good, facilitate the use of analogical reasoning in adjudicating situations where formal procedures appear inadequate.

The middle sections of the book identify cavities within democratic theory before moving on to a consideration of the possible corrective

and regenerative functions of religion. Herman de Dijn describes how, unlike early liberal theory which emphasized equal recognition *notwithstanding* differences, modern pluralist societies must *recognize* differences which are central to identity if fundamental equality is to be realized. This being so, there appears to be no reason to exclude *a priori* religious people from the discussion over the proper relationship between law and morality. In addition, religion helps give content to 'civil religion', needed by a political community to 'express its relationship with the beyond of politics' (pp. 69–70), for example, at times of national disaster.

In a nuanced reflection on the nature and centrality of tolerance in pluralist societies, Peter Jonkers warns against a mistaken understanding of this virtue as passive neutrality. If citizens ignore the question, they remain blind to the intolerable and incapable of distinguishing between that which should and should not reasonably be tolerated (p. 81). Paradoxically, the experience of the intolerable, while threatening tolerance, by defining the limits of what should be tolerated, simultaneously helps to safeguard it.

In his penetrating critique of the corrosion of communal solidarity by relativism, András Lánczi argues against the self-sufficiency of liberal democracy. Unless it is buttressed by structures and values above and beyond itself, its continuation cannot be anything other than precarious. This has led Habermas, for instance, to positively recommend the welcoming of religious belief into the public sphere so that the jejune discourse of modern democracy may be reinvigorated by narratives which embrace the 'complete experience of human existence' (p. 95).

Following on logically from Lánczi's essay, Walter van Herck discerns a fundamental misconception of religious belief in much of liberal theory. Notwithstanding the undoubted importance of individualism in modern society and the concomitant emphasis on the value of autonomy, citizens do not *choose* their worldviews. One may choose values *within* a worldview, but one does not, indeed cannot, choose those highest values which constitute that worldview. Drawing an illuminating comparison with Wittgenstein's theory of language, van Herck argues that it is only in the public space of a community, defined by values and traditions, that one makes choices and these choices will always be second-order in nature.

The final section assesses a number of examples of 'political theology as political theory'. András Csepregi looks at the theologies of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and István Bibó and their respective relevance to recent political developments in modern Hungary. Peter Losonczi elaborates the implications of Johann Baptist Metz's theology for a revitalized democratic politics of solidarity and compassion. Alexander Rosenthal's account of Reinhold Niebuhr's Augustinian realism provides a good example of the sort of 'politics without dénouement'

which Theo de Wit recommends in his essay. Niebuhr identified the central Enlightenment error as one of anthropology. By redefining evil as ignorance, which was, supposedly, eradicable through education and scientific advancement, a dangerous naivete became embedded in the liberal project. Augustine's theology, with its acute insights into fallen human nature (and the consequences of this for political life) offers a treasury of prudential wisdom for democratic theory in the twenty-first century.

When reviewing a book which offers such diverse and provocative insights, it is almost churlish to bemoan the failure to provide even more of the same. Yet, for this reviewer, there are two lacunae in the collection. The first is the absence of any discussion of the 2004 dialogue between Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas, which surely exemplifies the sort of fruitful engagement between faith and secularity which this volume extols. Moreover, Ratzinger, as Pope Benedict, has made critical dialogue with modernity and the evangelization of culture central themes of his papacy, making this absence even more conspicuous. Secondly, while there are occasional references to Muslims (usually *qua* immigrants who challenge Western societies to accommodate or assimilate them), apart from a brief mention of Qutb and Khomeini and a short paragraph on Roy's analysis of the cultural deracination of Islam in Europe, there is no discussion of how Islamic scholars have conceived and theorized the relationship of faith and modern democracy. One final quibble is the failure to adequately define the key term 'political theology', a phrase which, to many Roman Catholics, is problematic.

These cavils notwithstanding, this is a fine collection of essays which will receive a grateful readership among political philosophers and theologians alike.

James Carr
University of Bristol

★ ★ ★

Martin Bucer's Doctrine of Justification: Reformation Theology and Early Modern Irenicism, Brian Lugioyo, Oxford University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-19-538736-0), x + 256 pp., hb £47.50

Advocates of irenicism can quickly earn criticism from the very people they seek to unite. This seems especially true of debates about the doctrine of justification. The 'Joint Declaration on Justification' put together by Roman Catholics and Lutherans in 1999 resulted in new

divisions, as some Catholics and some Lutherans believed its authors had sold out their respective strengths. This mirrors Luther's outrage and papal fury following the Diet of Regensburg in 1541. There Catholic representatives Johann Eck and Johann Gropper met Protestant leaders Philip Melanchthon and Martin Bucer, under the oversight of papal legate Cardinal Contarini. Even though the parties agreed on the first articles presented for debate – including article 5, on justification – Luther eventually dismissed Bucer as a sorry attempt 'to be a mediator between me and the pope', and a papal consistory claimed that the whole process was invalid. One of the main authors of these articles had been Bucer, the former Dominican who became a reformer of Strassburg and Calvin's mentor. As Brian Lugioyo shows in this book, sixteenth century princes and churchly leaders already whispered about Bucer's suspiciously irenic love of dialogue. Calvin wrote, 'I am grieved that Bucer is incurring hatred from so many people. Because he has the best of intentions, he is more confident than he ought to be' (p. 16). Scholars are still suspicious of Bucer's plasticity. As W.J. Bouwsma once said, 'the singular agreeableness of Bucer calls for explanation'. Brian Lugioyo's answer is a meticulous examination of Bucer's doctrine of justification over time, which shows that Bucer's love of dialogue and his understanding of justification were consistent and related, and indeed grounded his irenic approach to reform.

The book begins by setting up the center and periphery of Bucer's views. His commentary on Romans (1536) centers on the doctrine of justification by faith, which is the foundation on which he builds his ecclesiology. In other words, pastoral issues and liturgical practice are peripheral to the real issue of reform, which is justification *sola fide*. Bridging the doctrinal center and the periphery of practice is a Greek word which appears in the very (long) title of the commentary: Bucer's commentary will be written with *èpieíkeia*, reasonably, fairly, for the sake of the common good (pp. 30–4). This commitment to good will is the basis for Bucer's love of dialogue. Lugioyo's fine-grained account of the structure of Bucer's thought in the 1536 commentary shows how an impetus to dialogue is also supported by Bucer's cognitive psychology. Original sin affects body and mind, but the persuasion of the Holy Spirit allows knowledge and frees the will to choose true goods – to know the good, for Bucer, is to do the good. Thus, those inbreathed by the Holy Spirit are cognitively led beyond intellectual faith in God's existence to trust in God's love, which then ignites the believer's love of God and the neighbor. The results of this process are necessarily good works.

Lugioyo's chapter on justification in Johann Gropper's *Enchiridion* (1538), a catechetical handbook for educating preachers, is, to my knowledge, one of very few English examinations of this 'moderate' Catholic cardinal's early thought. For Bucer, justification is prior to

ecclesiology; it 'was the basis for recognizing others as Christians, [and] the right use of the sacraments was the basis for recognizing other groups of Christians as churches' (p. 136). For Gropper, the emphasis was the other way around. Ecclesiology grounded justification. Sacraments were the visible signs of invisible grace, the ordained instruments for both forensic declaration of God's pardon and perfection of the weak rightousness of believers with Christ's perfect righteousness. He and Bucer could agree, however, that the formal cause of justification was not human righteousness, but God's mercy and grace alone. Such agreement allowed both to hold to article 5 of the Regensburg book. In a wonderfully lucid chapter, Lugioyo follows the complex history of Bucer and the statements about justification made in a series of conferences and colloquys from the 1539 Colloquy in Leipzig to the Diet of Regensburg in April 1541, before closing with a patient analysis of the different versions of article 5, 'On the Justification of Man'. Contrary to other historians, Lugioyo shows that, salted with the principle of *èpieíkeia*, the discussion resulted in an article consistent with Bucer's long commitment to justification by faith alone, of which the cause is God's grace alone – even though the participants cashed this out in different terms.

Those interested in how to apply these debates to current ecumenical discussions often want to know whether Bucer or Gropper held a view of 'double justification', or whether they hold a forensic view of justification. But there already exist superficial syntheses of these concepts. The great merit of Lugioyo's book is to firmly set such concepts within the context of Bucer's thought structures; the interested reader should go to the book, rather than find a conclusion here, in order to appreciate how these concepts are embedded in priorities and commitments of the day.

This book is tightly argued and elegantly organized, and it raises questions that are less criticisms than further avenues for research. First, how do Bucer and Gropper use the medieval and commentary tradition? While Lugioyo does a splendid job of selecting just enough from his sources to sketch the 'thought structures' of his subjects, those very thought structures were – as he hints in places – profoundly shaped by ancient authorities and church fathers, as well as Dominicans authorities. Lugioyo recognizes Bucer's motivation to write commentary based on the concensus of the fathers, a discussion which fills the ample pages of the *Romans Commentary*. We meet the Socratic dictum 'to know the good is to do the good', but historians will be convinced that much more must be relevant to comparing Gropper and Bucer. Second, how did Bucer read his Bible? A Romans commentary is an exegetical task, although Lugioyo's energy is focused on the results, not the process, of this exegesis. Surely he did not simply come up with a systematic theology, a 'thought structure',

without wrestling with the text? Others have begun this sort of study. What does Lugioyo have to say about it?

In any case, Lugioyo already succeeds at two levels. Not only does he show that Bucer's political moves were grounded in a deeply held commitment to a particular way of understanding justification by faith alone, but Lugioyo's own work is an insightful exemplar of how careful textual analysis is an effective solvent for cleaning stained reputations. Hence he establishes a firm basis for ecumenism with integrity. Understanding the good is at least a first step to doing the good. The book will be tough slogging for those who are not already interested in the doctrine of justification; nor is this introductory material for understanding sixteenth century politics of reform, or even sixteenth century intellectual methods. Yet with lucid prose, a solid index, careful footnoting, several appendices of key texts translated into English, and careful copyediting, this is a major clarification of a central dialogue in early Reformation history and theology.

Richard J. Oosterhoff
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★ ★ ★

Against Atheism: Why Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris Are Fundamentally Wrong, Ian S. Markham, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-4051-8963-7), x + 162 pp., pb $24.95

Does God really poison everything? Is God an unreasonable delusion? Is reason the end of faith and its enemy? Is God truly not great? Is religion the source of all the world's evil? Does science have the answer to everything?

These are some of the questions raised by the writings of the new evangelical atheists. Markham's book examines the ideas of three of the most prominent fundamentalist atheists – Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris.

These atheists are described as evangelistic because they boldly attempt to persuade others of the truth of their beliefs. They are described as 'fundamentalist atheists' because like the Christians who wrote *The Fundamentals*, they assert positions that they believe are 'uncompromising truth'. Those positions include the belief that 'science is incompatible with belief in God', and that 'religion is deeply destructive'. The difficulty Markham sees with these fundamentalist atheists is that they 'do not even try to understand their opponents', and that none have seriously 'studied theology' (p. 7).

In writing this book Markham worked very hard to understand 'the arguments of the fundamentalist atheists' (p. 8). Markham applied the methodology of Saint Thomas Aquinas who attempted to find and clearly state the strongest arguments against his beliefs, and then looked for the 'hinge argument' which would explain how his position 'is the correct one' (p. 8).

Markham used this method because he, like Aquinas, feels an obligation to discover truth. 'If God is, then God must be the author of all truth' (p. 8). To know the truth all ideas must be fairly studied, explored, and examined. This is the methodology of Markham's book.

Markham begins by accurately laying out the main arguments of Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris. First these atheists believe that the concept of God is incoherent because of inconsistencies between the descriptions of God and the realities of the world – like evil's continued existence if God is all powerful. Secondly many Christians appear to have no reasons for the truth of what they believe – no persuasive arguments for God's existence. Thirdly atheists believe that God was necessary for a dark and ignorant pre-scientific world, but is irrelevant in today's modern scientific age. Fourthly, atheism provides a more healthy and well-balanced world-view than does religion. Fifthly Islam is an especially evil religion. Sixth, bringing up children in any religious faith 'is an act of child abuse' (p. 23). And finally religion produces irrational practices.

Markham compares the atheistic philosophies of Hitchens, Harris, and Dawkins with that of Fredrick Nietzsche. For Nietzsche God is dead. There is no God. Everything has radically changed including truth, morality, and moral discourse. Nothing of the religious past can remain. In Markham's view this is what Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens have not done. They still engage in moral discourse using ideas influenced by religion. Measured against the atheism of Nietzsche they fail to be good atheists.

The trio of atheists are challenged to learn the language of faith so that they can see and understand more than just an atheistic view of life. Markham invokes the universal history of human religious experiences which argues for a transcendent cause. The moral dimension of life, the existence of love, music and art can also be understood as reasonable reflections of the creator God.

Markham's biggest challenge to these evangelistic atheists is in the area of science since they maintain that science and religion are incompatible. Weaving the narratives of religion and science together, Markham shares a brief history of God's work in an evolving creation which culminates in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The mathematics and physics of the 'Anthropic Principle' provide a scientific explanation of the exceptional 'order that makes life possible' and 'suggests strongly that we [human beings] were always

intended' to appear on planet Earth (p. 69). This 'Anthropic Principle' differs from 'intelligent design'. Dawkins, a biologist, rejects the ordered findings of the 'Anthropic Principle' in favor of a 'multiverse theory' (p. 70). Markham writes that Dawkins' multiverse theory is 'unscientific' and is very similar to 'forms of creationism that Dawkins abhors' (p. 73). *Against Atheism* posits the fact that modern 'physics is definitely faith-friendly' (p. 78).

Against Atheism wrestles with difficult biblical texts in order to provide reasoned arguments for religion. Markham believes that atheists fail to understand religion because they are not aware of the processes of knowing, nor do they study religion.

What is known begins in a local place, culture, and time and moves to a wider area. God's evolutionary creation processes took eons of time. So did the process of revelation in the texts of the Bible. Markham sees Christian revelation as different from revelation in Islam and Judaism. Christian revelation is centered in a person – Christ, whereas Islam and Judaism see God's revelation in a written text. This difference provides Christianity with more flexibility as it deals with changing world realities. For Markham Christian orthodoxy means 'one should be open' to change (p. 101). In deference to the dogmatic certainty of the fundamentalist atheists, Markham encourages 'provisionality' in religious faith (p. 142).

These fundamentalist atheists are getting wide press currently because 'of their fear of Islam' (p. 105). 'Islamaphobia' is an integral 'part of this sudden resurgence of atheism' (p. 117). *Against Atheism* provides a brief introduction to Islam and a balanced discussion of its beliefs in contrast to those who misuse Islam to justify jihadist terror or who believe it to be an evil religion.

The clear, reasoned, understandable summaries of Islam and Christianity and the good they engender counters the charge that religion is a poisonous and unreasonable delusion for these faiths have spiritual and historical substance.

Markham wrestles with the charge that suffering indicates God's absence by noting a 'part of the Christian response' to suffering is the fact that 'God Almighty suffered and died' and rose again to enable human beings to love others, and to give the hope of life 'beyond the grave' (p. 118). Human sin is the reason why even religious people at times do bad things.

Against Atheism refutes the belief that religion is in decline and that secularization is the wave of the future. 'Religion is part of the future' (p. 134).

Against Atheism joins a growing list of books written from a religious perspective which wrestle with the atheistic positions of Harris, Dawkins, Hitchens and others – among them Anthony Flew's *There Is A God*, and Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath's *The Dawkins*

Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine. Flew and Alister McGrath are former atheists. McGrath, a prominent Christian theologian, also has a degree in molecular biophysics.

Markham encourages people of faith to listen to the challenging critiques of atheists and to engage them for much of value 'can be learned', shared, and clarified in a respectful exchange of ideas (p. 134). Religious and non-religious people wanting to learn more about atheism, a religious response to atheism, and the connections between science and religion should read this book.

Armand J. Boehme
Trinity Lutheran Church

★ ★ ★

Is God Just a Human Invention? And Seventeen Other Questions Raised by the New Atheists, Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow, Kregel Publications, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8524-3654-3), 304 pp., pb $16.99

This book is part of the growing Christian literature that interacts with the influence of the New Atheists – Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and others – who are openly and vocally hostile to religion in general and Christianity in particular. They are individuals who 'are on a crusade against religion' (p. 10). However the New Atheists do not represent all atheists. In fact several of their fellow atheists (Thomas Nagel & Michael Ruse) have written 'some of the strongest criticisms of' the New Atheists (p. 10).

The authors of this book desire to engage the New Atheists 'in an accessible yet rigorous manner and from a distinctly Christian perspective' which would enable people to 'make up their own mind after considering the evidence' (p. 11). The authors see the New Atheists' argumentation falling into two areas – the *scientific/philosophical* and *moral/biblical*' (p. 14).

Invention is divided into two parts. The first part contains articles which address the scientific and philosophical challenges to the Christian faith. The second part contains articles which respond to the moral and biblical questions raised by the New Atheists. Each chapter or article is about ten pages in length and opens with a quotation from an atheist. These chapters attempt to accurately lay out the argumentation of the New Atheists and counter that argumentation from a Christian perspective. Every chapter has a concluding two-page section, authored by scientists, apologists, and philosophers, entitled '[why it matters]' (p. 30). Suggestions for further study and reading

are given at the end of each chapter. The book has three appendices which list resources for further engagement with the subjects treated in the book, deal with doubt, and defend the veracity of the New Testament.

Invention was written to promote 'reasoned and mutually respectful conversation' and constructive dialogue about faith and unbelief (p. 13).

Evidence that *Invention* accomplishes this goal is testified to by one of the endorsements for the book found on its back cover. This endorsement is given by David Fitzgerald, an atheist activist and author. In endorsing this book, Fitzgerald wrote that its authors 'ask questions that deserve to be discussed between believers and their atheist friends. I hope this book will be a springboard for that dialogue. I, for one, want to debate it with them'.

The book examines the New Atheists' charge that religious faith is irrational, delusional, nonsensical, and lacking in evidence. *Invention* gives evidence to show that Christianity is a religion that utilizes rational thought and argumentation. The charge that Christianity and science are totally at odds with one another is addressed. *Invention* views naturalism as a 'scientifically oriented worldview that denies the existence of God and the soul', and is intrinsically atheistic. Naturalism and theism are in conflict with one another 'not science and Christianity' (p. 37). Evolution, the origins of the universe, the beginning of life on this planet, and why the universe is habitable are all studied using reasoned argumentation including the universe's intelligent design. The New Atheists' denial of miracles leads the authors of *Invention* to include an examination of the reasonableness and evidence for Christ's miraculous resurrection. The denial of the existence of the human soul is based on the New Atheists' purely material view of the world. *Invention* counters with evidence that human beings are more than just physical bodies.

The New Atheists ask this question, 'Since God doesn't exist . . . why do so many people believe?' The New Atheists, especially Hitchens, answer that question by stating that God is just a human invention. This idea comes from Freud. Religion is understood to be something that comforts human beings. With Freud, the New Atheists assert that beliefs which comfort human beings are inherently 'false' (p. 122). The validity of Freud's projection theory which posits the non-existence of God is questioned since he never psychoanalyzed 'people who actually believed in God' (p. 123). This has led one psychology professor to write that Freud's interpretation is 'unsupported by psychoanalytic theory' and 'clinical evidence' (pp. 122–3). It is stated that Freud's projection theory can cut both ways. If religious beliefs are simply a projection of the 'need for security or a father figure', then one can use the same reasoning to say that 'atheism is a response to the human desire

for freedom to do whatever one wants without moral constraints or obligations' (p. 123). This book argues that God is neither an illusion nor a human invention. The question of the 'God gene' is also examined (p. 125).

The second part of the book takes up the biblical and moral arguments of the New Atheists. They believe that religion is dangerous, the source, or one of the sources, of almost all of the world's evils, and that the existence of religion and religious people should no longer be tolerated (p. 143). *Invention* admits the reality that some have misused or abused religion for other than religious purposes just as some have misused atheism. However, atheism (the total absence of religion) will not produce a kinder, gentler world where 'greedy people will become generous, angry people will become merciful, Jerry Springer will be cancelled, and everyone will support PBS and listen to NPR' (p. 137). The human heart is the problem. It is sinful. And it leads Christians and atheists to do bad things. Secular humanism and atheism place their faith 'in the inherent goodness of humanity' (p. 142). Christianity reflects the view evident throughout history, that human beings are broken, sinful, and do bad things. *Invention* posits the thought that one of the most effective means of offsetting evil is religious faith and argues for the validity of religion's place in the public square.

McDowell & Morrow's book also addresses the New Atheists' assertions that God 'expects us to keep slaves' (p. 148), that hell is God's divine torture chamber, that God is 'a divine sadist' (p. 165), and that God is an 'evil monster' who enjoys genocide (p. 172).

The New Atheists believe that 'religious faith is both the result and cause of dangerous sexual repression' (p. 185). After setting forth the New Atheists' arguments, *Invention* makes the case for the biblical view of sexuality. Several studies are quoted which conclude that 'Christian men and women in monogamous marriages are among the most sexually satisfied people on the face of the earth' (p. 190). The joy of these married Christians is a direct result of the fact that they do not 'have to worry about' the many dangers associated with sex outside of marriage (pp. 191–2).

Invention engages in reasoned debate as to whether people can be good without God, on the problem of evil, whether religion truly poison's everything, and the differences between Jesus and a 'flying spaghetti monster' (p. 238). In the book's conclusion, the authors encourage their readers to weigh the evidence presented and to answer for themselves the question as to whether God is or is not a human invention.

Armand J. Boehme
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★ ★ ★

Eucharist: A Guide for the Perplexed, Ralph N. McMichael, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-03229-4), 176 pp., pb £14.99; (ISBN 978-0-567-03228-7), 176 pp., hb £50

Was another book on the Eucharist needed? It has to be acknowledged that a lot of books about it have already been written. What does this new one add? It gives a personal but well-informed view. It also takes a line – on the whole a high-ish church line, which approaches the Eucharist with devotion and respect, and which is keen that his readers should understand and enter into the complex nature and meaning of the sacrament. His love of his subject shines through, and it is that which mostly justifies this new book, given that it is so far from being the first in the field.

Ralph McMichael has the pen of a ready writer. He has produced a full and very readable account of the place, content and spirituality of the Eucharist. Inspired by Louis Weil, he now he writes for *his* students, who have fostered further his love of his subject, and with whom, now, he seeks to share his insights and enthusiasm. His is a very up-to-date, contemporary approach and follows the main lines of current thinking.

He addresses his subject with great love, and full technical details. He assumes no expertise in his readers, except that to be found in the familiarity of a regular worshipper. So after an introductory chapter (in which 'gaze' is a key word – suggestive of a contemplative approach to his subject) six chapters follow, each of which teases out in detail an aspect of the liturgy: tradition, presence, sacrifice, church, life and theology.

The chapter 'tradition' describes the basic shape of the liturgy. (Interestingly, Dix does not appear in the bibliography.) He starts with the early accounts, biblical and other, and describes such texts as we have, starting with the Didache, and such references as there are in the New Testament. 'Presence' follows, and I thought there was a particularly useful unpacking on page 41 of what this word means in the Eucharistic context. 'Sacrifice' is a thorny subject, about which historically Christians have not seen eye to eye; but again, eirenically, McMichael draws things together and presents the relatively converging thinking of our own times. As he ties the Eucharist with baptism, he moves from description to discussion to resolution.

In Chapter 4, the intimate connection between the Eucharist and 'Church' is argued with passion. They give meaning to each other. In passing I was sorry that his translation of 'Sursum corda' (p. 101) saw it as an exhortation rather than an ecstatic statement of fact. (Our hearts are on high! – Yes! We have them in the Lord!) But on the same

page – perhaps he, or I, was getting tired so far into the book (and I think it could have been shorter) for it is surely a slip – he ties together the Marcan and the Lucan words from the cross. Don't they represent very different understandings of the event?

But such are tiny quibbles in a grand survey – even grander in the final chapters, 'Life' and 'Theology'. McMichael's love of his embracing subject shines out. I hope his students – and his other readers too, for he deserves them – will get this far. It is a detailed and devout story he tells, and it would be a shame if only the nerds battled on to his conclusions. The blurb on the back cover tells how 'the need for a guide both to [the Eucharist's] history and meaning becomes more and more urgent'. Perhaps. But it is a subject which has rarely lacked attention – and certainly not in recent years. This writer's contribution ties together the various departments of theology which historically may have been done in different rooms. And he has done so with passion and insight.

John Armson
Herefordshire

★ ★ ★

Reconciled Humanity: Karl Barth in Dialogue, Hans Vium Mikkelsen, Eerdmans, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8028-6363-8), xiv + 280 pp., pb £19.99/$30

Hans Vium Mikkelsen offers in his *Reconciled Humanity: Karl Barth in Dialogue* a valuable contribution to contemporary Barth scholarship. Mikkelsen aims at putting the Swiss theologian into dialogue with contemporary issues in theology by engaging his work critically with a wide number of conversation partners. His particular points of focus are three classic areas of Christian doctrine: revelation, theological anthropology and atonement. The result is not only a critical engagement with Barth's work, but also a constructive approach to questions of modern theology.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, preceded by a preface and a list of abbreviations and including a list of acknowledgments as well as a helpful bibliography and index at the end. Chapter 1 functions as introduction to the project as a whole, the remaining chapters are topically divided, covering revelation (Chapters 2–4), anthropology (Chapters 5 and 6), and Christology and atonement (Chapters 7–13) respectively. Useful cross-references to different chapters throughout allow for an organic reading of the study as a whole.

In Chapter 1, Mikkelsen introduces his main topics for discussion, as well as some of his conversation partners who come from a variety of

backgrounds and time periods, including, for example, Hegel, Buber, Girard and Frei. This moves seamlessly into the first major part, examining Barth's doctrine of revelation. Mikkelsen first establishes Barth's doctrine as being formulated in opposition to natural theology (Chapter 2), before moving on to Barth's understanding of the Bible (Chapter 3) and pointing to a 'two-way dialectic', where, 'the Bible is not only able to enlighten the reader . . . but the reader . . . is also . . . able to enlighten the Bible' (p. 40). In Chapter 5, Mikkelsen points to the objective and subjective side of revelation. He argues, on the one hand, that Barth's doctrine of revelation is, on the objective side, strongly linked with his understanding of election and atonement. On the other hand, Mikkelsen suggests that Barth is, with regards to the subjective side of revelation, closer to Schleiermacher than Hegel.

The second part turns to Barth's theological anthropology. Chapter 5 offers a dialogue between Barth and Buber, considering human beings as creatures of God who are determined by their relation to God, to self and to the other. Providing a bridge between Chapters 5 and 6, Mikkelsen examines the question of human freedom, and the fallen character of the human being, before turning in Chapter 6 to an overview of Barth's understanding of sin and nothingness. This entails an excursus on the debate between Barth and Brunner on the relation between God the Redeemer and God the Creator and concludes that the question of sin in Barth cannot be solved on a theoretical, but only at practical level: 'as God's partner the human being is asked to fight against nothingness' (p. 141–2).

In Chapters 7–13, the third main part of the book, Mikkelsen discusses Barth's doctrine of Christology and atonement. Chapter 7 serves as introduction to the theme by examining Barth's redefining of the dogma of the two natures of Christ, based on the Chalcedonian formula. Mikkelsen subsequently moves in Chapter 8 to a discussion of the covenant motif, linking it with the two states of humiliation and exaltation, as well as federal theology. As further aspect of the atonement, Chapter 9 turns to the topic of judgment. Mikkelsen uses René Girard's theory of mimetic desire to shed further light on aspects such as substitution and solidarity, underlining the centrality of Jesus Christ, who is, 'substitute for both God and human being' (p. 200). Chapter 10 discusses Barth's reformulation of the double outcome of election which rejects a spatial and chronological separation of salvation and damnation. Mikkelsen also offers a discussion of the punishment and wrath of God (Chapter 10), criticizing Barth for overemphasizing God's freedom to the extent that God becomes unknown. This is followed in the next chapter by an argument for the interrelated character of Jesus' death and resurrection. In the final discussion in Chapter 12, Mikkelsen draws together different aspects of the preceding analysis, underlining once more Barth's importance as dialogue partner in contemporary theology.

Mikkelsen offers a lively and engaged investigation into major themes in Barth's theology. Written in an accessible and clear style, the study introduces a range of conversation partners for Barth, 'both to open Barth's theology so that it can interact with other ways of practicing theology, and to get some tools through which Barth's theology can be criticized in a constructive way' (p. 10). Simultaneously, Mikkelsen pays careful attention to nuances pertaining to content and language in Barth's works. While the choice of dialogue partners is commendable, it could also be seen as slightly restrictive, as they do not include for example, a Roman Catholic theologian. In addition, one might be slightly taken aback by the recurring presentation of ideas and concepts in numbered lists. On the one hand, these are undoubtedly helpful in covering many aspects of a theme. On the other hand, these lists occasionally fall into the trap of not being explained in great detail and are therefore missing facets of a particular topic. Finally, the volume would have benefitted from a more detailed consideration of Barth's broader corpus besides *Church Dogmatics*.

None of these minor criticisms should distract from the constructive proposal formulated in Mikkelsen's study for a fruitful engagement with Barth's work. *Reconciled Humanity – Karl Barth in Dialogue* successfully shows, 'how vital a dialogue partner Barth is for modern theology' (p. 262). The book is strongly recommended to anyone interested, either as participant or as observer, in questions of contemporary theology.

Sven Ensminger
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★ ★ ★

Barth Reception in Britain, D. Dedil Morgan, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-03186-0), viii + 320 pp., hb $120

Although Karl Barth did nothing less than reshape the theological landscape in Britain, this reception has received surprisingly little attention. D. Dedil Morgan addresses this void by offering what is now the largest English language study on this subject. The project is organized chronologically, spanning primarily from 1925 through 1968, and along national and ecclesial lines.

Nearly the first half of the book focuses on the earliest phase of Barth reception during 1925–1933. Morgan begins in Britain with Adolf Keller, a man who was both personally acquainted with Barth and deeply sympathetic with his theology. As Keller discovered this new theology of 'crisis' and 'dialectic', he was quick to describe and

disseminate these ideas to the Anglo-American theological scene. Through this initial exposure, he paved the way for the broader reception which would follow.

Morgan moves next to Scotland and focuses on the responses of John McConnachie and Hugh Ross Mackintosh. These thinkers by no means accepted Barth uncritically, but they saw in him an intriguing passion for Reformed theology, including both a strong emphasis on God's transcendence and the need for God's word. While Barth's acceptance in Scotland is generally known, Morgan then highlights the largely unknown and quite positive reaction to Barth in Wales. When liberalism and Hegelianism became powerful forces, they were not challenged by a conservative evangelical movement but rather through the introduction of Barth's theology, especially through J.D. Vernon, E. Keri Evans, and J.E. Daniel.

In English Nonconformity, Barth's exposure did not make a significant impact among Baptists or even, quite surprisingly, among Presbyterians. He did, however, prove to be important with the Wesleyans and even more so with the Congregationalists. Although the challenges of the Victorian age had led Congregationalism into a state of enlightened liberalism, the countermovement of 'Orthodox Dissent' created a context in which Barth's thought could take hold. The works of P.T. Forsyth and Nathaniel Micklem played an essential role in this regard.

In the Church of England, Barth's early impact was quite limited. Aside from the positive appraisal offered by C.J. Shebbeare, the modernist milieu tended to create negative reactions. Interestingly, while Barth's theology had the greatest affinity to the evangelical school, only Allan John Macdonald responded positively at that time. Among the Anglo-Catholics, J.K. Mozley and Edward C. Hoskyns were the most significant scholars to have positive encounters with Barth.

Having examined this initial phase, Morgan begins to trace the developments of these receptions with a slightly quickened chronological pace and with a more rapid movement between these various contexts. In England, a student of Forsyth named F.W. Camfield became an important voice for Barthian theology. Also, Hoskyns influence continued to grow, especially through his translation of the 1922 edition of Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans*. More generally, the focus in Barth reception in Britain became increasingly colored by the rapidly changing political context in Germany and the corresponding responses of the different strands of the German church. While most viewed Barth and the Confessing Church as being in the right, the still shadowy knowledge of Nazism allowed for mixed reactions.

The mid through late 1930s brought opportunities for more direct engagement with Barth. This initially came through the translation of additional works by Barth into English, particularly the translation of *Church Dogmatics* I/1 in 1936. This was furthered when Barth himself

visited Britain to give the Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen in 1937 and 1938. Barth also became more established through new literature on his theology, in England by Hoskyns and in Welsh Nonconformity by Ivor Oswy Davies, J.E. Daniels, and T. Ellis Jones.

During World War II, the Welsh Congregationalist Daniel T. Jenkins arose as the dominant advocate for Barth. Aside from his own books and articles, he co-edited a monthly journal with Alexander Miller called *The Presbyter* which became a forum for numerous lively discussions about Barth. However, Barth also came under fire from both liberals such Hywel D. Lewis and evangelicals such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Cornelius Van Til. When his debate with Emil Brunner was translated into English in 1946, even Jenkins himself had a mixed reaction.

After the war, Jenkins took up a teaching position in the USA and new Barthians like T.F. Torrance and Alec Whitehouse rose to prominence. Likewise, in 1948 *The Scottish Journal of Theology* was founded which quickly became the primary forum for discussions about Barth in the English speaking world. Barth even began to make an increased impact on biblical scholarship, as was exemplified by the journal *Biblical Theology* which was founded in 1951. However, he also found new sources of criticism such as the 1952 Gifford lecturer Brand Blanchard and his quite critical commentator E.L. Allen.

It was also during this time, as Morgan explains, that Barth's challenge to Bultmann's demythologizing program began to be felt in Britain. These issues were first introduced by Ian Henderson and Ronald Gregor Smith, two Scottish Barthians turned Bultmannian. Therefore, the challenge to Bultmann's new existential form of liberalism, and particularly his eschatology, came instead through T.F. Torrance and Alec Whitehouse. Despite all this, Barth and Barthians like T.F. Torrance faced strong opposition from conservative evangelical such as those in Inter-Varsity Fellowship.

During 1956–1968, despite the challenge posed by the secular theology of scholars like John Baillie, A.M. Ramsay, and John A.T. Robinson, Barth's theology continued to demonstrate that its significance was secure. T.F. Torrance and Geoffrey Bromiley's project of fully translating the *Church Dogmatics* was critical in this process. Also important were the host of new works which sympathetically interpreted Barth's theology, most notably those of T.F. Torrance, Daniel T. Jenkins, and Herbert Hirschwald. Morgan then concludes his study with a summary of the works on Barth produced in Britain during 1968–1986.

Barth Reception in Britain is a much-needed and well-executed study. Since the most critical gap in this area has been the reception of Barth in Wales, this 'exercise in Bangor theology' proves to be precisely what was needed (p. viii). Moreover, despite the rather meticulous nature of this material, Morgan still manages to write with a lucid and engaging style. In addition to this work's primary function of filling the void in

the literature on Barth reception *in Britain*, it can also be fruitfully read as a commentary on *how* Barth has been received more generally. While some liberals have dismissed Barth as a pathway to dead orthodoxy and some conservative evangelicals have dismissed Barth as a pathway to heterodoxy, Morgan's account demonstrates that Barth's more patient readers came to a quite different conclusion. Barth pushed beyond dead orthodoxy, 'enlightened liberalism' (p. 66), and even the 'compromise between orthodoxy and modernism' (p. 151) to 'a modern enlightened orthodoxy' (p. 223).

If this work has a defect it is that its impressively detailed account sometimes lacks a desirable degree of synthesis and analysis. In these cases, readers may be left wanting more cohesive and comprehensive conclusions. All in all, however, while this work may be primarily intended for a scholarly audience, it should be enjoyed by all who are interested in English language Barth studies and contemporary ecclesial life in Britain.

Brian D. Asbill
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★ ★ ★

The Incarnation of the Word: The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo, Edward Morgan, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-56703382-6), 191 pp., hb $120

In this work, Morgan weaves together investigations in three of Augustine's best-known and most important works to tease out insights about his theology of language. Morgan's thesis is that, for Augustine, language and its sociality are the primary mediums through which God relates to us and transforms us. His examination begins and ends with *De trinitate*, but loops through *De doctrina cristiana* and *Confessions* before returning to where he started.

As Morgan understands it, in *De trinitate*, Augustine reflects on how the engagement between mind and language moves us toward God. Human speech is used as an analogy for the incarnation of God in Christ (the Word made flesh). But in order to understand this process more fully, Morgan turns to *De doctrina cristiana* which he sees as a 'textbook' account of how language – especially scripture and preaching – form a bridge between God and us.

His three-part exploration of *De doctrina Cristiana* contains some fascinating insights. Morgan reveals how language is ultimately eschatological, drawing us toward our fulfillment of life in God through

conversation with God about our embodied and social existence. When understood rightly, God's words to us in scripture and the church's proclamation shape our very identity – which is also linguistic and social in character. Coming to understand God's words – and our own – involves a process of sanctification which draws us deeper into the life of God. This process of formation is social – dependent upon Christian community. We cannot love God without loving others; we cannot know love without being loved by others.

Morgan uses Augustine's *Confessions* to exemplify the sanctification process within Augustine's own life. Augustine's searching for God – and being sought by God – demonstrates the deeply social and linguistic character of redemption. For example, it is in the substantial words and humble life of Ambrose that Augustine begins to see God's truth and beauty. Morgan adeptly shows how, once fully surrendered to God, Augustine is finally able to speak to God as a whole person. Augustine's habit of babbling is transformed in the context of his relationship with God; Augustine chatters away to God in delight. Conversion entails a change in speech about oneself before God in whom our identity is securely established. Barriers to carefree conversation with God are thus removed.

Morgan then brings the reader full circle back to *De trinitate*, arguing that the other readings reinforce the ideas found there. Language is the bridge between human and divine; language exists in the context of sociality; both are necessary to point us to God. While language is limited, we *can* come to understand God in part, just as we understand ideas like justice by encountering a person, like the apostle Paul, who lives these ideals to such an extent that his words inspire us to seek it. The encounter with God mediated through language transforms us into what we are meant to be.

This work should be a valuable resource for some theologians. Those reflecting on the problems language poses for the discipline of theology, as well as for apologetics, will find much of value here. Morgan's understanding of how language in the context of sociality works to reveal ideal concepts as well as the divine person undermines deconstructionist projects. His understanding of language in the context of sociality as a bridge between humanity and an unchanging God challenges social constructivist approaches as well. But the mysteries of God and consequent tension between hiddenness and revelation which serve to draw us in deeper offer little ground for epistemic arrogance. Similarly, this book may help theologians considering Augustinian insights on the Trinity. Finally, those considering the dynamics of conversion and sanctification may also find engagement with Morgan and Augustine helpful.

Morgan's writing is lucid; his arguments clear, succinct, and persuasive. His intended audience is already familiar with Augustine's works

under investigation. Unfortunately, this book is not priced for the casual student, but those theologians reflecting on the theology of language will find this monograph useful. Recommended for seminary and major university libraries.

Glenn M. Harden
Baker College

★ ★ ★

Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation, 2nd edition, Craig L. Nessan, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-6326-1), 178 pp., pb $20

The focus on the church's mission in a post-Christendom context continues to bring to the surface new questions about the church's identity and the need to reflect on that identity within a theological framework. Craig Nessan's second edition of *Beyond Maintenance to Mission* supplies a helpful resource to this growing conversation on the missional components of congregational leadership, practical theology, and pastoral ministry. As Professor of Contextual Theology at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Nessan builds upon his first edition by articulating a 'theology of the congregation' that revolves around two central foci: identity and mission (p. xii). His primary thesis is that 'Christian congregations in North America are uniquely situated to serve as "centers of mission", both ministering to the needs of their members and carrying forth the gospel beyond themselves to their communities and world' (p. xii). Allowing theology and praxis to inform one another mutually is at the heart of how Nessan believes congregations may build upon the foundation of worship and how they may actively engage in vital missionary outreach to the world (p. xii).

Nessan structures his argument by outlining a model of congregational life that is centered in the worship of the triune God. As he states in the opening chapter: 'all of a congregation's identity and mission is grounded in what we profess and enact at worship'; 'worship is given central place in this theology of the congregation' (p. 7). Therefore, all the rest of congregational life needs to be understood as serving this core: with respect to identity by faithful practice of prayer, teaching, life in community, and stewardship; and with regards to mission by evangelizing, making global connections, building ecumenical partnerships, and engaging in social ministry (p. 7). Taken together, these nine components offer a comprehensive and dynamic approach to congregational ministry. As Nessan puts it, they offer the nine key criteria to

measure and develop wholeness in ministry, with worship the thread tying them all together (p. 11).

After describing his basic 'model' of a theology of the congregation, Nessan moves on to offer the 'method' by which leaders may engage in the kind of contextual theology he envisions: listening (p. 154 ff). Utilizing insights from Douglas John Hall, Tex Sample, and Robert Bellah, Nessan puts forth insights into how leaders may ask the right questions about congregational life in a North American context and how they might go about listening to the multiple stories involving congregational life, cultural situation, and biblical word (p. 17). All three of these stories intersect as leaders discern the Spirit's movement amidst the warp and woof of congregational-cultural-biblical life settings (p. 23). And yet, according to Nessan, it is the mission of the Holy Trinity that undergirds the theology of the congregation (p. 29). Speaking out of his own Lutheran tradition, Nessan instructs readers on how they need to pay attention to God's own activity in the sending of the Son and to the Holy Spirit's movement in the shaping and guiding of the church (p. 30). Thus the *real presence* of Christ in Word and Sacrament forms the basis of congregational identity and mission (p. 30); the real presence of God's instruction and exhortation through the Spirit is crucial if the congregation is to thrive (p. 36).

Nessan's emphasis on the centrality of worship to congregational identity and mission provides several points for reflection. First, Nessan's provocative chapter on worship as 'imagining the kingdom' supplies a refreshing basis for recapturing the power of the imagination in pastoral leadership. While others, like Walter Brueggemann and Craig Dykstra, have lifted up the importance of the imagination in terms of leadership, Nessan rightly connects the power of the imagination to the life of worship: to imagine is to enter into an alternative world that can profoundly shape and alter the ordinary world (p. 41). Imagination rests at the heart of ritual (p. 43). We are at the same time those who can imagine and those who actually receive the kingdom (p. 45). The interplay of these two factors engages both leaders and congregations in a powerful and life-changing ways. Nessan's work invites more study in this area.

Second, related to this point is Nessan's appropriation of the language of epiclesis. By the very invocation of God's presence, we enter into 'kingdom reality' (p. 45); that is, the very mood of worship is one of epiclesis, invoking and imploring the Spirit of God to come and enliven us by its presence (p. 47). This is why worship is the single most important factor in forming Christian identity: worship mediates God's energy that transforms congregations into centers of mission (p. 49). Thus the church's 'one long epiclesis' cannot be separated from the church's practice of *paraenesis*, or instruction (p. 49). Worship and making disciples go hand-in-hand.

And third, with these above points in mind, Nessan's book raises important questions about the immediate challenges facing the church in a post-Christendom context. Using Loren Mead's 'apostolic paradigm' as a tool to understand our current ecclesial-cultural situation, and seeing the relevance of Bonhoeffer's use of a *disciplina arcane* (literally 'secret discipline') for the making of disciples, Nessan's work helpfully illustrates the significance of how the church in a pluralistic, often non-Christian world, needs to reconstitute its identity and initiate persons into the way of discipleship (p. 73). In short, there is an urgent need to recover the mystery or otherness of the Christian faith as evoked through the practice of an arcane discipline (p. 73). Such awareness can assist the church in a time of cultural transition. It can also assist in raising the right questions (p. 81).

Nessan's book is timely. The theological framework within which he operates is refreshing. Although this reviewer would have liked to have seen more emphasis placed on the 'evangelizing church' as an 'initiating church', there is still a great deal Nessan's boo does to connect worship with disciple making and reaching out and learning to speak the faith. He nicely outlines how all the various components of identity and mission 'fit' together. He is very good at drawing the ministerial connections to the Trinity and Incarnation. This alone is worthwhile.

Nessan's book provides much food for thought among those who are currently seeking to discern the signs of the times and find solid theological substance for ministerial reflection. In addition, it supplies a much needed correction to the missional and emergent church movements that often get wrapped up in technique or trends. His work definitely can be used in seminary classes in the areas of missiology, congregational studies, practical theology, or pastoral ministry. As a second edition, it creatively reveals the kind of pastoral and theological wisdom we all wish more churches will come to embody.

Andrew D. Kinsey
Franklin, Indiana

★ ★ ★

Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity, Dermot Anthony Nestor, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-01297-5), xii + 276 pp., hb $130/£70

In recent years, constructivist and circumstantialist perspectives have come to dominate the ethnic analysis and identification of the *actors* found within the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures and, in particular, those people that have come to be known, albeit arbitrarily, as 'Israel'.

While a Sociological approach will give a maturity to the reading of the Hebrew Scriptures (in that it highlights a political reality of [a given] *Sitz im Leben*), a social constructivist approach indicates that it is all too easy to become complacent about the ethnicity of a specific/named group of people, for it not only limits the already subjective evidence produced by the text, but it also raises questions from the moral and political dimensions which also challenge any antimonies left behind other interpretations and previous investigations of ancient Israel.

In this piece of research, Nestor aims to present an epistemological, as opposed to an ontological, approach to the Hebrew Scriptures, which breaks the malaise in the study of ethnicity and has given a poor account to the story/*geschichte* about the emergence of ancient 'Israel'. Instead he hopes to illuminate the political, social, cultural, and psychological processes used to transmit a portrait of legitimized ethnic and cultural status by recognizing a more viable scenario. Using cognitive perspectives that break with the substantialist tradition, he encourages a revision of our understanding of what we have come to know as 'Israel' and shows that it is in the recognition of the performative and reifying potential of these poor categories of ethno-political practice that disqualifies their appropriation as categories of social analysis.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century the concept of 'race', more so than 'ethnicity', emerged in a number of different guises to become the principal mode that dominated the conceptualizing of human diversity, concentrating primarily on the physical and cultural boundaries that created parity/disparity between the social, cultural, and political life. This concept was certainly significant as a means of classifying human variability; however, its attempt to categorize ethnicity in this manner loses some credibility as it appears to serve too much of a nationalistic agenda which legitimizes certain political aims differentiated by biological difference.

Archaeology also has certainly often tried, without much success, to attach an identity to the creators and owners of the artifacts it locates. While such artifacts certainly offer some evidence of settlement and lifestyle, they do not necessarily offer access to ideational norms of behavior and therefore tell us little about the true nature of the 'race' that became known as 'Israel'. On the other hand, theoretically, as members of any ethnic group are characterized by ideological descent, we should not therefore necessarily dismiss how an archaeological label might represent ethnic groups and perhaps also what such reveals about social mobilization.

A person's membership of an ethnic group and the ethnic boundaries such membership would lead to, offers a key to the internal cognitive structure of the (cultural) identity it also represents. As such, it is an epistemological, as well as a tangible reality, about people in their own (social) world, who question their own social construction(s) and

experience by means of their immediate surroundings, and whose ethnicity cannot simply gleaned by ontologically attaching identity to an ancient monument. While personal, social, and cultural identity might be somewhat objectified in *things*, culture itself can never be reduced *a priori* and materially to any singular meaning or association. In this manner, ethnicity is not a thing but a perspective on the world, objectified through its material form and encountered through a multifaceted generational process.

This is clearly an important text, shrewdly perceptive in content, informative in every detail, and offering a new perspective for sociological investigation of the biblical material that would be of interest to biblical scholars with an interest in ethnicity and *Sitz im Leben*. This is also a complicated book, not least by the author's encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject, but with a use of vocabulary that is almost certainly inaccessible to the lay-reader and a highly academic content which is clearly for a specific audience whose appreciation of the topic would certainly be at postgraduate level. This being said, Nestor's grasp of the topic would not go without interest and I would not stray from recommending this book to scholars open to a change from the more traditional readings of Israelite history which limit cultural identity to a simplistic interpretation of the four roomed house or collared rimmed jar, for such would indeed tell us very little about how a group truly made sense of their social world.

Benjamin Bury
University of Birmingham

★ ★ ★

Hospitable God: The Transformative Dream, George Newlands and Alan Smith, Ashgate, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-7546-6560-1), vii + 251 pp., hb £55

Scholarship on the theology and practice of Christian hospitality has become a cottage industry. Most studies emphasize the demands of individual hospitality this work by George Newlands and Alan Smith focuses on hospitality's risks and benefits within the inter-religious and trans-cultural spheres of human rights and international policy. Despite their sometimes unwieldy digressions and often un-integrated cataloging of other theological positions, Newlands and Smith contribute significantly to our understanding of how of Christian hospitality flowers in the political realm. Never denying how quickly virtue can degenerate into vice, the book frankly acknowledges the risks and

abuses associated with practicing hospitality. For Newlands and Smith, it is from faith in a hospitable God that practices of hospitality issue.

The authors acknowledge that religious communities and thinkers have often been inhospitable and persecuted individuals and communities who did not share their beliefs. Yet, Christians also have a rich history of hospitable figures and communities. Even amid the Protestant Reformation, they see Reformed theological writing as one that developed in dialogue and engagement with the 'opposing' Lutheran and Anabaptist groups. (This reviewer finds some of these engagements to be bitter polemics against the other rather than hospitable treatment of the other.) They begin sketching a portrait of divine hospitality of God in dialogue with a host of Christian thinkers, and here their secondary references often overwhelm the reader. Making these references footnotes would have provided greater clarity to the authors as they build their considerable constructive case.

Moving on from Christian theologies of a hospitable God, the authors examine hospitality in both non-theological social practices and non-Christian theological traditions. While attempting an overview of select religious and cultural traditions, one cannot help but think that the brevity of these overviews seem to betray the book's argument for a deep and real engagement with the other. The short section on Islam, for example, contains references to an unpublished lecture in Princeton, New Jersey, but lacks substantial engagements with canonical Islamic texts. The book argues for hospitality and respect for others traditions, but than engages in cursory sketches of non-Christian texts and traditions. If the authors want to establish the norm of hospitality across religions this chapter fails to do these traditions full justice. In contrast, their discussions of hospitality in literature seem insightful, but un-integrated.

Newlands and Smith next offer an unflinching account of how evil and suffering can be connected to a lack of hospitality. Regardless of what their religious traditions might teach, the authors note that humans can be both good and evil. They engage in a summary of Marilyn McCord Adams' *Christ and the Horrors* showing how evil challenges the portrait of God as hospitable. They also explore Richard Dawkins' assertion that, since God does not exist, there can be no Divine guarantor or motivator for human hospitality other than as a psychological delusion. Noting the potential for ambiguity inherent in hospitality, Newlands and Smith finally turn to their main concern, namely, the ways in which hospitality can affect the global struggle for human rights. The lack of concern for hospitality in human rights discourse builds upon Newland's earlier book, *Christ and Human Rights.*

The fourth chapter turns from concrete analysis of rights to notions of postmodernism. Yet again the authors engaging a vast amount of secondary material that would have been better relegated to footnotes, thereby allowing their constructive case to be more concisely advanced.

In the course of just six pages, they cite John Millbank, Stanley Hauerwas, Robert Neville, Ian McFarland, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Calvin Schrag, before deeply engaging Van Huyssteen's notion of post-foundational morality. These are pages seem aimed at specialists well versed in the complexities of contemporary theology. Still, the authors rightly note that fundamentalism, and the belief that one party has 'all the truth', undercuts the posture of openness toward others that is a prerequisite for hospitality. What is required is the forging of a middle way between fundamentalism's unyielding certainty and postmodernism's unwillingness to make any claims of truth or value in the public sphere.

The next chapter begins the book's second part, which aims at finding ways to have faith in a God who is hospitable. They observe that most major religions affirm reciprocal obligations between humans and God. God has made promises to humanity and humanity responds in fidelity to God. Turning to questions of human rights, they show how a lack of hospitality leads to slavery, discrimination, and other rights violations. They note also that religious institutions have not been hospitable either officially or institutionally, denying the gifts women and other outsiders bring to leadership. Equally, there have been many hospitable individuals and communities in the Christian tradition to draw upon as models. In particular they explore the work of American theologian Henry Sloane Coffin, arguing that liberal theology, with its generosity, hopefulness, and emphasis on love and openness, is not dead in America but is prove vital to public-sphere hospitality. Liberal theology's concern for social issues that directly impact human rights such as economic justice and poverty makes it relevant. Hospitality is, on this reading 'embracing justice, not simply benevolence' (p. 129). This hospitable theology will need somehow both to respect cultural differences but also drive toward a cosmopolitan vision of rights. Yet, such claims seem to duck the question, are there practices and beliefs held by some that are so harmful that we cannot, in good conscience, be hospitable to those who hold them?

Chapter 6 begins an explicitly theological reconstruction, seeing salvation as hospitality, noting that Jesus himself models hospitality through vulnerability and kenosis. God is seen not as a magic dispenser of salvation but as 'unconditional presence . . . as salvific ground of restored humanity and as tangible ground for creative human response' (p. 143). Drawing upon Reformed theology's faith in reason, they argue that the Enlightenment, despite its problems, offers a framework to engage theologically based justice claims. Here the authors argue that one can remain faithful to Christian convictions, and yet engage others in the search for truth. They urge a responsible revival of Christian humanism, one that argues for the transformation of the world based on Gospel principles of justice and equality that are applicable to all people. Such efforts require Christianity to form practitioners capable of reading

and praying hospitably with and for others within the context of their own communities. They note that economic injustices, such as poverty, should compel Christians to offer a reality-focused account of hospitality cognizant of both theology and culture. One cannot simply accept 'the way things are' as divinely sanctioned. This reality-focused approach also means that hospitality and discourses of globalization need to be discussed and practiced by ordinary people not simply elite academics. Hospitality is not only an emotional response; it is a long-term structural approach and plan for the other.

The seventh chapter turns to the issue of church practices central to forming hospitable Christians. Noting how Matthew's Gospel reconfigures relationships they advocate for a Christians community where Christian identity, rather than race, sexuality, or class is the criterion of relationship. The authors discuss the vexed issue of homosexuality, making it clear that they advocate for hospitality toward all, rather than engaging the numerous studies on what ancient texts say about homosexuality. But sometimes hospitality can occlude even the Gospel message itself, and here 'liberals' can be every bit as dogmatic and unwelcoming about their beliefs as 'conservatives'. Hospitality welcomes all equally. The book's appendix engages at length with Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*.

The primary weakness of this book is its un-integrated engagement of secondary sources and tendency to range across a vast terrain of figures, quoting everything from Hawthrone's *Scarlet Letter* to Barack Obama's autobiography. Clearly, both authors have read widely in theology, political science, and other relevant fields. By refusing to wear this engagement lightly, however, the book often seems full of laundry lists of positions or supporting arguments that are simply not well written or incorporated. Still, this book makes an important contribution to theology, showing how hospitality has implications for basic questions of social and political ethics.

Aaron Klink
Duke University

★ ★ ★

The Atheist's Creed, Michael Palmer, The Lutterworth Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-7188-3083-0), x + 344 pp., pb £20

Michael Palmer, a former Teaching Fellow at McMaster University, has compiled seminal writings in the history of atheism in his new book *The Atheist's Creed*. He divides the writings topically under: 'The Meaning

of Atheism', 'The Origins of Atheism', Two Arguments for the Existence of God: An Atheistic Critique', 'The Problem of Evil', Morality and Religion', 'Miracles', and 'The Motivations of Belief'. He includes extracts from notable men like Bertrand Russell, Antony Flew, Ernest Nagel, Michael Martin, and Victor Stenger; nineteenth century German philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx; enlightenment thinkers like David Hume, Thomas Paine, and John Stuart Mill; and ancient philosophers like Sextus Empiricus, Cicero, Epicurus, and Lucretius. Palmer uses all of these men to form an intriguing narrative of unbelief throughout human history.

Palmer's book begins with what he calls a 'credo' of atheism. This credo starts off saying: 'I believe that the cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be' and ends with the hope of people 'being thus released from the irresponsible and pernicious illusion of religion, for which there is neither evidence nor need' (p. viii). By beginning his book this way Palmer intentionally drafts his credo after the style of a traditional Christian 'creed', 'manifesto', or 'statement of belief'. It captures beliefs that many atheists hold strongly to: the eternality of matter, human finitude (no afterlife), the ability of human reason and compassion to establish morality, and the importance of education. Of course this credo is not final. Palmer knows that much more could be added and expounded upon. He simply wanted to provide 'the barest outline of atheism's landscape' (p. xiv).

In his introduction, Palmer speaks of the differences between *positive atheism*, *negative atheism*, and *agnosticism*. He works out their subtle nuances and says that this book is 'an exercise in positive atheism' (p. xix). It is mainly positive atheism because nearly all of the writers put forth '*grounds for the repudiation of God*' (italics his, p. xviii). They provide positive arguments against belief in God and positive arguments in favor of unbelief (or non-belief). The format of the book is rather helpful, since before each extract Palmer includes a biographical, philosophical, and bibliographical summary. This helps the reader put the writing in proper historical and philosophical context.

With the cultural shifts taking place in the modern West, along with the ongoing rise of secularism, this book is as timely as it is helpful. It is especially helpful to students who need a reference source that is quick and accessible. Of course it does not contain all of the important atheist literature, nor does it presume to. If asked to add to the list of authors I would choose men like Jean Paul Sartre, A.J. Ayer, Walter Kaufman, and Anthony Kenny, but when this list of names keeps growing you see why one needs to establish a criteria to determine what is to be included and what is not. To organize the authors topically and thematically was wise for this reason. It helped organize the overall 'flow' of the book, and it narrowed down what has the chance of becoming an infinitely long anthology.

In his introduction, Atkins makes note of an interesting blind spot in the debates between atheists and theists. He points out how some theists completely ignore the critiques of David Hume, and how some atheists never mention Friedrich Nietzsche. It may be due to the fact that modern science – with men like Darwin, Einstein, and Hawking – has taken the front stage of the debate and left the more 'philosophical' scholars in the background. It may also be because the persons in these debates are not exactly Hume or Nietzsche scholars. Nevertheless, to ignore men of such caliber is to forget a rich portion of atheisms philosophical heritage.

Atheism, like any other worldview, has a history and tradition of its own. It has key texts, scholars, and historical milestones. This anthology shows just how rich and expansive atheisms history is, and we would do well to learn from it. On the other hand, this tradition cannot be equated with a 'religion', since it does not elevate its authors to anything beyond simple intelligence and passion. Even with a credo like the one which Palmer begins this book with, it is still evident that this atheism promotes free thinking and exhorts people not to believe based on authority, but on reason and evidence. Only by believing freely, without fear of punishment of coercion, can humanity reach its potential and free itself from tyranny and oppression. This is part of *The Atheist's Creed*.

Kile Jones
Claremont School of Theology

★ ★ ★

Christ and Culture, Martyn Percy, Mark Chapman, Ian Markham and Barney Hawkins (eds.), Morehouse, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8192-2397-5), xviii + 201 pp., pb $24/£14.99

The Lambeth Conference of 2008 caused ripples of interest beyond the Anglican Communion to which it related, and beyond the church generally. Being such a prominent and newsworthy event, it enabled the media to highlight major issues with which the church continues to wrestle (sexuality above all, of course) and to use as a test-case one major global Christian communion's handling of such issues. In the case of the 2008 gathering, the backdrop was formed by the 'Anglican Covenant', an attempt to find grounds and principles on and by which the whole Anglican Communion might be able to stay together.

Of particular interest was the challenge presented to the 'usual way of doing things' by the *indaba* process, described in this collection as 'a

gathering for purposeful discussion . . . (which) . . . presupposes a willingness to meet and converse about seriously divisive issues as well as ensuring voices are not suppressed' (p. 121). Those who gathered at Lambeth conducted their conversations about the selected topics according to this method. In contrast to Eurocentric/Northern Hemisphere/Western, confrontational, semi-legal forms of argumentation, the *indaba* process, as Mark Chapman notes, shifted the focus from speaking to listening (p. 1).

This collection of essays, offered in a series 'Canterbury Studies in Anglicanism', continues what was begun at Lambeth 2008. The writers were invited 'to take the themes of the Conference into every corner of the Anglican Communion and to make the themes accessible for grassroots conversation and reflection' (p. xvii). So far so good; the aim is laudable on the part of both editors and (UK and USA) publishers, and the structure of the book – relatively short essays and a four-page study guide (pp. 194–7) – keep that aim in view. That said, especially given the book's title, this is a most puzzling collection of essays. The Lambeth Conference is a meeting of bishops. Although others, lay and ordained, do contribute to the event through, for example, leading Bible studies, it is bishops who converse. It is largely bishops who were invited to contribute to this collection even though, as the editors clearly acknowledge: 'Twenty-first-century Anglicanism cannot be shaped by bishops only or by a bishop-centred conference' (p. xviii). Yet to get to grips with 'Christ and culture' and to address topics such as mission and evangelism, human and social justice, environment, ecumenism, relations with other world religions – to name but five of the *indaba* discussions themes – it is difficult to conclude that this is the best way to start. Will not the addressing of such crucial topics in this way, even if under such a vital overall heading, not skew the discussion to an alarming degree? To note the most obvious objection: there is not one woman among the fourteen main contributors. Katharine Jefferts Schori offers a two-page Foreword, but that is it.

The scope of the collection, then, is very limited indeed. As a non-Anglican I am not being invited much to worry about what Anglicans are worrying about. But for that I am glad, for as Jefferts Schori notes, 'Bishops are the subject of much of this repast' (p. xv). This means, though, that the content – despite the seemingly far-reaching indaba themes – is very internal to Anglicanism, and sharply focused on 'what sort of bishops' Anglicans should have. Hence, there are chapters on the relationship between episcopacy and Anglican identity, the bishop and social justice, and the bishop, other churches and God's mission – a theme which merits three chapters, even though the range of 'other churches' addressed is not quite as broad as it might be. At times one begins to wonder whether the Reformation ever happened. The urgency and significance of topics addressed does increase at points,

largely due to the contexts out of which contributors are writing (Suheil Dawani, writing as Bishop of Jerusalem, e.g.). But generally, this is not just an uneven collection, it looks hastily assembled, incomplete and insufficiently thought through. Just where has a concern for 'Christ and culture' gone in the midst of largely internal ecclesiastical concerns?

The apparent haste of the collection became clear when I needed to contact the publisher to check whether I had received the right book. Early editions included names of intended contributors on the cover whose essays did not materialize. I am grateful to the UK publisher for being sent a copy of the later, more accurate, text so at least I know what it is I am reviewing. But the clarification merely accentuated the collection's limitations.

I hope that within Anglican circles the essays might be studied by those who will find episcopal (and some other) essays helpful, although I must say I cannot see this collection making too many ripples, or even being very useful in Anglicanism, let alone beyond. Certainly, if readers wish to address the topic of 'Christ and culture' in a contemporary way, here is not the place to begin.

Clive Marsh
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★ ★ ★

Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, SJ, Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang (eds.), Catholic University of America Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8132-1793-2), xvi + 351 pp., hb $39.95

This volume, paying homage to one of the dons of American patristic studies, is a fortuitous combination of thoughtful essays by seasoned and younger scholars. Unlike many Festschrifts, the title does in fact have meaning, as many of the articles do more than tangentially address the two related subjects of the role of tradition and the rule of faith in the church. The word 'early' applies to most of the essays as well, although a number deal with medieval, reformation, and modern interpretations and applications. The volume is nicely bound, affordably priced, and well edited, and thus will provide the specialist reader with a banquet of historical and theological fare that will repay careful reading, digestion, as well as providing food for future research (assisted by the wealth of documentation provided in real bottom-of-the-page footnotes!). Here is but an overview of the menu.

The first of the four sections of the book is entitled 'Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Fathers of the Church'. Everett Ferguson provides an appropriate backdrop for the entire volume in the opening study with a thorough word study of the main Greek and Latin terms used for *tradition*, finding ten interrelated usages in the early church. Jonathan J. Armstrong continues with a study of the rule of faith and the New Testament canon, arguing for 'the inextricability of the histories of canonicity and orthodoxy' (p. 31). He concludes that 'the κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας is in fact a direct antecedent to the κανὼν τῶν γραφῶν, for the former served as the primary standard of orthodoxy during the era preceding the final emergence of the latter' (p. 47). Case studies of Irenaeus by D. Jeffrey Bingham, and of Prosper, Cassian, and Vincent by Alexander Y. Hwang round out the first section.

Section two, 'Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Arian Controversy' is comprised of three essays of key, if often little-known and enigmatic, figures of the fourth century controversies over the divinity of Christ. Sara Parvis builds on the important studies of Marcellus of Ancyra published by Lienhard and herself, here analyzing Marcellus's letter to Pope Julius, arguing that the creed it contains truly did encapsulate Marcellus's teaching. Kelley McCarthy Spoerl explores the theology of Eustathius of Antioch as a possible early source of Apollinarius's thought, concluding that the latter's theology was both anti-Marcellan in its Trinitarian thought and anti-Eustathian in its Christology. Brian E. Daley focuses attention on Meletius of Antioch, describing his central role in church affairs in the East during the middle third of the fourth century, and arguing that his theology and ecclesiology were both inclusive and irenic at heart. Thus he was a centrist figure, something that has baffled modern scholars who have attempted to pigeonhole him into one of the theological groupings of the day.

Part Three focuses on 'Augustine, Tradition, and the Rule of Faith' and opens with Roland Teske's study entitled 'Augustine's Appeal to Tradition'. Teske shows how Augustine's appeal to tradition was carefully tailored to fit his arguments against each of his three chief nemeses – the Manichees, the Donatists, and the Pelagians. The late Thomas Martin's essay, 'Augustine, Paul, and the *Ueritas Catholica*', shows how a proper interpretation of St Paul and his writings were central to Augustine's debates with these same three groups. He concludes that Augustine understood and thus presented Paul as *the* '*doctor veritas*', the ultimate 'manifestation and confirmation of the Catholic rule of faith' as opposed to the various interpretations of Paul found among the heretics (p. 174). Patout Burns examines Augustine's soteriology and sees three variations in his writings – a 'forensic analysis which addresses the rights of the devil' which may depend on the Antiochene tradition, Christ's taking of 'human sinfulness upon himself and

destroying it bodily on the cross' as emphasized in Alexandrian tradition, and Augustine's own contribution, that 'as a manifestation of divine love, the death of Christ provokes human sinners to repentance and inspires a love of God which is itself the beginning of their salvation' (p. 193). Kenneth Steinhauser's essay shows how the concept of happiness developed in Graeco-Roman philosophy and was then given Christian embodiment in Augustine's early tract *De beata vita*. Finally, Ronnie J. Rombs' contribution returns to the volume's title with an essay on 'Implications of the Rule of Faith in Augustine's Understanding of Time and History'. He argues that Augustine inherited a Platonist conception of time which was fundamentally incompatible with the goodness of creation. The mature Augustine would consider time 'a necessary dimension of created and mutable being' and thus intrinsically good (p. 235).

The final group of four essays shows how the rule of faith and tradition continued to influence the medieval and renaissance churches, and how modern scholars view and interpret early Christianity. Joseph F. Kelly summarizes what is known about biblical exegesis in medieval Ireland, concluding that the strong interest in the fathers by Irish biblical commentators was almost exclusively in their exegetical works, not their polemics. Frederick Van Fleteren crystallizes the use of Augustine into three traditions, those who via 'philosophical archaeology' seek to interpret the master in his own context, those who are 'assimilating the ancient thinker into a new synthesis which extends the tradition, but does not betray it', and finally those who use him and his thought as a springboard for entirely new thinking (p. 285). The final two essays focus on Origen. A. Edward Siecienski's fascinating essay focuses on Origen as an example of the Christian thinker who 'has occupied the "limbo" separating Church Father from heresiarch, at different times finding himself on both sides of the divide' (p. 287). While the author admits the church's verdict is still out on Origen, the latter's twentieth century rehabilitation by De Lubac and others has made him 'the patron saint of Christian theological scholarship', and Siecienski tips his own hand when asking 'If Origen never consciously violated the rule of faith, and used that rule to guide everything he did, should he be excluded from the company of the saints because the church later judged some of his positions to be at odds with the faith?' (p. 307). Finally, Thomas Scheck looks at Erasmus' life of Origen showing how he made the controversial church father into 'a historical model in his plea for humanist reform' (p. 320).

The volume concludes with a list of significant dates in the career of Prof. Lienhard and a complete bibliography of his publications, especially useful because of the vast array of venues in which his work has appeared. As mentioned at the outset, this volume is a feast for serious scholars of Christian theology and history – well prepared and

presented, hearty and satisfying. Yet the essays, as should be the case, leave us wanting more, both from the authors and, as we hope will be the case, from the distinguished and prolific honoree.

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★ ★ ★

Revitalizing Theological Epistemology: Holistic Evangelical Approaches to the Knowledge of God, Steven B. Sherman, James Clarke & Co, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-227-17334-3), xv + 278 pp., pb £22.50

As the split between evangelical theology and classical foundationalism continues to widen, Sherman proposes that evangelical theology shift from ahistoricism to tradition, rationalism to narrative, and evidentialism to embodiment. Such a shift has been long in the making as he shows in the first part of this book which examines the legacy of Clark H. Pinnock. By retracing Pinnock's journey from bibliocentrism to christocentrism to pneumacentrism, Sherman provides the reader 'with a sense of the distinctions between traditionalist and reformist evangelical approaches to theology and theological knowledge' (p. 18). Pinnock's gradual openness to the cultural particularity of the scriptures, theological pluralism, and a view of salvation that incorporated the unevangelized planted the seeds for postconservative thinking. Sherman wants to focus more sharply on these contemporary approaches to theological knowledge before concluding with a 'modest' proposal for revitalizing theological epistemology.

Sherman's broader goal is to lay the groundwork for a constructive, holistic approach to theology that moves beyond the modernist/fundamentalist dichotomy and creates space for young postconservatives – that is, those who want to update theology in the light of postmodernity without diminishing the integrity of the Gospel – to address the epistemological concerns of the modern, postmodern, and biblical worlds. A rational-propositional Christianity must yield to a Christian story that is original, historical, and spiritual. Not only will this allow theology to engage postmodern philosophy more effectively, it will also allow theology to rediscover its premodern roots, especially as evidenced in Eastern theology and its core ideas of *theosis* and the universality of Spirit. 'If only one thing were to be learned by evangelicals from postmodern philosophy, it would be the wisdom of approaching practically every subject with appropriate tentativeness and humility' (p. 93). Such humility, Sherman argues, fills the pages of

Pinnock's later books *Flame of Love* (1996) and *Most Moved Mover* (2001) which present a more dynamic, relational, modest epistemology.

A good part of this book is concerned with analyzing the rise and fall of foundationalism, by which Sherman means classical or Cartesian foundationalism: that is, the grounding of all human knowledge in something indubitably certain. Given the intellectual climate of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was only natural for theologians to sense a need to confront rationalism, skepticism, and the quasi-Epicureanism of the Enlightenment. In the process, theologians forgot about the various and multifaceted ways of knowing bequeathed to us by the ancients. Protestant theologians in particular countered *opinio* with stronger models of certainty; yet *opinio*, as Sherman rightly notes, is itself embedded in the analogical knowledge of God elaborated by Thomas Aquinas and other medieval theologians. It is a pity that Sherman did not expand this discussion to include other classical and medieval ways of knowing: sense knowledge, knowledge from experience, knowledge from art, practical knowledge, theoretical knowledge, etc. The distinction between *opinio* and *scientia* is only the tip of the iceberg, and if Sherman had gone beneath the surface he would have found a plethora of distinctions that could have helped him to flesh out his proposal for a revitalized epistemology. Instead, he continues his analysis of foundationalism by examining the influence of Old Princeton Theology and its utilization of Scottish Common Sense Realism.

Before outlining his own proposal, Sherman reviews several alternatives to classical foundationalism, including soft foundationalism, coherentism, pragmatism, theocentric fideism, postliberal epistemologies, virtue ethics, and Wittgenstein. The latter, in words of Fergus Kerr quoted by Sherman, 'invites us to remember ourselves as we really are. Once and for all . . . we need to give up comparing ourselves with ethereal beings that enjoy unmediated communion with one another' (pp. 121–2).

Sherman's own proposal includes a commendation of Wesleyan Quadrilateralism – Bible, tradition, reason, and experience – and he argues that scripture remain primary, tradition serve as a source of renewal, reason assist in helping us to understand scripture and doctrine, and experience guide us in Christian living. Sherman shows great sympathy for postmodern philosophy insofar as it helps us to view knowledge as personal, subjective, and collective, thus offering 'new opportunities relative to constructing models of thought beyond prevalent rationalism-oriented motifs' (p. 259). Moreover, he argues that greater attention must be paid to the pneumatological dimension of theological knowledge and the indispensible activity of the Holy Spirit in enlightening the church about its tradition and scriptures. Sensitivity to the work of the Spirit will also liberate us from an exclusively text-based approach to theology.

Sherman offers a well-researched and highly readable overview of evangelical epistemology's journey from foundationalism to postconservatism. His synopsis of the complex development of Pinnock will prove to be a fine contribution to understanding the legacy of this influential theologian, especially since he passed away in August of last year at the age of seventy-three. At the same time, this book is more topically than systematically organized, and it is often not clear what is new in Sherman's proposal and what constitutes a summary of the directions neoconservatives have taken and continue to take. The book offers sparks of insight, but seldom stokes the flame.

Finally, Sherman does not give much space to the counterarguments of those more wary of postmodernism than he is. This is frustrating since he suggests that many of the epistemological concerns of postmodern philosophy were already concerns of early Christian theology. But it may turn out that the ways in which each addresses those concerns diverge sharply at times. To take but one example, the theology of grace – a notion that receives short shrift in Sherman's book – underwent a highly refined elaboration in ancient and medieval times, asserting that when the mind of the believer is transfixed with divine light, a supernatural certainty is imparted wholly other but nonetheless analogous with natural certainty. In other words, the analogy of being that makes it possible to speak of who God is radically elevated by the knowledge we have of him through grace. Consequently, the 'unspeakable' of Wittgenstein may be quite different from that of Teresa of Avila.

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★ ★ ★

The God Debates: A 21st Century Guide for Atheists and Believers (and Everyone in Between), John R. Shook, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-4443-3641-2), x + 241 pp., pb $24.95

John Shook wants more of a dialogue and debate between believers and naturalists. In his words: 'If religions' reasonings are on the agenda for open discussion, why shouldn't outside evaluations of arguments for god carry some weight too? If religions expect their theologies to be persuasive, trying them out on non-traditional minds and nonbelieving skeptics could hardly be a waste of time' (p. 2). He urges this dialogue more for the sake of atheists who are often discriminated against and are in a minority position today. Creating such a dialogue should not

come as a surprise to Christians; the church has been well known for debating and defending her beliefs for centuries. In point of fact, a debate can drive and shape one's beliefs so that Christian doctrines and practices can become more nuanced and therefore more defensible in the face of outside critiques. Given the radical pluralism of twenty-first century America, we are living in an exciting time for such a dialogue to begin (p. 10).

Shook needs to realize that atheism is not all that common today. Nor has it ever been popular. He seems to focus on lay believers who are often ignorant of the arguments in defense of theistic beliefs. But there is a good explanation for the lack of dialogue with atheism among lay believers. One might have evidences to make religious faith reasonable, but this evidence is not necessary for all believers to have ready in defense of the faith. Only those believers endowed with certain virtues and/or callings are called to do apologetics and engage in debate with the 'non-traditional mindset'. But when the opportunity arises for such an interaction, Shook's proposals about dialogue must be upheld.

Nonetheless, Shook himself shows very little awareness of the dialogue that is taking place between atheists and believers on a more scholarly level. Nonbelievers are not ignored by Christians, at least among Christian philosophers, theologians, and official representatives of the church. Among other ecclesiastical bodies, the Catholic Church continues to address the challenges of atheism and what Shook calls 'atheology'. The Vatican dicastery for discussion with atheists publishes a journal called *Ateismo e Dialogo*. The intention of this journal is to provide a forum to keep up-to-date of the trends in atheism and to offer a robust Catholic response to them.

What is most disappointing in light of Shook's honest and original framing of the 'God Debates' in Chapter 1 is that he shows very little appreciation for understanding the best arguments now in favor of Christian faith. He limits himself to popular arguments in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. At times I think Shook is successful in exposing the weaknesses of these arguments, but this would not justify an atheological attitude. Perhaps there are other arguments that need to be considered. So, it is frustrating to read this book when St Thomas Aquinas' philosophy is not seriously analyzed or even adequately engaged. Instead Shook settles for critiquing the fine-tuning argument (instead of Aquinas' fifth way). He mischaracterizes the *Kalām* cosmological argument by focusing exclusively on the evidence provided by big bang cosmology (pp. 136–7). But this argument is a philosophical argument, not a purely scientific one. The scientific evidence is used to lend credibility to a minor premise in the argument. Moreover, the principal issue with the big bang is not whether there are other viable models that are consistent with the scientific observations

(by positing these alternative models Shook prematurely concludes that 'atheology' is justified), but whether those models are more conclusive than the standard big bang. Likewise, Shook does not address Aquinas' first three proofs in the *Summa Theologiae*. Again, I agree with Shook that the divine command theory is shortsighted or maybe even mistaken (pp. 110–21), but then again this is not the only kind of moral argument for God's existence. Aquinas casts a type of moral argument in his fourth proof. Aquinas, moreover, is not a divine command theorist.

Because some atheistic moral realists appeal to human nature to determine what is objectively moral (although Shook thinks that government and culture determine an objective morality, there would be no consistent way for governments to be objectively right or wrong), they prematurely conclude that there is no need for God. Divine command theorists, on the other hand, insist that in order to retain moral objectivity, we must act in response to God's commands which reside above and beyond human nature. Otherwise, the divine command theorists say, we would be left with ethical relativism and/or subjectivism. Not only is this a false dilemma, it also prevents Shook from taking dialogue more seriously with theologians. Following Aquinas's formulation of participation metaphysics, I submit that both positions have significant insights, and both of them falter in other respects. Ethical naturalism is not always inhospitable to the moral argument for God's existence.

Thomists respond by noting that a reflection on human nature helps individuals to know and respond to basic moral norms (and that these reflections are expressed by cultures and governments), but this necessarily presupposes the existence of a Divine Lawgiver. Otherwise it would not make sense for atheists to refer to human *nature* as the basis for objective morality. In response to divine command theorists (and this would include proponents of the newer, modified version of the theory), Thomists insist that human nature is a necessary condition, but definitely not a sufficient condition for objective morality. God is still necessary for the metaphysical ground of basic moral truths.

Like most other books on philosophical atheism, most of the assertions made against theistic arguments are laden with exaggeration, misrepresentation, selective reporting, half-truths, or outright falsehoods. At most, then, Shook exposes the attentive reader to the difficulties of sustaining a constructive dialogue. Dialogue partners need to understand each other's positions correctly and be willing to follow the evidence wherever it leads. Even more difficult for me to accept is the refusal of Shook to include and/or understand Aquinas' natural theology, and, more importantly, analyzing his metaphysical schema (the act-potency distinction, the existence-essence distinction, and the

difference between substance and accidents) which make his arguments for God's existence possible.

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★ ★ ★

You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature, Louis Stulman and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, Abingdon Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-687-46565-1), xvi + 323 pp., pb $25

'You Are My People' argues that Old Testament prophetic literature, described as 'war-torn artifacts', has enduring value because it refuses to deny the unspeakable, telling the truth throughout, but also imagines a future for defeated people (p. 1). In this way therefore, while it is disaster literature, it is also survival literature. After an introductory chapter, the book is split into four parts, which deal successively with Isaiah (two chapters), Jeremiah (three chapters), Ezekiel (two chapters), and the Book of the Twelve (two chapters).

The book's significance will surely be primarily for those who wish to use the prophetic literature as 'scripture', whether that is in the forum of public preaching or private devotional reading. For, while the authors do not ignore the less palatable parts of what are indisputably hard texts, their (largely synchronic) reading is ultimately a positive one and their understanding is that the end purpose of the prophetic literature is to give sustained hope to the 'dangerous world we inhabit' (p. 6) as well as that of its own context. Or, in the words of the *Introduction*, 'It looks the politics of violence in the eye without flinching and refuses to let death and destruction have the final say' (p. 7). The readable nature of the book means that it is accessible to a non-specialist audience; indeed, it seems primarily to have been written for such.

One strength of the book is that each section can be read in isolation from the others without losing the major emphases of the book, for each section shows how the prophetic book in hand is 'survival' literature. This means, of course, that there is significant repetition (particularly of the key themes of hope, survival and truth-telling), but the benefits surely outweigh the cost for ministers and teachers turning to the book in preparation for study of a particular prophetic book.

In fact, the book should be especially useful for such projects, for it provides key themes of the prophetic books, for example, 'seeing and hearing' and 'understanding and knowing' in Isaiah (p. 33), 'good

versus evil' in Nahum and 'crime and punishment' in Habakkuk (p. 220). As well, the book gives pithy nuggets of interesting information, such as noting that Isaiah does not intercede for the people. Likewise, it points out that the two extensive sections of historical narrative in Isaiah (chs. 7–8 and chs. 36–9) compare two contrasting kings; Ahaz and Hezekiah. Regarding Second Isaiah, the authors observe that the theme of 'wilderness' is prominent, helpfully commenting that while Babylon turns out to be a wilderness, the wilderness is often a place of hope. They also include an instructive diagram showing a chiastic structure that thematically links the first and last books in the Book of the Twelve (husband–wife and parent–child metaphors), the second and penultimate ones, and so on (p. 203).

Another strength of the book is that the authors keep the whole of the canon in their purview, drawing from this wider context for significance where they deem appropriate. For instance, they note in the chapter on Ezekiel that YHWH becomes a displaced God and therefore in solidarity with his people and then go on to suggest that this prefigures the passion of Christ. They also point out that YHWH's journey East is significant when looking back over Israel's history, for journeys eastward are often replete with danger (pp. 157–8).

One of the main criticisms that I have of the 'You Are My People' is that it does not seem sufficiently nuanced, particularly in theological terms, and it appears at times as if contemporary psychology is guiding the interpretation. For instance, one of the maxims of the book is that truth telling is the starting point of hope and we are told that apparent harbingers of hope in Jeremiah (Hananiah and Shemiah) only strengthen the grip of despair (p. 103). The authors refer to contemporary psychology in support of this and while this may be the case in general, I question that the Jeremiah text presents this view. Rather, Jer. 5:31 records the reaction to such false prophecy as, 'and my people love it so', while, Jeremiah, the 'truth-teller' seems to be the one who despairs at times. Similarly, they state that Jeremiah's road to hope includes 'letting go of the old world' and make the point that we are all apt to cling to the past (pp. 135–6). However, while the text does exhort the people of Judah to 'accept their marginal status in Babylon' (if not 'surrender their old identity') the final hope (and, arguably, the key theme of the Book of Comfort) lies not in Babylon, but in a return to and restoration of the old land. On a couple of occasions the authors note that the text at some level blames the victim (e.g. p. 103), yet Stulman's and Kim's 'victim' is usually the prophet's 'perpetrator' (although neither are particularly appropriate words given the Hebrew) on whom the Hebrew text casts a sentence. There are other examples where the book seems to slightly simplify or skew the interests of the text. For instance there is a sub-section on Jeremiah which emphasizes the cosmic upheaval and shaking of heaven and unearth, based on Jer

4:23-26, but this text is not representative of Jeremiah as a whole, which tends not to have a cosmic focus.

A minor criticism that I have of the book is that much of the language is reminiscent of Brueggemann (who is much cited and quoted in the second sentence of the *Introduction*). This is not only the case with particular phrases, for example, 'claims and counterclaims, testimonies and opposing testimonies' (p. 128), but also in the larger perspective and general approach and at times I felt that I was reading a reworking of Brueggemann's ideas.

At the same time, ironically, given the authors' propensity to hear all voices and to include outsiders, for example, they note Second Isaiah's insistence that outsiders be welcomed and incorporated into the life of the community (p. 85), the authors seem to implicitly assume a North American audience. Indeed, on one page the authors criticize authors in the field of Jeremiah for having dismissed marginal voices (p. 128) while on the next page they talk about how 'Only yesterday . . . Our place in the world was safe and symmetrical, our lives well insulated and predictable, with only a few glitches along the way.' (p. 129) The next paragraph makes it clear that 'us' equals US. Nevertheless, this notwithstanding, there is nothing in the book that precludes a wider readership and much in the rest of the tone of the book to encourage it.

Stulman and Kim note that Amos's oracles, 'declare the possibility of (new) life in the face of a death sentence' (p. 201). This could perhaps sum up the book's approach to the whole of the prophets. Thus, 'You are My People' should give timorous expositors more confidence in approaching the prophetic books.

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★ ★ ★

A Poetic Discontent: Austin Farrer and the Gospel of Mark, Robert Titley, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-28321-4), xii + 220 pp., hb £65

When I was a student (of natural sciences) Austin Farrer was all the rage. I read some of his works and was impressed – not least because I knew he had started one of his sermons something like this: 'Descending an underground escalator, I saw the words, "Gives comfort and support to ladies." I thought at first it was an advertisement for my religion, but then saw it referred to an article of clothing.'

Such books of his as I possessed have long since been lost (lent irretrievably) so I found it salutary to return to Farrer through one of

those lost books – viewed now, fifty years later, through the eyes of a scholar of today. Clearly the mood has changed. Theological fashion – as with clothes – has moved on. Farrer is now subject to less admiring scrutiny.

One example of this shift in mood is evidenced in Robert Titley's book, *A Poetic Discontent*. Titley has produced a very thorough critique of one of Farrer's best-known books, *A Study in Mark* – one which, at the time of its appearance was novel and much noted. But Titley has tackled Farrer at a number of levels and found him, by today's standards and attitudes, wanting, to one degree or another, in each of them. Not everything that Titley says is negative, by any means; and the fact that he has tackled Farrer at all is in itself a compliment. Clearly Farrer is still considered a mind to be considered.

Titley himself is certainly very well read and acquainted with the moving fashions of scholarship as they relate to the New Testament and to Mark's gospel in particular. His approach to Farrer's *Mark* is thorough, and his book highly organized and well laid-out. At first sight it might appear to be the sort of book for newcomers to the field of New Testament scholarship, but that impression is quickly dissipated. It is a book which builds upon, and assumes in the reader, quite a sophisticated level of understanding.

Titley's method is to consider, in turn, under three main headings, different approaches to *Mark*: as literature, and as history and as scripture. The first two are tackled in the same way: each time, Titley reflects on Farrer's work in the light of work by one or more noteworthy scholars. This team is impressive, and reflects well on Titley's own breadth of reading. (It may, by the way, introduce his readers to a variety of other scholarly authors, fresh to them – as it did to me.)

I had assumed Farrer was a voice of the past until I read this new assessment of at least this part of his work. It is a kind of retrospective of this remarkable man, and so a compliment. Not that Titley is uncritical: he is not. Quite the opposite. Like his chosen team, he takes a far from adulatory approach to Farrer's handling of Mark's gospel.

For the detailed queries Titley raises, the reader must really go to the book – for the queries are indeed detailed, and based on detailed analysis in the light of more recent work evidenced by the different authors he cites. He also reflects the deep change in attitude towards scripture, as a genre: its authority and genesis. Times have indeed changed since those post-war, Festival of Britain, days.

Titley's written style is not always easy to enjoy. Repeatedly I found myself wondering whether the text before me was the script of a spoken lecture. He writes (he spoke?) at times in a high-flown style which could be commendable in a lecture, but which, at times, I found heavy going. (But readers of this review must bear in mind that this author is more used to scientific presentations which, when good, have

a different kind of clarity.) Nevertheless, I sometimes felt Titley might have expressed himself in a more straight-forward manner. That said, I admired the *thoroughness* of his work. He certainly writes thoroughly and takes care to provide justification for every detail of his argument.

I said that the book, after an introductory section, is in three main divisions. Well, two-and-a-half really (the last one is very brief): Mark as literature, Mark as history and Mark as scripture.

In the first, Titley takes apart Farrer's view of how Mark had organized his material. He more than hints disapproval at the way in which the poet and believer in Farrer called the tune. Reading Titley now, his worries about Farrer's beautiful schemes seem entirely justified: they all seem too neat and forced to be true to the *facts* of Mark's text. To back up his case, Titley draws on the writings of more recent scholars – first V. Taylor, D. Nineham, R.P. Martin, J.A.T. Robinson, M. Goulder, J. Drury, and F. Kermode; and second Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie.

The second major section considers Farrer's *Mark* as history and is, if anything, even more devastating. Again, more recent writers are produced as witnesses to support Titley's case and – although this is quite outside my own area – seem to do so convincingly. But here again, in this section, even more than in the first, I was most struck (as an outsider – and as scientist at that) by the thought that so much remains opinion and so little fact. However, what I read seemed reasonable enough.

The final third and by far the shortest section seems to say: beneath Titley's well-presented and well-argued critical remarks, Mark is still well-worth reading – as scripture. Clearly for Farrer, Mark's gospel (ah, yes: *Saint* Mark to Farrer) is importantly a biblically canonical, inspired book which combines divine action, poetry and authority; yet his (Farrer's) commentary on it – says Leslie Houlden – is 'an outcrop' among his other writings which, taken as a whole address the *central* question of how divine and human action are related. (p. 195) A crucial question indeed. Titley sees Farrer's Brampton lectures, *The Glass of Vision*, as addressing this issue, and so accuses Farrer of needlessly declining to look into the abyss dug by the legitimate questions his works raise. 'Needlessly' for, as Titley's final conclusion says, 'Farrer's own instincts about the fecundity of human imagination married to divine grace seemed to lead in the direction of rich plurality rather than buttoned-up neatness' (p. 207).

A grouse to the publisher: the quotations are in too small a print, relative to the main text.

John Armson
Herefordshire

★ ★ ★

Good and Bad Religion, Peter Vardy, SCM Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-334-04349-2), xi + 180 pp., pb £12.99

For those outside the religious camp(s), 'religion' typically denotes something quite negative, even evil: religion is responsible for wars, hate, intolerance, torture, division, persecution, murder, and the suppression of learning.

For those inside the religious camp(s), 'religion' often connotes something quite regrettable, as mentioned above, as well as representing something quite positive: religion has also inspired compassion, self-sacrifice, love, hospitals, schools, beautiful music, inspiring architecture, stunning painting, and creative philosophy.

But what determines whether a religion – or more specifically, a particular religious belief or a specific religious action – is bad or good? What are the criteria by which certain manifestations of religion may be judged positive or negative? Searching for and setting out those criteria is the avowed aim of Vardy's *Good and Bad Religion*.

Divided into two parts, the first half of the book addresses various challenges to religion – atheism, the lack of evidentiary support for religious truth, and whether divine commands are good because God is the source of them or whether they are good because they can be judged by some independent standards (this debate is known in philosophy as the 'Euthyphro dilemma').

Vardy argues that atheism is a reaction to bad religion over the centuries. Many atheists, he claims, reject not so much God *per se*, but the 'claimed manifestations of God provided by many religious groups' (p. 7). This is debatable: How does one quantify *which* kind of atheism is which? How many atheists qualify as 'many'? He comes dangerously close to the same criticism that he levels at atheism and its view of religion – that is, that atheism regards religion as monolithic, when in fact it is quite complex and varied. While he acknowledges that atheism is not monolithic, and while some brands do react to some outdated or indefensible notions of God, other brands do not allow room for *any* notion of theism in their worldview. Is this a minority or a majority? What constitutes 'many' or just a 'few'?

While affirming that religious truth does not enjoy evidentiary support, Vardy points out that not all truth claims can be evaluated by deductive and inductive reasoning, and that to assume that they can be is to deny other forms/ways of 'knowing'. It is also to wrongly conclude that religion – because its assertions lie outside logical proof – devalues, erodes, or even destroys reason.

He is careful here also to evaluate the un-provable assumptions of reason and science. That is, in the first case that reason is the only method via which a belief or assertion can be evaluated as true, and in the second case that the theory of evolution by natural selection or the theory of cosmic origins through the Big Bang can be supported with conclusive deductive or inductive reason. Indeed, some scientific understandings that were readily adopted and tenaciously held over the years have been shown to be incorrect – for example, the 'steady state universe' that dominated science fifty years ago, and many centuries ago the understanding of the world as flat. These theories had to be radically altered; thus, religion and reason, religion and science, *both* hold 'unsupported faith claims' (p. 19).

The Euthyphro dilemma, he points out, is difficult to resolve: if God's commands are good simply and solely because they come from God, then it would follow that God does not have to follow any external idea of fairness, for God can decide and do whatever God wishes. Alternately, if God's commands can be potentially judged as good by appeal to an external standard, then *which* standard of goodness should one use that would be independent of God and against which God's commands could be evaluated as good?

Appealing to Aristotle, Vardy argues that something is 'good' insofar as it fulfills its nature – something is 'good' when it contributes to human nature being fulfilled, to human character development, to human flourishing. What is interesting is that he appeals here not only to the obvious referent, Thomas Aquinas (perhaps the greatest Christian theologian of the Late Middle Ages), but also to Muslim theologians such as Ibn Sina (Averroes) and Isbn Rushd (Avicenna). Human beings should fulfill the God-given potential they all share as a part of human nature; the 'good' is whatever contributes to this. Therefore, those actions that help persons to realize their full potential may be judged as 'good', those that diminish this may be judged as 'bad'. Concomitantly, those manifestations of religion which help persons to actualize their full potential are good, those that deflect from this are bad. Vardy holds that any aspect of a religion may be judged according to the standard of human potential and fulfillment. Of course, who decides what is fulfilling and what is not, is not without dissension.

Vardy thusly taps Aristotelian philosophy as a partial source for developing criteria which may assist in assessing whether a certain religious expression is good or bad. With this segue, the author moves on to the second half of the book, attempting to provide a list of criteria that would permit the assessment of a religion – or more concretely, a religious manifestation in belief or action – as good or bad.

Part Two describes and discusses the four criteria which Vardy believes offer 'a way forward', as a starting point for discussion: (1) The use of authority and texts; (2) religion's relationship with science and

justice; (3) how religion relates to societal differences; and (4) religion's attitude toward individual freedom.

Regarding the texts and authority criterion, he argues that, since there is no 'meta-narrative' which holds true across every land and every culture, 'good' religion gives people a reason to be good; it is about changing persons to become better – that is, it involves personal transformation through the cultivation of virtue. Texts necessarily involve interpretation, and a literal reading is not only not 'neutral', it is nigh near to impossible. Therefore, study, discussion, and debate are essential. And the fact that one may be mistaken requires humility rather than certainty. Otherwise, what results is mindless response, an assurance of certainty (with no possibility of error), and rote learning. This results in 'bad religion'.

Regarding the science and justice criterion, Vardy asserts that the contributions of science to correcting and amplifying religious understanding should be welcomed. This constitutes 'good religion'. If the response to scientific insights is negative, then this is 'bad religion'. And in light of the heavy accent on justice in all the world religions, he concludes that any religion that denies justice and rejects that God wills justice is 'bad religion'. 'Those religions that fail to take justice seriously are bad religions and those that honestly and dispassionately seek to foster justice are good' (p. 127).

Regarding the societal differences criterion, the author argues that good religion does not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation, and even religious belief. 'Good religion must respect the essential value of human life, regardless of the beliefs of individuals' (p. 139). This poses a very difficult challenge for all religion(s), because each religion typically claims that it is better for a person to belong to that particular type than to another brand or to none at all.

Regarding the human freedom criterion, Vardy contends that a good religion is one which promotes human freedom, and a bad religion is one which does not. He goes on to assert that good religion is open to alternative viewpoints, while bad religion is not.

Throughout these criteria, Vardy seems to be arguing – consciously or unconsciously – that 'liberal' or progressive religion is good, and 'conservative', traditional, indeed fundamentalist, religion is bad. The flexibility, open-mindedness, and humility required to satisfy his criteria are not likely to be adopted by conservative religion, given the position it takes – that these values are a sign of waffling, compromise, or 'backsliding'. Given the fact that liberal religion in the twenty-first century is waning and conservative religion is waxing, this could lead to the conclusion that, on this basis, good religion is in decline and bad religion is gaining ground. It is hard to resist the further conclusion that, therefore, the majority of religion today is bad.

But the author previously made it clear that what he wants to do is address and start a conversation on an issue – how to determine clear, consistent criteria which will enable the distinguishing between 'good religion' and 'bad religion' – which has not yet been addressed, and to do it in such a way as to get a discussion and debate going. In a very thoughtful and articulate way, he has accomplished his goal.

Clifford Chalmers Cain
Westminster College, Fulton, MO

★ ★ ★

Green Christianity: Five Ways to a Sustainable Future, Mark I. Wallace, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-6461-9), xvii + 182 pp., pb + DVD $25

Green issues are very much in vogue, and rightly so. The more people pay attention to them, the more likely we are to get somewhere. But getting there is not going to easy, so involved are the interlocking considerations, not to mention the economics. This book offers one more approach to this tricky issue. Does it help? Answer, yes and no.

Yes, in that it is by a college teacher who is a convinced environmentalist. One assumes, therefore, that he will have an influence for good on the younger generation. No, in that Wallace offers a relatively selective, if enthusiastic, survey of the situation. The back cover blurb describes as a 'Christian animist'.

His book has a preface and six chapters, of which the final one is a commentary on the enclosed DVD (for which I lack the necessary equipment).

The preface explains that each chapter 'offers a model for Earth- and body-affirming living based on spiritual values' and lays the ground for his thesis that Christianity is 'a fleshly, earthly, material religion' (p. x ff). Wallace blames the Bible for the unease some Christians have about 'locating physical pleasure on a spiritual foundation' Wallace has no such qualms. *His* bible is suffused with stories about the warmth and beauty of sexual intimacy'. They are there, it is true, but 'suffused' might be overstating the case? And this is one criticism I had of this book. Like most of us, he is right in what he affirms, wrong in what he denies.

Chapter 1 is headed, 'Find God Everywhere'. Amen. I'm sure this is indeed a crucial attitude, never more important than in today's shrinking world. Wallace cites Chalcedon as maintaining that 'without separation or confusion, God is fully embodied in creation, on the one hand, and God is still God, on the other' (p. 8). My own lack of training in this

are means I must leave others to judge how accurate an interpretation his is of the fifth century fathers' work, and how useful. It certainly underpins Wallace's approach. The following chapter, 'Read the Bible with green eyes', builds on it. 'The earthen Bible', and 'the Green Jesus' are phrases he uses.

Chapter 3, 'Enjoy the Flesh', pushes his case further: As a modern man, he distances himself from the 'war against the flesh . . . [of] . . . much of early Christianity' (p. 51). Well, yes; but who's to say which generation got it right? His own discussion of the story of the woman anointing and kissing Jesus's feet at dinner (Luke 7.36 ff and parallels) forms a major part of the chapter. Wallace sets it alongside the story of Ruth and Boaz, and says that in each case 'feet' is a euphemism for genitals, although gives no source for this interpretation. But it certainly gives each story a new thrust.

Chapter 4, 'Eat Well (Seek Justice)', discusses the works of a co-operative grocery store developed by the community in Chester, 'a failing city'. As he writes of it, it sounds an admirable venture. It offers, says Wallace, 'a beacon of light and hope on a landscape pockmarked with poverty . . . ' (p. 93). He rails against the fact that 'the Christian gospel has been co-opted by politicians and preachers who trumpet personal morality at the expense of fighting against structural conditions that lock down America's underclass in depraved and dehumanizing urban environments' (p. 97). Sadly that is not only true in the USA.

The final two chapters point to a Christian life-style which may be called 'the good life' in more than one sense. Wallace argues for 'institutional sustainability – the development of fiscally solid business practices that fully account for their social and environmental impacts . . . ' (p. 103). Here I found his passion more solid, even though the changes he longs for may well be beyond human grasp. Alas.

A passionate book by a passionate teacher, more than one which 'does' nuance.

John Armson
Herefordshire

★ ★ ★

The Church Event: Call and Challenge of a Church Protestant, Vítor Westhelle, Fortress Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-8006-6332-2), ix + 181 pp., pb $20

Vítor Westhelle, Professor of Systematic Theology at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, begins his rather curious contribution to

Protestant ecclesiology with a rather curious analogy. For Westhelle, 'a study of the church done from a staunch ecclesiological standpoint is akin to a self-dissectional forensic investigation'. The reader is nevertheless invited to place herself alongside Westhelle on the coroner's table in an attempt to 'aid in the solving of the mystery of what plagues the [church] body' by addressing 'the ecclesiological disputes that have assailed the church and are symptoms of its infirmities' (p. 1). Of vital importance to Westhelle, in the carrying out of this difficult task, is the avoidance of those images and motifs that are commonly employed in ecclesiological discourse to reinforce particular modes of church representation (Westhelle mentions, for instance, the Roman Catholic appeal to Peter as the rock in Matthew 16 and the Protestant emphasis on the Pentecost account of Acts 2) (p. 5). For Westhelle, such images are inextricably bound with territorial allegiances. As such, Westhelle aims instead to situate the ecclesiological problem within the tension of two forms of institutional representation: the 'economic' and the 'political'.

This tension between the economic (*poiesis*) and the political (*praxis*), and the church's proper location somewhere in between, functions as the guiding thread through what may otherwise seem like an assortment of largely disconnected essays. Drawing on Aristotle's exposition of these two basic human faculties, Westhelle defines the relationship between *poiesis* and *praxis* as follows: 'the distinctiveness of *poeisis* and the verb *poieo* in contrast to *praxis* is that they designate an activity that results in the production of something, entailing an objective result, while *praxis* conveys a deed done that has an intersubjective effect but does not result in a positive and material outcome' (pp. 32–33). For Westhelle, the temptation of the church is always to find or allow itself to be subsumed under one of these two realms (p. 41). *Poietic* churches 'understand themselves as the very means through which their ministries deliver the message they have amassed, administered and kept. The church in this case has a sacramental character . . . The church does what it ontologically already is' (p. 42). The *praxic* church, meanwhile, 'presents itself as a transient reality without a nature or an essence of its own . . . Church functions; and its function, not its intrinsic nature, determines its reality' (p. 44). The former is manifested predominately (although not exclusively) in episcopal models of the church (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, etc.), while the latter is largely a Protestant phenomenon. According to Westhelle, it is imperative that the church resists the temptation to be entangled in either of these two forms of institutional representation. The church is instead to inhabit a 'third place' between these two realms. Rather than presenting itself in essentialist terms (the *poietic* type) or as an institution without a nature or an essence of its own (the *praxic* type), this 'third

place' is to be understood as a sphere wholly determined by God's prior action, 'by God's enunciation of the Word and the promise to be present materially in the elements of the sacrament'. Put simply, 'the church happens as God speaks' (p. 40).

With these two paradigms defined and the church proffered as a *via media* between the economic and the political (the house and the street), Westhelle proceeds with alacrity through an assortment of contentious ecclesial topics. Westhelle addresses the relationships between tradition and scripture (Chapter 4), the church and the Trinity (Chapter 5), the church and society (Chapter 7), and ecclesiology and eschatology (Chapter 8), as well as tackling matters as diverse as foundationalist hermeneutics (Chapter 4) and the challenges facing the modern ecumenical movement (Chapter 1). Whenever possible, Westhelle tethers his reflections on such topics to the underlying dichotomy between *praxis* and *poesis*. To mention but one example: in ruminating over what it is that constitutes tradition in relation to scripture, Westhelle differentiates between an understanding of tradition as the passing down of a particular practice of biblical exposition and an interpretation of tradition as the handing down of a received endowment deposited in the church. Not surprisingly, he finds the 'political' paradigm at play in the former interpretation and the 'economic' paradigm in the latter.

While Westhelle does an impressive job of framing an assortment of 'typical' ecclesiastical controversies in refreshingly '*a*typical' terms, thus preventing his readers from settling into an all-too-common, over-familiarized complacency, *The Church Event* ultimately suffers from the sheer scope of its reach. The tremendous breadth of topics addressed in *The Church Event* hangs together rather loosely without a clear, unifying line of reasoning. The dichotomy of *poiesis* and *praxis*, which Westhelle seems to develop as an attempt to provide just such a unifier, fails to carry the burden allotted to it. This is due in part to the lack of conceptual clarity given to these two terms. For Westhelle, the distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* encompasses a myriad of complex relations: economic/political, public/private, globalization/fragmentation, and collectivism/individualism, to name a few. In short, the dichotomy of house and street, because it comes to mean so much, loses its ability to speak meaningfully to the topics at hand. To return to Westhelle's opening analogy, we might say that his self-dissectional forensic investigation provides us with an assortment of symptoms without ever actually diagnosing the disease. The forest is often missed for the trees and we, the patient, are left upon the table, still wondering what ails us.

Jordan Hillebert
University of Aberdeen

★ ★ ★

The Collected Sermons of William H. Willimon, William H. Willimon, Westminster John Knox Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-664-23446-1), xiv + 273 pp., hb $30

Will Willimon has been regarded by a great and growing number of persons across the country and around the world as the preacher's preacher – one who combines in his sermons, narrative and proposition, prodding and comfort, humility and confidence, predictability and surprise. According to an international survey conducted by Baylor University, he has been recognized as one of the twelve most effective preachers in the English-speaking world. Thomas G. Long, Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology, put it well when he said (paraphrase) that when we listen to Will Willimon, it is as if we are talking to a neighbor-friend across the fence in the backyard between our two properties. These sermons reflect Dr Long's insight: sometimes Willimon is pastoral, sometimes prophetic, sometimes conversational, sometimes cantankerous, sometimes conservative, sometimes liberal, sometimes safe, sometimes cutting-edge, sometimes jabbing, sometimes nurturing.

This collection of sermons give us multiple glimpses into a preaching career that stretches from 1974 to 2010, and from settings as diverse as a small church in South Carolina to mega-church pulpits, as the Duke University Chapel to Harvard Memorial Church, as Parents' Weekend worship to a service at the request of a fellow pastor whose son had just committed suicide. They are the proclaiming words of a pastor, a professor, a dean, and a bishop.

Dr Willimon accents a number of key themes in his sermons, but it appears that his three favorites are the regularly-recurring topics, the generous grace of God, our human sinfulness, and Jesus's inclusive love. The three are not unrelated. Through sermons such as 'Graciousness and Grumbling', 'Being Good', and 'Jews and Christians: All in the Family' – which explicate and extol the undeserved grace and love of God – he sounds like a contemporary Karl Barth, tirelessly and persistently plugging God's free, extravagant, and excessive grace: God is 'amazingly gracious' (p. 58) and 'determined to love us' (p. 92); each of us is 'a victim of the divine dragnet of grace' (p. 269).

Again echoing Barth, Willimon holds tremendous respect for the mystery of God. Therefore, God remains largely 'unknowable', save through the figure of Jesus. And what we have come to acknowledge is that God's grace is not simply helpful, it is essential: God's persistent search and relentless reach for us, despite our shortcomings and our failures, are what lie at the heart of the gospel and the center of each

individual Christian's journey. 'The lost sheep the shepherd seeks is *us*' (p. 26); my sin is not knowing that I am mired in sin (p. 173).

Although he admits that 'the expansive reach of Christ is too wide for most of us' (p. 143), he insists that it is an inspirational model to emulate and goal to seek – especially when it involves our reaching out to persons who are not like us. And just when we think he is only talking about us doing the reaching, he reminds us that Jesus was/is willing to reach out to persons unlike himself – that is, to 'rabble like us' (*ibid*). Willimon argues that the 'reach of Jesus extends to all' (and he means *all*! p. 164).

Willimon's ego is not small – despite some rather tedious disclaimers and aggrandizing self-criticisms – and sometimes the sermons reflect that. Not all of them deliver. Only a few of them are great (Willimon himself confesses this). But all of them are in some way helpful.

Thus, any pastor, religious studies professor, or parishioner will be enriched by reading these sermons, experiencing their encouraging or their unsettling tone and content, and reflecting on one's spiritual journey which is impacted by and can be aided by sermons from the pulpit. Effective preaching produces a reaction, and Will Willimon's sermons cannot ever be criticized for failing to provide that.

Clifford Chalmers Cain
Westminster College, Fulton, MO

★ ★ ★

Nonviolence – A Brief History: The Warsaw Lectures, John Howard Yoder, Baylor University Press, 2010 (ISBN 978-1-60258-256-9), xiv + 150 pp., hb $29.95

Nonviolence is a collection of lectures given by John Howard Yoder in Warsaw, Poland in 1983. Yoder conducts a series of lectures on nonviolence in Poland in the middle of the Cold War. However, instead of embracing too much polemic, this series of lectures opens the possibilities of the embrace of nonviolence for overcoming the personal and structural sin of war and violence. The essays feel like 'talks' by Yoder, allowing the reader to listen in on a discussion he is having. As such, the articles have a conversational feel as they introduce major topics and theses that Yoder will work out, not only in these lectures, but through the rest of his career. As a conversational collection this text offers a very readable text by Yoder which introduces the reader to the material that most concerned the author. The collection, then, offers a

unique look into the way that Yoder conceived the discussion surrounding the idea of 'Christian nonviolence'.

In order to construct his argument, Yoder makes three basic moves. The first piece of his argument is to offer a conception of nonviolence through the writings of Martin Luther King Jr, Gandhi, and Leo Tolstoy. Yoder spends the first chapter of the book outlining the nonviolent pursuit of Tolstoy and Gandhi as an active strategy of resistance. Gandhi moves beyond Tolstoy, though, in this active resistance by understanding the cosmos as a spiritual unity and that this meant truth was a force for nonviolence. Yoder then moves, in the second chapter, to a discussion of King and the America civil rights movement. King builds off of the work done by Gandhi to construct a strategy of nonviolence. Yoder believes King does this through the work of the church, where, as Baptists, there is a focus on conversion of the individual and that this means a decision and commitment to Jesus Christ, part of which is embracing nonviolence.

After elaborating this conception of nonviolence, Yoder moves to construct a history of nonviolence from a Christian perspective. This part consumes the majority of the text, with Yoder outlining the practice of nonviolence from the time of the Old Testament through Jesus and the Just War tradition to the modern sciences. Drawing from Jewish and Christian worldviews, Yoder says that nonviolence 'can only be rooted in a religious vision of the congruence between suffering and the purposes of God' (p. 42). This allows Yoder, among other things, to posit that the importance of Jesus is in his quest for liberation that can only be attained through the practice of nonviolence. Yoder believes that this means that any ethical system or theology that tries to share in the 'seizure of power' through violence must be rejected (p. 104).

This leads him to the last part of his argument, which offers some examples of nonviolence in practice by turning to twentieth century Roman Catholics, specifically lay theologians, pastors and professors, and people from Latin America. For Yoder, the lay theologians embrace a nonviolent spirituality. Those who most exemplify the nonviolent spirituality he outlines are Dorothy Day and James Douglass, both of which practice nonviolence as a form of resistance and as a way of building community through the embrace of hospitality that comes through the reconciliation offered by God in the cross. From these two, he moves to the way that Roman Catholic professors and pastors have worked for nonviolence. He turns to the professors John A. Ryan and John Courtney Murray to review the just war tradition as these two emphasized aspects of the tradition that would work against nationalistic tendencies toward war, like the fact that one must be willing to accept defeat or that a nation's rights do not make right an unjust war. After discussing the professors Yoder turns to the pastors in the Roman

Catholic tradition who are concerned more with the quality of a community rather than setting out a legal and ethical system. Yoder sees in the office of the pope the continued work to advocate for world reconciliation, even thought oftentimes the papal message does not go far enough in renouncing unjust governments or people groups. However, in 1983, American bishops did open the way for people to resist injustice in the government with the publishing of 'The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response' which uses just war reasoning to advocate for effective restraint. After this explication, Yoder moves to his final example of practitioners of nonviolence through certain models from Latin America. He turns here because of the move in liberation theology to incorporate social justice as a necessary part of the gospel message. Yoder does level a critique at liberation theology for its misread of the exodus event because this event, for him, is not the end of Israel's tribulation, but really a beginning for continued suffering. However, what theology in Latin America does do correctly is to call for a transformation of people through the giving up of hatred, resentment, and vengeance and for opening to nonviolence as a just and active response to violence and oppression. For Yoder this is important as liberation through violence does not bring the just society sought.

Throughout *Nonviolence* Yoder attempts to present a picture of nonviolence that is not always fleshed out but spurns the reader on to do more. Due to this, the text has several benefits and one problem. The problem with this collection is that it is a collection of essays that have not been developed as thoroughly as most of Yoder's other material, so the argument is not always as clear and evident as one would like. However, this is also a benefit, as this is a text that can be read by almost anyone, from pastors and undergraduate students to professors and those doing research in nonviolence. The collection is eminently readable and offers glimpses and insights into Yoder's thought without being too difficult. A second benefit to this collection is that it resituates some essays published elsewhere after Yoder's death; here, they are in their proper context which allows the reader to see them in the flow of a certain argument. Lastly, the foreword by Michael J. Baxter offers some very original and unique insights into Yoder, not only as theologian but as a person. On the whole, this text offers a good introduction into the thought of Yoder by the man himself, showing the various paths that concerned him throughout his life. All in all, then, this is a text highly recommended to those interested in the contemporary discussions surrounding questions of Christians and violence, the role of nonviolence and Christianity, and just war theory.

Nathan Crawford
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★ ★ ★

Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of Nature: The Re-Enchantment of the World in the Age of Scientific Reasoning, Avihu Zakai, T&T Clark, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-567-22650-1), ix + 331 pp., hb $120

A generation of specialist scholarship in the history of science and religion has shown that the 'warfare' or 'conflict' model of how science and religion interact is a Bad Thing. In place of conflict, we have learned to see 'complexity'; at any point in history, science and religion interact in many ways, only rarely reducible to enmity or love. A consequence of such revisionist history was that the old nineteenth century narratives of disenchantment looked suspect. If Isaac Newton scribbled more on biblical genealogies than on physics, how could one describe the rise of science as essentially disenchantment on the march to reason? In a welcome reconsideration of the revisionists, in a previous book Avihu Zakai used the phrase 're-enchantment of the world' for the philosophy of history which the enormously influential and fecund American theologian Jonathan Edwards used to assail Enlightenment rationalism. Zakai's new book repeats the motif, picking out a strand of tension between science and religion to expand the third chapter of his previous book. He lines Edwards up with writers who criticized the new mechanical philosophy because it 'demystified', 'disenchanted' and reduced the meanings in nature that older natural philosophy once allowed.

In fact, Zakai wants to show that Edwards turned to a traditional orthodoxy that is rooted in medieval theology, in reaction to the upstart heterodoxy of the new philosophy. The first five of the seven chapters establish a genealogy for Edwards' thoughts on natural philosophy. Zakai first sketches Edwards' commitment first to theology's preeminence over philosophy (including natural philosophy), and then to the venerable tradition of describing the universe as a great chain of being connecting low earthly elements to heavenly stars. In view of these commitments, Zakai claims a place for Edwards among the English 'physico-theologians' who tried to deduce God's attributes from nature. Chapters 2–5 invoke the historiography of science and religion to link the 'new philosophy' with heterodox attempts to evacuate theological purposes and meaning from nature. Along the way he covers *loci classici* such as Galileo's defense of natural philosophy's autonomy. Zakai sees this as heterodox, stimulating orthodox responses. In this framework, he proceeds through Donne's poetic laments for how a mechanical world flattened poetic meaning. 'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone; All just supply, and all Relation', Donne mourns, answering the Copernican shift in heavenly spheres, Galileo's mathematical physics, Bacon's inductive philosophy, and the revival of atomistic

philosophies. In parallel answer to the mathematical principles and laws of nature of Descartes and Newton, Zakai describes Blaise Pascal's outcry against the 'god of the philosophers', a god distant from humanity and unrecognizable as the God of Abraham. The fifth chapter develops this tension among a cast of familiar early modern English philosophers – and Wilhelm Leibniz. The representatives of a mathematical and corpuscular universe, devoid of all but philosophical deity, are Newton and his defenders Samuel Clarke and William Whiston. At the other pole Zakai places Leibniz, Jonathan Swift, and William Blake, and other critics of Newtonian philosophy.

The second-last chapter – the shortest in the book – outlines Edwards' view of the 'age of Enlightenment'. So far as I can tell, this applies Zakai's earlier study of Edwards's philosophy of history: God is the primary actor in history, and revelation gives primary insight into how God acts. Edwards reacts to the mechanical philosophy roughly the same way as critics did in previous chapters: he places trust in the 'God of Abraham', and by assuming God's providential action in history, he critiques Enlightenment natural philosophy, suggesting an alternative based in 'idealistic phenomenalism' (p. 219). In an idealist world, where God is the 'mind' which holds even atoms together, continually determining them, God is implicit in the world in continual creation, making 'laws' of nature and of history. That is, the Trinitarian God reveals himself not merely as distant legislator, but as intimately present in every part of creation, so drawing the hearts of believers to adoring praise. It would have been nice to see exactly how this was supposed to happen – in wondering at spiders and atoms, did Edwards hope that believers would perceive providence in purposively designed creations, as English natural theologians said of the eye?

Long on context, short on Edwards himself, this book joins Zakai's earlier work as a valuable invitation to consider Edwards as a philosopher, even a philosopher of nature. I say invitation, because this book should be supplemented by future studies. Zakai's effort to define Edwards with the medieval handmaid metaphor, where philosophy serves queen Theologia, undercuts Zakai's plea to consider Edwards as 'more' than a Calvinist theologian. Said otherwise, a philosopher would be 'less' than a theologian, on Edwards' own view. Zakai also fails to situate Edwards' philosophy deeply in Edwards' life – perhaps assuming that his first book finished the job. Overall, Zakai tends to quote Edwards instead of interpreting him for the reader, which can make the account opaque in places.

The book's strength and bulk is an account of the broad intellectual context for understanding Edwards, but this too merits qualification. First, the narrative arc spans a tension between (newer) heterodoxy and (older) orthodoxy, where Edwards' voice joins the orthodox. The evidence troubles this neat division. Jonathan Swift and William Blake

were certainly conservative in the senses Zakai explores, but they were hardly orthodox Christians. Also, the new philosophy is more accurately plural, drawing varied responses: Alexander Pope was especially worried about hubris, a different issue than Donne's worries about symbolic meaning, or Blake's defense of the humane. The physico-theologians, to whom Zakai would like to add Edwards, also thought themselves part of the new philosophy! Not surprisingly, more organic metaphors are chiefly found in natural history, while Zakai focuses on physics and mathematics. But even there recent scholarship has wrestled with Newton's *De gravitatione*, a manuscript in which the Cambridge professor criticized 'Cartesian' mechanistic Deism and proposed instead an idealist view of the universe as God's sense organ. This text, which Zakai ignores, shows similarities between Newton, Berkeley, and Edwards. In sum, neither the new philosophy nor its critics were as homogeneous as Zakai implies. Edwards' intellectual context looks too familiar, like a mixture of our English philosophy and literature departments – was this really Edwards' intellectual universe? The *Catalogues of Books* belonging to Edwards hint that it would have been productive to see how he read John Tillotson, Charles Burnet, Joseph Butler, William Wollaston, Lord Henry Kames, and Thomas Wilson, among other English natural theologians.

Although this book will leave Edwards scholars and historians of science and religion wanting more, it does two valuable services. First, it places Edwards on a scholarly map which joins English and American theaters of philosophy. And secondly, it celebrates a discourse which criticized the new mechanistic philosophies, a discourse which needs to be digested before being injected into modern debates over nature and transcendent meaning, as some readers of Edwards are wont to do. Price and unreliable analysis means that this book is not suitable for beginning students or pastoral contexts; scholarly libraries, however, will find it useful for posing further questions.

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