

THEOLOGY, ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY

The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought, Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' (ed.), Blackwell Publishing, 2006 (ISBN 1-4051-2174-2), ix + 657 pp., hb \$139.24

Imagine the following issues: Islamism and secularism, modernity and globalization, nationalism and nation-state ideology, feminism and patriarchy knitted together to form a giant quilt entitled *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*.

In reality, very few publications could afford to offer in a single collection of essays such an in-depth analysis of the complexity and diversity of contemporary Islamic thought as does the companion. This collection of essays calls upon the expertise of a number of distinguished Muslim scholars from various countries, such as Iran, Malaysia, Turkey, Egypt, South Africa, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan.

One marvels at the way the writers scrutinize the relationship between the intellectuals and the masses, and the ambivalent role of the ruling elite (religious, military, political, and economic) in the Muslim world.

First, the companion focuses on themes and issues that are relevant and timely to 'Islamicate': societies (to borrow Marshall Hodgson's expression). Second, the articles explore multiple intellectual histories of the Muslim world and pay due attention to the circumstances and criteria that have defined its inception. Thus, the Indo-Pakistan partition, Dutch and British colonialism in Indonesia and Malaysia respectively have shaped the intellectual history in South and East Asia. The Kamalism movement in Turkey along with the French and the British colonial rules in the Middle East and North Africa have influenced the intellectual history of the area.

In its effort to be faithful to the diversity of opinions and trends in contemporary Muslim intellectual life, the companion consists of thirty-six essays, divided in five major parts:

- Part I Trends and Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought: One or Many
- Part II Secularism, Modernity, and Globalization in Contemporary Islamic Thought
- Part III The question of jihad and terrorism
- Part IV Islamism, Sufism, and Pluralism in Contemporary Islamic Thought
- Part V Justice, Dependency, and International Relationship
- Part VI Women in Contemporary Islamic Thought

Furthermore, some essays focus on the complex cultural and economic transformations of Muslim societies since the advent of nation-states and Western capitalism. Others reflect the social and political history of the modern Muslim world in general or a Muslim country in particular. Finally, the companion helps readers locate Islamic intellectual history in the broader context of Western and Eastern intellectual trends and voices.

The companion is edited by Ibrahim Abu Rabi, a Professor of Islamic Studies at the McDonald Center for the study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relationship at Hartford Seminary. His strength lies in his keen and intelligent reading of the intellectual histories of Islamic thoughts in the Arab Middle East, North Africa and South East Asia. He has contributed to the field of contemporary Islamic thought with many highly regarded publications.

Abu Rabi's introduction to the companion is in itself a sufficient reason to own the book. He captures the exact goal and importance of the companion in five sections:

1. the nineteenth century background of contemporary Islamic thought,
2. the meaning of salafiyah in modern and contemporary Islamic thought,
3. liberalism, nationalism, and Marxism in the Muslim world,
4. modernization and religious revivalism,
5. the question of Islam and modernity/capitalism/nation-state/globalization/US hegemony.

It is a delight to study side by side 'Muslim Feminist Debates on the Question of Headscarf in Contemporary Turkey' by Ayse Kadioglu, and explore the views of a number of religious and political giants from different historical and geographical background such as, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877–1960) from Turkey, Mawlana Wahiduddin Khan (1925–) from India and Hassan Turabi (1932–) from Sudan.

The following essays reflect their unique understanding of Islam and its place in the modern world: 'Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Approach to Religious Education Renewal and Its Impact on Aspects of

Contemporary Turkish Society' by Sukran Vahid or 'Islamic Thought in Contemporary India: The Impact of Al-Risal Movement' by Irfan A. Omar or 'Hassan Turabi and the Limits of Modern Islamic Reformism' by Abdelwahab El-Affendi.

Also, the companion reflects the variety of trends and voices in Islamic thought. A few articles center around specific issue in a particular country such as 'Indonesian Response to September 11, 2001' by Muhamad Sirozi or 'Secularism and Democracy in Contemporary India: An Islamic Response' by Syed Shahabuddin. Others explore the legacy of a particular Islamic scholar, such as 'An Islamic Critique of Patriarchy: Mawlana Sayyed Kalbe Sadiq's Approach to gender Relation' by Yoginder Sikand, or 'Islamic Thought in Contemporary Pakistan: The Legacy of Allama Mawdudi' by Abdul Rachid Moten.

Clearly, the companion targets a particular audience, scholars and students of Muslim intellectual history and related fields of study. The book focuses on the development of modern Islamic thoughts in post-colonial nations with a majority of Muslim population. Also, the companion attempts to cover a large and complex ground in terms of history and geography. Hence, the reader is introduced to the dynamism of Islamic thought, to the complex mind of major religious thinkers.

However, the scope and range of modern Islamic thought between and within nations cannot be covered in one book. Thus, the companion is not a comprehensive work on contemporary Islamic thought. It is rather a selection of the most representative trends and issues in major 'Islamicate' societies and regions.

Therefore, one could take issue with Abu Rabi when he asserts in his introduction that, 'In addition, this collection of articles helps us formulate comprehensive perspectives on the current movements of thought in Muslim societies'. Besides, Sudan and South Africa, Sub Sahara Africa is not represented. There is not a single article about Nigeria, the largest Muslim country in Africa.

Hence, the beauty of the companion lies not in its attempt be comprehensive but in its effort to bridge a gap. Abu Rabi enunciates the goal of the companion:

The collection of articles in *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thoughts* is intended to fill a major lacuna in this area [the intellectual histories of the modern and contemporary Muslim world and alert us to the various currents of thought dominant in the contemporary Muslim world and their articulation of the questions and challenges facing it.

The articles give reader a well-informed perspective from major intellectuals and scholars from the Muslim world. These contributors to

the companion are seasoned scholars who 'transmit a complex Islamic tradition in a highly dynamic age' writes Abu Rabi. Others are favored by the political power of their country or are frowned upon. Ustadh Ashaari of Malaysia (see Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid's article) and Fethullah Gulen in Turkey are such examples. They represent serious challenges to the official religious discourse of their respective countries.

These contemporary Muslims scholars live and work in North America, Europe, Middle East, North Africa, and South East Asia. They come from diverse backgrounds and fields of expertise and represent various social, political, and ideological trends. Their articles strive to do justice to the difficulty of the issues. Their analyses help the reader understand the complex cultural and economic changes of the post colonial Muslim world. Finally, their command of the subject dismisses the rampant and essentialist notion that Islamic thought has stagnated or is monolith.

Thus, the companion is a rebuttal against all kinds of intellectual sloth in both Western and Muslim world. The vitality of Islamic thought transpires through the range of the issues explored. It would suffice to cite: 'What do we mean by Islamic Futures' by Ziauddin Sardar, 'Islamic Feminism: Negotiating Patriarchy and Modernity in Iran' by Nayereh Tohidi, or 'Islam, Terrorism and Western Misapprehensions' by Muhammad Fathi Osman, or 'Hindu Fundamentalism in Contemporary India: A Muslim Perspective' by Zafarul-Islam Khan. It is very rare to read a serious article about what a Muslim thinks of other forms of fundamentalism. Truly, the companion is a wealth of ideas and a daring enterprise.

The contributors do not shy away from the main challenges of the Muslim world. What is the place of Islam (qur'an and hadith) in the age of neo-liberal globalization and the US hegemony? For example, the following articles explore the current and future of Islamic thought: 'The World Situation after September 11, 2001' by Khursid Ahamd, or 'The Futuristic Thought of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad of Malaysia' by Hamad Fauzi Abdul Hamid.

The authors of these essays are well versed in several Islamic and Western languages. They are familiar with the social, economic (see Syed Farid Alatas's essay on 'Islam and the Science of Economics'), and intellectual histories of modern Muslim world (see 'Contemporary Turkish Thought' by Sahin Filiz abd Tahir Uluc). They are Muslim scholars thinking and writing about the intellectual history of Islamic thought (see 'Contemporary Islamic Movement in Southeast Asia: Challenges and Opportunities' by Ahmad F. Yousif).

However, a major caveat in terms of contributors is that women are underrepresented. Far from blaming the editor, I wonder why men dominate the debate and women come on board only when there is a

women's issue. Unfortunately, this tired notion of confining women expertise to women issues still plagues academia.

Nevertheless, the companion is a gift and a tremendous resource for scholars and students inserted in modern Islamic thought. Crucial questions such as nation-state building, the failure to assure a fair distribution of wealth and power, and the role of Islam in this age constitute the background to contemporary Islamic thought. Let us hope that the Blackwell Companion would complete this present volume with another one that does justice to the missing voices and acknowledges the scholarship of women.

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Habermas and Theology, Nicholas Adams, Cambridge University Press, 2006 (ISBN 0-521-68114-6), ix + 267 pp., pb \$29.99

In this book, Nicholas Adams engages in Habermas's 'post-metaphysical' philosophy which has tremendously influenced the intellectual formation of the modern public sphere in the West. Adams recognizes correctly that Habermas's 'communicative action' and 'discourse ethics' pose a formidable challenge to the modern religious studies because Habermas schematically lays out the religious thought as 'mythic' and 'metaphysical', while the modern thought is 'rational' and 'post-metaphysical'. Although Habermas has never argued that religion has become obsolete as a fundamental source of meaning for an individual life, he certainly claims that the 'validity' of religious discourses cannot be contested in the realm of the public sphere. If Habermas is right, then there is no longer a place in the universe, in which interested people can join a public debate to verify their contested religious claims for 'truth', 'rightness', and/or 'truthfulness'. Adams, however, appreciates Habermas's reconstructive project to save the Western civilization and culture from the despairs of the 'iron cage' in the aftermath of the Western modernization and rationalization. As he clearly states in the beginning, Adams tries to argue that 'while his [Habermas] claims are not false, they fail to account for modern religious thinking that is not metaphysical and not mythic in his sense' (p. 20).

Adam's major critique of Habermas is focused on the validity of Habermas' bold, but highly debatable claim that the post-metaphysical theology is not possible. Adams first points out that Habermas fails to do justice to contemporary theology 'because he is too ignorant of

theology' (p. 3). Adams's important ally in developing his argumentation is the so-called 'post-liberal' theology represented by Hans Frei, Stanley Hauerwas, Nicholas Lash, George Lindbeck, John Milbank, and Rowan Williams who emphasize the significance of narrative. Significant portions of Adams's book is devoted to his rigorous analysis and investigation of Habermas's thoughts which have religious implications such as the ideal speech situation (Chapter 2), the authority of the sacred (Chapters 3 and 4), universalism (Chapter 5), theology and socio-political theory (Chapters 6 and 7), and modernity's triumph over theology (Chapter 8). In Chapter 9, Adams reviews the works of Helmut Peukert and Michael Theunissen, who have explicitly adopted a post-metaphysical approach to theology. While Peukert's post-metaphysical tactic is keyed to the problem of the dead, who are excluded in the theory of action with a universal intent, Theunissen focuses on the phenomenon of despair which calls for the annihilation of despair leading toward the notion of God as the 'infinite power of an other'. Interestingly enough, in his critical review of these post-metaphysical approaches, what Adams discovers is not the possibility of the theological-philosophical alliance in the public discourse, but the theological deficit, which he affirms along with Habermas's warning: 'To the extent that theologians are willing to adopt and rely on a theory of communicative action, they abandon their own Christian tradition' (p. 199). In this sense, Adams disassociates himself from the theological approach of those 'dangerous public theologians': David Tracy, Helmut Peukert, and Jens Glebe-Möller.

The final two chapters (Chapters 10 and 11) are important because he makes a case for 'an *alternative* way of considering the question of what Habermas calls "rationality"' (p. 153). In the penultimate chapter, Adams thematizes Habermas's sharp distinction between 'problem-solving' and 'world-disclosure' in characterizing the relationship between 'argument' and 'narrative'. For Adams, this distinction is 'profoundly problematic' in that this distinction is based on the division of the world into 'spheres' (e.g. science, morality, art) or 'expert systems' (e.g. research, law, art criticism), whose validity is highly questionable. Adams skillfully tries to deconstruct Habermas's basic world scheme. Adams argues, 'Problem-solving and world-disclosure are not as decisively separate as Habermas insists, and the spheres of differentiation are obviously blurred when an artist produces a painting inspired by legal cases about *in vitro* fertilization' (p. 215). The deconstruction of Habermas's clear distinction is significant because it would mean that Habermas's 'context-transcending procedural ethics' in actual practices of argumentation needs to be reconfigured in such a way to incorporate the aspect of the world disclosing narrative. Adams juxtaposes John Milbank against Habermas as a prominent figure who develops radically contrasted approach (narrative over argumentation). Adams,

however, does not introduce Milbank to hastily follow his radical orthodoxy. 'Habermas moves too quickly to an "explanation," by trying to ground a context-transcending procedural ethic . . . Milbank too hastily gives up on it by instating that, because no adequate theory of the transcendence of tradition is available, all the reader will get is a retelling of the Christian *mythos*' (p. 225). Now what Adams is trying to do is to carefully navigate between these two radically estranged views with his newly developed approach: the 'scriptural reasoning'.

As Adams himself acknowledges, however, the theoretic description and explanation of the scriptural reason is 'very sketchy' (p. 251). Adams believes that being developed its own literary and social form in recent years, the 'scriptural reasoning' as a communal practice without any grounding on any objective theory can be a better process for 'coordinating different traditions in genuine argumentation than his [Habermas] own project of discourse ethics' (p. 252). So, according to Adams, the answer to the question – how do communities with different narratives meet peacefully in the public sphere in order to argue with, and not merely encounter, each other (p. 219)? – ultimately lies in 'hospitality' rather than in 'rivalry'. Through his program of the 'scriptural reasoning', Adams tries to embrace argumentation and narrative together with no commitment to 'some neutral or universal criterion that transcends the traditions' (p. 250).

In sum, if readers would expect in this book a theoretic breakthrough or an alternative method to overcome Habermas's discourse ethics, they may find that this book is not so helpful. However, if readers are willing to engage in Habermas's post-metaphysical philosophy in order to have a further in-depth discussion about the limitation and possibility of the post-metaphysical theology, this book can be a beneficial resource. Although Adams is careful not to use any unnecessary philosophical jargons, this book can still be a challenge especially to those who are unfamiliar with Habermas or post-metaphysical theologies.

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Through the Eye of a Needle: Theological Conversations over Political Economy, John Atherton and Hannah Skinner (eds.), Epworth, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-7162-0626-2), xiv + 274 pp., pb £19.99

One of the many paradoxes of the Christian faith, evident almost from its inception has been its deep ambivalence to the world. Despite its

incarnational credentials and the claim by a former Archbishop of Canterbury that Christianity 'was the most material of religions', many followers of Christ have preferred instead the path of the spirit. The world of flesh and blood, of money and machines, of wealth creation through trade and economic processes has been at best peripheral, at worst positively harmful to the business of soul making and learning, as Blake put it, 'to bear the beams of love' through long hard days of toil. This attitude seems all the more curious when we consider the record of scripture. Adam got his living from the earth. Cain was a ploughman. Abel, Moses and David were shepherds. Christ was a carpenter, his apostles fishermen. Paul made tents. Simon, the host of Peter was a tanner and Dorcas, the woman of godly repute, fashioned garments with her own hands. There is some evidence here of cottage industries and the nascent micro-economics that have always made for survival and human well-being. The ambiguity remains, however, up to our own day. Globalization, free markets, and the attested success of capitalism (not least in relation to lifting some of the world's poorest people out of misery) continue to evoke indifference, hostility or disdain from some religious commentators. They point to the intrinsically disordered nature of the global market, its brutal impact on the environment, and the sin of pursuing economic wealth as 'a rival to the worship and service of God' (p. 2). Within living memory, Anglican prelates in their hundreds have also listened to and wildly applauded set-piece denunciations of global economic trends but without, alas, any clear idea what should replace them.

There now appears to be a new and welcome form of theological realism surfacing that without seeming to offer a crass endorsement of markets *per se* has recognized that there can be 'no radical starting again' (p. 165) – capitalism like nuclear weapons cannot be disinvented – and the challenge now to theology is to interact with economics and economic processes in such a way that these juggernauts become more fittingly the means to the laudable 'goal of human flourishing in God' (p. 2). *Through the Eye of a Needle* contains the fruits of a sustained ecumenical conversation between twelve contributors representing different skills, experiences, and faith traditions. So we have academic theologians, jobbing clerics, economists, and urban regeneration specialists who together bring a broad and deep experience in church, mosque, industry, local communities, and the academy. Their common belief is that public theology can and must strengthen the connections between ethics and economics in the cause of social justice. Increasing prosperity is not the work of the devil but it must be tempered and reformed to make possible the wealth of *all* nations without scorching the earth in the process.

The book divides into three sections: the first addresses the theoretical relations between theology and economics. Both disciplines

owe much of their coherence and vitality to their controlling narratives and conversations between them therefore 'must address this dimension' (p. 9). The second section acknowledges *difference* and the extent to which these conversation partners feel able to endorse or challenge the capitalist market economy as a cornucopia of goods and services for affluent consumers and the marginalized that have still to taste even the crumbs that fall from the laden tables of the West. The third takes seriously the local as a primary source of theological reflection on practice. The domain in which we live and work and bear each others' burdens is also, increasingly, the place and the space in which we come to recognize what it actually means to inhabit a globalizing world.

I read the whole book with interest and went back to some pages more than once. It is fascinating to learn from Zahid Hussain about the ethical undergirding of an Islamic political economy that carefully prescribes on Quar'anic principles what is admissible and inadmissible in the accumulation and distribution of wealth. No less absorbing are the startling facts concerning the scale of Islamic finance and economics. In Britain alone, sharia compliant mortgages were likely to yield up to £4.5 billion by the end of 2006. Globally, 176 Islamic banks and financial institutions hold assets of \$148 billion. The world of high finance is paying attention and in Sweden the JAK Bank has been established and entirely based on zero interest transactions. Wilf Wilde offers a very personal account of his years in the oil industry and then as a stockbroker. He knows about global capitalism from the inside and it is refreshing to read such an accessible story informed by intelligence and conviction. His faith journey has not entailed the rejection of capitalism but he is insistent that moguls and corporations wield too much power. The few must give way to the many and ordinary people must begin the task of controlling 'the politics and economics of their lives' (p. 165). Michael Northcott takes careful aim at the World Trade Organization and its allies and shows powerfully that unfettered economic growth accompanied by repressive tariffs and subsidies in no way represent good news for the poor. At a more prosaic level, there is something profoundly dispiriting to read about the tonnes of discarded Western clothes unfit, even for charity shops that are sold to the rag trade here before being exported to Africa where they turn up on street market stalls. As a consequence, local clothiers are unable to compete and they are put out of business. The 'invisible hand' of the market is often remarkably inept. The volume begins and ends with challenging and characteristically forthright essays from John Atherton. He knits the contributions together well and provides some markers for the way forward for those who recognize the importance of economics for our collective well-being and believe, no less, that a public theology has much to contribute to the

perennial task of moving things a little closer to the civilization of love that we identify with the kingdom of God.

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The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism, Robert Barron, Brazos Press, 2007 (ISBN 978-1-58743-198-2), 352 pp., pb \$29.99

This book is an extremely well-written, informative, and insightful text that would be a delight to use in an undergraduate or seminary classroom. It is the cover that raises two concerns for me. First, the title promises a postliberal Catholic theology, but there is very little reflection on what postliberalism is or what a distinctively Catholic theology would bring to it. Perhaps this is merely a sign that the marketing forces at Brazos Press continue to hype postliberalism long after its demise as a coherent intellectual movement. Perhaps too this is a sign that Catholic theology is still so analogically comprehensive and hermeneutically generous – as well as, perhaps, intellectually decentered? – that it can swallow whole any distinctly Protestant school of theology without suffering the least bit of indigestion. Too it might be the case that the methodology and assumptions of postliberalism find their completion in Roman Catholicism, but that argument is not made here. To his credit, Barron wants to think theologically, rather than get mired in the problem of methodology.

Second, the title led me to expect an account of the ontological Priority of Christ along the lines first fully developed by John Duns Scotus. Scotus is the current whipping boy of postliberally minded theologians, so I thought the combination of Scotus and, say, George Lindbeck, in the hands of a Catholic, would be very interesting indeed. Perhaps, I thought, I might even find a defense of that dreaded term, univocity! Instead, Barron defends and explicates Thomas's analogical imagination, and puts Christ at the center of a Christian epistemology. The idea that Jesus Christ is first in the ordering of the world – and not just essential in the knowing of the world – is left under developed.

Barron in fact blames Scotus for getting theology into trouble by making 'God and creatures belong to the same basic metaphysical category, the genus of being' (p. 13). In its place, he develops a noncompetitive account of divine transcendence. (As an aside, the term *non-competitive* has become increasingly popular in recent years, and it deserves some careful analysis and qualifications. It is true, of course,

that God has no need to compete with us, but this term seems to imply that there is no tension or struggle between God and humanity whatsoever. I also suspect that it gets thrown around in a kind of quasi-feminist manner as a way of signaling the alleged bullying of typical male competitiveness.) The first step of his project is to develop what he calls an iconic Christology, which attempts to do justice to the richness of the Gospels without reducing Christ to a mere cipher of religious experience. Nonetheless, he does treat Jesus as a symbol (which is very un-postliberal), just as he treats doctrines (and this is where he is very pro-postliberal) as heuristic guides that 'serve to resolve certain puzzlements that threaten to block further investigation' (p. 51). For Barron, Jesus in the Gospels is the particular kind of symbol known as an icon, and icons are dynamic and multidimensional.

Barron examines three aspects of Jesus' iconicity, the Gatherer, the Warrior, and the King. Along the way he presents some close readings of New Testament texts. My favorite was his analysis of the wedding feast at Cana. He interprets Mary as a symbol of Israel, so that when she asks Jesus for more wine, she is 'reminding him that the people have run out of joy, purpose, and connection to one another' (p. 74). His addressing her as 'woman' is, rather than being disrespectful, a sign that he takes her to be the new Eve whose intentions are good but whose timing is off. When she says, 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2:5), she is really speaking to all of Israel, not just the servants. Finally, the wine is the Holy Spirit, the true source of community and celebration.

I was especially intrigued by Barron's depiction of Jesus as a warrior, although I wanted to hear more about how this relates to the theme of noncompetition. I also wanted to hear more about how he can reconcile the warrior Jesus with the Girardian interpretation of the cross that he defends, since Girard makes Jesus a passive victim, not an aggressive warrior. Barron begins this section by following up on a remark by C. S. Lewis that Jesus enters the world anonymously because he is slipping 'quietly behind enemy lines' (p. 91). The most direct evidence of the warrior Jesus is his battles with demons, but on this point Barron retreats from a plain reading of the text, which is one of the standard features of postliberalism. 'I certainly don't advocate a literalistic reading of the Gospel accounts; however, I am convinced that some struggle – whether we interpret it physically, psychologically, or spiritually, interiorly or exteriorly – took place between Jesus and the power that he took to be elemental in the determination of the sinful *ordo*' (p. 98). If what 'he took to be' was not the actual case, then isn't that a pretty devastating problem for the Christian faith?

When it comes to the passion, he defends Pope Leo the Great's formulae that 'the reason for the birth of the Son of God was none other than that he might be fixed to a cross' (p. 104). This is precisely the

opinion, however, that an ontological priority of Christ renders unbelievable. If the world was made for Jesus, and we were made in his image and intended to be his companions, then the incarnation was not made for the cross. The cross was made necessary by sin, but Jesus was not made necessary by the cross! That puts humanity at the center of the cosmos, not Christ. Barron does talk about Christ's ontological priority (see pp. 134–5), but he conflates this with the theory of participation implied in Thomas's theory of analogy. His discussion of the concept of participation is rich and profound, and should help readers of all levels of theological training, and his development of what he calls the Christ Mind is suggestive and insightful. Yet, he situates the question of Christ's priority in epistemological debates about how we know the real, rather than in the theological context of what it means to be human and the distinction between salvation and redemption. If Christ is truly prior to the world, and not just a priority in the sense of a presupposition in the act of knowing, then our weakened state of knowing is evidence of our incompleteness as well as our stubbornness and pride. We need salvation because even if humanity had not fallen, we would have been destined to become one with our prototype. When Christ is put at the center of an analogical theory of participation, Christ is easily lost amid the proliferating affirmations of every act of knowing, no matter how partial. Barron illustrates this danger when he ends up affirming – and perhaps this demonstrates the limits of a liberal, as opposed to postliberal, Catholic imagination – the coincidence of the Christ Mind with Habermas's ideal speech community (p. 186).

There is much more in this book, including a superb summation of Jean-Luc Marion and the problem of naming God with the act of gift giving. The book ends with a fine discussion of ethics and moving portraits of Edith Stein, Thérèse of Lisieux, Katherine Drexel, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

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Religion and Violence in a Secular Age: Toward a New Political Theology, Clayton Crockett (ed.), University of Virginia Press, 2006 (ISBN 978-0-8139-2562-2), x + 233 pp., pb \$22.50

This collection of ten essays displays postmodern re-envisionings of the relationship between theology and politics primarily through the category of the 'secular'. Crockett's introductory essay provides a

narrative to braid the various contributors into a single project, but this is not entirely convincing due to internal unresolved tensions within the different chapters. Nevertheless, following Crockett, it is helpful to sketch the overall 'thesis', broad as such brush strokes inevitably are. Until recently, the story runs, the secular was pitted against the sacred and the rise of modernity heralded the disappearance of the religious from the public square. Liberal theologians seemed to aid and abet in accepting the terms dictated by this version of the story. On the other hand, postliberals, like Radical Orthodoxy, opposed this entire movement by wanting to revert to the premodern. Crockett and collaborators take a different road on this map which is marked by two particular characteristics: first, they accept the wisdom of postmodernity on its own terms and then seek to theologise from within this paradigm; second, they see in this possibility, the radical politicising of theology in so much as the divide between the sacred and secular is elided, thus overcoming previously doomed efforts at political theologies. One might call this postmodern political theology which asks the constant question: what is the theology behind any formation of the 'secular'? In Talal Asad's words: 'The concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion'. Thus, theology is always immanent discourse, though never without reduction, and hence always political discourse – and herein lies the novelty of the project. Both theology and politics are concerned with power – in bad forms of theology as in politics, concerned to possess and control; and in good forms of both, to critique, to question, to unveil the masking of reality. Thus runs the self-narrative of this meta-narrative guiding the volume.

The essays are of a uniformly high standard and the first six by B. Keith Putt, Carl A. Raschke, James J. Dicenso, Eleanor Pontoriero, Martin Kavka, and John D. Caputto take various postmodern writers and harness them to the task. For example, B Keith Putt shows how René Girard and Caputo both develop, in traditional theological terms, Abelardian exemplary atonement theory, compassionate repetition, rather than espouse the violent imitation inherent in Anselm's atonement theory. Indeed, the use of Girard and Caputo helps to critically highlight Anselm's problematic violence buried at the heart of Reform theology, in so much as Calvin develops and exemplifies this tradition. In many ways, the constructive exposition of this essay is valuable, but there is a lack of theological nuance in the uncritical characterization of Anselm and it is not clear whether theological models ever call into question the wisdom of the postmodern patriarchs. This same is evident in John D. Caputo's elegant and excellent exposition of Derrida's 'Democracy to Come'. Caputo shows how deeply resonant is Derrida's recent thought in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* and *Rogues* with the creation of a radical theological politics. He sees Derrida as the door by which theology must enter into this new pasture. But there is never

a questioning of Derrida, never a chance to consult the traditional or classical theological writers first, but a reading of the theological tradition entirely through Derrida's eyes. I do not want to suggest that Derrida, Lyotard, Levinas, and other giants of the postmodern era are unimportant, nor that their philosophies should not act as handmaid to theology, but only to ask whether theology ends up being the handmaid to their philosophies in this project and sometimes seems to disappear entirely. I shall return to this shortly.

The final four essays by Noëlle Vahanian, Edith Wyschogrod, Jeffrey W. Robbins, and Richard Kearney are more wide-ranging and equally as engaging. Robbins for example draws on Lyotard's examination of the postmodern, Vattimo on fundamentalism, Hardt, and Negri's analysis of Empire, to cumulatively suggest that fundamentalism is actually postmodernity's shadow, not a regression to the premodern, and that 'terror' is too complex a category to be simply applied to the perpetrators of 9/11. To quote Eqbal Ahmad, terrorism is 'the use of terrorizing methods of governing or resisting a government' (p. 193). Robbins then provides a map of the project of the political theology being pursued in this book, offering a running criticism of alternatives such as the death of God movement and the afterbirth of postmodern theologians like Carl Raschke (who has a chapter in this book), Mark C. Taylor, and Charles Winquist. Liberation theology and process political theology are paradigms that still leave traditional theology intact, simply bolting on various Marxist or Whiteheadian elements. In contrast, theology in Robbins's project is called into radical question. Sadly, Robbins does not comment on Radical Orthodoxy nor the European political theologies of Metz and Moltmann, but one can perhaps guess what might be said. This is fascinating and informative, but I wonder whether ultimately for Robbins, political theology is nothing other than the close reading of postmodern political philosophies and siphoning off these readings to form theology? Kearney's essay shows how various religions can draw on resources for alternatives to violence. Of all the essays in the collection, it is difficult to see the postmodern thematic present in this instructive and stimulating piece.

I am left wondering whether what we have here is ultimately the eclipse of 'theology' as a discipline and its elision with philosophy – of a postmodern trope. Incarnation betokens concrete communities of practice which allegedly herald in the kingdom, whereas this political theology seems unrooted in any such community and seems entirely unaccountable to it. If I have persisted in a single line of critical questioning, it should not detract from the positive, high-quality and novel contribution this volume seeks to make.

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Old Testament Theology Volume 2, Israel's Faith, John Goldingay, Inter-Varsity Press, 2006 (ISBN 0-8308-2562-2), 891 pp., pb \$25.00

In this second book of what will no doubt be a three volume masterpiece, John Goldingay takes a more traditional approach to the text of scripture, asking questions that aim to offer exposition of the faith that created the Old Testament (here referred to as the First Testament) and the theological motifs that endorsed God's relationship with Israel, as well as the nature of human existence and the faith it determines. Using a variety of disciplines, and utilizing the context of postmodernism (I use the term loosely), Goldingay embraces the depths of theological rigor in an attempt to penetrate the true meaning of the first testament text that might support discursive, reflective, and comprehensive communication, in both the pulpit and the lecture hall. Remaining faithful both to his theological agenda and the questions it presents as well as to the God it reveals, Goldingay uses both systematic theology and personal reflection/[faith] to produce a book that is certainly worthy of scholastic and pastoral recognition.

While this is clearly a theology of the Old Testament, Goldingay expresses quite clearly that such a theology cannot take place without due consideration being given to its relationship with the New Testament, to which there is most certainly an obvious connection. Indeed, the New Testament certainly appears to confirm many of the perspectives highlighted in the First Testament and there is no doubt that it brings God's apparent purposes with Israel to a climax. As such they are (if only by means of narrative,) fundamentally at one in their understanding of God and his relationship and expectations with humanity; the New Testament certainly takes the *story* forward. The first testament tells the story of what God did to create the world and the covenant made with Israel, the second testament tells of the visible embodiment of the self-revelation God had given Israel. While I would agree with this, I did find myself chuckling at Goldingay's description of the New Testament as being a 'series of ecclesial footnotes to the Old Testament'!

To understand the content of a person's life, one can look at the story that he or she has to tell and the plot that subsequently emerges. In addition to this, one can also consider the qualities that that person has to offer as well as identify the traits that create their personality. The same is true of scripture – each Testament has a *historical* narrative that has a story to tell (its plot), but as well as this, each Testament also attempts to give a meta-physical account of the people that create the story, raising questions about the qualities of Israel's faith and, as such, their relationship with God. As Norman Gottwald pointed out, to fully

understand the Hebrew Bible one should take account of everything it says about God, everything God says and everything people say about God. To me, this suggests that we should consider both the plot that is implicit in the text, but also the personality of those within it (and indeed those that created it); such would give, albeit a mammoth task, a more thorough understanding and appreciation of the text. This is precisely the agenda that John Goldingay takes in this hugely engaging and critically comprehensive book.

Throughout the book, Goldingay considers a number of different issues including: (1) the personhood and nature of God as one who speaks and acts, for it is upon these two contingencies that Israel's faith finds its expression. This is a God of proleptic proportions whose majesty can be confronted through an anthropomorphic agenda that makes Him accessible to all human beings – a God whose agenda for Israel is that they receive His blessing and that the world might seek the same blessing through them; (2) the people of Israel as the people of YHWH rather than a political, ethnic, or geographical entity. In this way, Israel is a family that exists by His grace whose *raison d'être* is to stay in relationship with Him by virtue of Covenant and Torah. This is not an exclusive relationship but one which has a proto-gospel agenda that extends God's election epidemiologically to the rest of the world; (3) the consequences that arise from lack of obedience to the covenantal relationship with YHWH and the failure of Israel to conform to His commands. According to Goldingay, evil occurs not as a self-existent entity in and of itself, but rather consists in the absence of that which is good (YHWH). In denying YHWH and by looking for answers elsewhere, Israel forgets what He has done for them and subsequently set themselves up for moral and religious failure through their own self-alienation from God. Sin therefore abounds in Israel's resistance of the election prepared for them, a hardening of hearts that allowed God to administer his grace through the work of Jesus Christ in the New (second) Testament; (4) the vision of YHWH for the people of Israel. Israel's lack of obedience to YHWH and the consequences it brought would have shaken the foundations of their social and religious identity. Israel therefore would have needed a vision of hope that would re-establish relationship, relieve oppression, and bring fulfillment at some point in the future. For Goldingay, the hope that lies in YHWH becomes dependant on past experience and, while he is cautious about using eschatological terminology, this is certainly a narrative of apocalyptic hope in which God's Covenant with Israel is bound up in a proleptic agenda; (5) Israel's relationship with God as having a distinct purpose with the whole of humanity. The narrative of the first testament is bound up almost entirely with God's vision of man rather than man's vision of God. The creation of humanity in God's image teaches us that humankind can only ever be defined and understood in terms of

its relationship and encounter with its Creator. In this way, while God is committed to humanity, humans are under obligation to serve God, sharing His world, and vision, in a kind of a Theo-anthropological (my words) agenda; (6) YHWH's commitment to the nature of the cosmos/ (the heavens and the earth) and the continuity that exists as a result of His activity – of which humans were invited to be a part. From the beginning, God's involvement in His creation is established within a framework that demonstrates a security and order which serves to share the created world with humankind (through symbiotic relationship) as well as invite the world to give God its worship. Such an activity is made more apparent later on when creation reaches its goal in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; (7) the first testament's portrayal of a transcendent God who is involved in His creation and a people who are called into special relationship with him, yet who continue to fail. This is a story of nations created by YHWH, living in His world, summoned to recognize Him, and His sovereign power, and of a God who never finishes with His creation and whose created order is reliant upon Him.

This is a very interesting book, lucid in style, exhaustive in content and intelligent in substance. Goldingay raises questions that provoke fruitful debate for both undergraduate and postgraduate level as well as producing a resource that will be valuable for a plethora of theological disciplines – I was certainly impressed by His ability to marry the theological agenda with both the academic and the clerical. Since being introduced to the whole Israel debate in my undergraduate days, I have been waiting for a text such as this to be written, I can only look forward to reading volume three!

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Metaphysics and the God of Israel: Systematic Theology of the Old and New Testaments, Neil B. MacDonald, Baker Academic, 2006 (ISBN 978-0-8010-3243-1), 248 pp., pb \$24.99

Neil MacDonald is an original thinker who writes with intensity while covering a wide range of topics. His newest book makes a bid to integrate metaphysics and biblical studies in a way that is challenging to both fields. It takes a broad leap across the divide that modernity has dug between historical studies and the sometimes obscure state that has befallen metaphysics. MacDonald wants to defend the basic rationality

of the Bible, as well as attend to its historical specificity. To do so, he develops what he calls a 'biblical metaphysic'.

This book is a natural extension of the revival of metaphysics among theologians and should open a new conceptual space for the philosophical study of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, it is hard reading, and not just because MacDonald is equally at home with Gerhard von Rad and Claus Westermann as Karl Barth and Nicholas Wolterstorff. On nearly every page, it seems, MacDonald takes conceptual jumps with all the dexterity of a Russian ballet dancer. Even after you see it several times, you still wonder how he does it. His previous book compared Wittgenstein and Barth, and this one continues in this vein by applying a salve of Barthian theology to soothe the itches of the historical critics just as Wittgensteinian therapy was meant to heal the wounds inflicted by metaphysical idealists. What makes this book curious, at times, is that MacDonald deepens the complexity of metaphysics as he tries to clarify and simplify biblical theology.

The one jump that prepares the way for all of his subsequent crossings of the divide between history and metaphysics has to do with his interpretation of God's self-determination. 'My claim will be that God creates the world precisely by determining himself to be the creator of the world. The paradoxical aspect of this is that it seems to put things the wrong way around. Our natural inclination is to say that God determines himself to be the creator precisely by creating the world' (p. 25). I am not sure about MacDonald's description of our natural inclinations (do people really have natural inclinations about this kind of philosophical problem?), but MacDonald makes the most of this point. He argues that the doctrine of creation must be understood first and foremost as an action that God takes 'on himself' (p. 26). God is both the subject and the object of this action. This decision is not conditioned in any way. It is purely free.

This act of self-determination, for MacDonald, renders natural theology irrelevant, because God's decision to be the Creator is purely internal to God. There is no trace of this decision in nature. The predicate 'created by God' does not add anything to our descriptions of nature. This is MacDonald's way of trying to provide a metaphysical foundation for Barth's rejection of natural theology, though I doubt Barth would have been happy with that. In one fell swoop, MacDonald has reconciled history and metaphysics at the cost of destroying any possible dialogue between theology and science. He thus accepts Richard Dawkins' account of evolution – that there is no evidence of design – as a logical outcome of his own metaphysics (see footnote on p. 60).

To clarify MacDonald's position, take his interpretation of God's speech act, 'Let there be light' (Genesis 1:3). For MacDonald, the puzzle of how God could have created light before God created the sun and the

stars is solved by realizing that when God said, 'Let there be light', God was not really creating anything. Instead, God was creating the possibility of time, which, for MacDonald, is the presupposition of the creation of space. God introduces sequence into the world by the time it takes to make this statement, 'Let there be light'. Only after light is created can the light be separated from the darkness, which suggests that space (the separation of things into their distinct places) is dependent upon time. MacDonald has some very interesting things to say about time, though his discussion always comes down to this simple proposition: 'God determines *himself* to be within our time. Therefore, he *is* in our time' (p. 79). This appears to me to have limited explanatory potential due to its tautological form.

I found MacDonald's discussion of the divine voice to be especially intriguing. Simply put, MacDonald thinks that God really talks. (Although he uses *speak* or *speaks* throughout, I think using *talk* or *talks* is more provocative and best gets at his meaning.) MacDonald rejects Wolterstorff's argument in his book, *Divine Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), that God can be said to speak in ways that do not involve physical vocalization on the analogy that we can be said to speak when we send someone a birthday card or commission an ambassador with a message. MacDonald also rejects Augustine's notion of spiritual speech. Instead, MacDonald thinks that God talks because God decided to talk, which means that he really talks! God spoke because he determined himself to be the one who speaks, which means, to MacDonald, that he could speak without a physically embodied voice organ. 'We can even say, along with the simple literal sense of the text, that God spoke Hebrew (both Barth and the great Old Testament scholar Herman Gunkel affirm this) since this is what is in the direct-speech quotational marks!' (p. 21). The best that I can make of this observation is that it might follow from the idea of exhaustive divine foreknowledge (God knew what language the Old Testament writers would use so he spoke in it for their sake).

My first response is to say, 'Of course, God can do whatever God wants to do, and if he chooses to do something, then it gets done'. MacDonald, however, thinks that the description of God as a self-determining agent gets a lot done for us as well. He uses it to solve several metaphysical perplexities, including the ancient question of how an immaterial being could have created a very material world. He also uses it to argue that the *imago Dei* is not a natural property that we possess, concluding that 'Humankind is in no wise different from the other living species' (p. 63). We are a product, it seems, of both random mutations and the random decision of God, but we know the latter only through faith, and the latter has no bearing on the former.

If I could interject at this point, what seems to be missing from this metaphysics is a strong dose of Christology. Surely, it would help his argument that God speaks Hebrew if he were to discuss the role of Christ in the creation of the world. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all things, which also helps to solve the problem of mediating between the immaterial and the material as well as the difficulty of locating the meaning of the *imago Dei*. If God created the world through Christ, then the materiality of the world is made possible by God's self-determination to be the Father of the Son, just as the image in which we were created is the Word that God speaks.

MacDonald chooses not to mix Christology and metaphysics because he wants to remain utterly loyal to the Hebrew Scriptures. He does provide a reading of the Gospels at the end of this book, but he argues that a plain-sense reading of the Old Testament – in contrast to 'the conventional tendency to reread the Old in terms of the New' (p. 183) – actually better prepares the reader for the way in which Jesus Christ comes to take the place of Israel. In his reading of the Old Testament, he interprets the Genesis account of creation as the explanatory complement to Israel's historical experience of YHWH in the Exodus narrative. He argues that the narratives can be trusted precisely because they coordinate so well with the Genesis metaphysics. 'Is it rational to affirm the narrative-claims of such experience as it is narrated in the Old Testament?' he asks. His answer: 'It is rational to affirm this experience because what it is experience of is true, and this because God determined himself to be such that it is so, is true' (p. 118). Just as God's self-determination to be the creator solved a host of metaphysical problems, it also, MacDonald argues, solves the problem of the historical reliability of the Exodus narrative. MacDonald's argument, however, only says that God determined himself to be experienced as the one who determined himself to be the creator. It does not say that he determined himself to be experienced in such a way that all of the details of that experience of him are true. That might indeed be true, but metaphysics cannot solve all the problems of hermeneutics.

There is much more in this dense book, which is exciting in its parts and pieces even if it seems to promise more than it delivers. MacDonald throws off inspiring thoughts and insights with daunting efficiency. He might not solve all the puzzles he describes, but he gives the reader much to puzzle over.

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The Way That Leads There: Augustinian Reflections on the Christian Life, Gilbert Meilaender, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006 (ISBN 10: 0-8028-3213-x, ISBN 13:978-0-8028-3213-9), xi + 171 pp., pb \$16.00

As part of what can only be called an Augustinian publishing industry, Gilbert Meilaender engages with the writings of Augustine in a novel and provocative way by allowing him to be a conversation partner in subjects that human beings have wrestled with for centuries – desire, duty, politics, sex, and grief.

Written in an accessible style, the originality and scope of the work deserves merit among the vast corpus being published out of a renewed interest in the Doctor of Grace.

The longest chapter in the book looks at desire, that very seat of much of Augustine's writing. The familiar thought is of course that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God. But is this human longing for God towards the end of our own happiness problematic? First, the 'seeming "anthropocentrism" of the eudaimonistic quest' (p. 6) could see God as important only as the One who satisfies a human need to be happy, which is hardly a selfless pursuit. Second, Augustine seems to suggest that 'to seek the happy life is to seek God' (p. 8), as all seek to be happy, there is ultimately no one who does not seek God. Third, in Confessions 5.4, Augustine says that a person is happy by knowing God regardless of whether he knows other things or not. This seems to suggest that 'if no other object of love other than God can really satisfy the restless heart's desire, then it is hard to know why the heart that has found God should need or love any other object' (p. 9).

By leading us through these complex questions in an unusual and occasionally convoluted way, Meilaender does reach moments of brilliance. To the third problem for example, he says 'God gives us others to love . . . as a kind of "school" in which we learn the real meaning of loving not just the gift but also the Giver . . . and when we find God we find the One who continues to give us others as objects of our love, who are not left behind' (pp. 37–8). Yet, this is only partially satisfying in approaching the Scylla and Charibdis of eudaemonism and obliteration of the self. Meilaender suggests at the heart of Augustine lies a deep criticism of anything that could be seen as self-sufficiency. The 'entirety of the ancient eudaemonist project in now denounced as infected by pride' (p. 39), to be free from the longings that make us dependent and vulnerable would be a step away from God and cause us to loose 'every shred of humanity' (p. 41).

The chapter on sex was the most difficult. Meilaender works with the notions of desire that Augustine used in coupling libido and hunger. He articulates Augustine's model of affirming the pleasure of eating only when it serves the good of nourishing the body in life and health. The author suggests that an additional good can be found in that eating

can foment human conversation and community. Likewise, Meilaender takes up Augustine's allowance of the pleasure of sex so long as it led to procreation, to suggest that the pleasure of sex can be allowed apart from procreation so long as another good: carnal conversation and community is attained.

To pursue this need to locate a further good apart from the simple pleasures of eating and sex may be problematic for some readers. The need to locate an additional moral good apart from the goodness of all of creation, even at its biological level, is something Christian thinkers have been cautious about in recent times.

Throughout the book, and clarified in his final chapter 'Method', Meilaender wants Augustine to teach us how to think about the Christian moral life as a true contemporary. Cautious of those historians who tell us 'we must never read Augustine as if he were contemporary with ourselves' (p. 165), Meilaender warns that 'we may make a thinker as significant as Augustine seem largely irrelevant to our concerns and questions' (p. 165), if we do not recognize that in our shared humanity we are confronted by issues that recur and echo throughout the ages. Reading Augustine in his time may desensitize us to the truths that he articulated for all time.

As I have intimated, Meilaender's project is well placed and mostly successful, and on those few occasions where I have some doubts, the problem seems to lie, not in the method, but in the application of the method. To extend Augustine's thought as a long line through history is certainly a mandatory and rich resource for an 'ecumenism of time' (p. 170); its Gordian Knot is that other trajectories are needed to discern where refractions may have occurred.

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Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology: A Study in Karl Barth's Analogical Use of the Trinitarian Relation, Peter S. Oh, T&T Clark, 2006 (ISBN 0-5670-3119-5), xvi + 180 pp., hb £70.00

Some of the most challenging and vital questions in the field of systematic theology concern the interconnection between doctrinal loci. It is fitting, then, that the study of a great theologian would aim to discern such connections in his or her work. In a revision of his doctoral thesis written under the supervision of the late Colin Gunton, Peter S. Oh asks after the connection between trinity and church in Karl Barth. Oh's

thesis is that, for Barth, the relation between divine and human action within the church is analogous to the perichoretic relation within God's triune being, such that the latter grounds and informs the former. Oh's task is to identify the basis and implications of such an analogy in Barth.

Basic to such an investigation is not only what connections are made but also *how* they are made. Since, in Barth's case, theological connections are made by analogy, Oh spends Part One of his book dealing with the thorny issues surrounding Barth's conception of the term. This part consists of four chapters. The first chapter describes Barth's development from his initial opposition to the *analogia entis* in favor of the *analogia fidei* to Barth's later more irenic attitude toward the *analogia entis*. This chapter represents a current trend advancing the claim that Barth fully retracted his criticism of the analogy of being. Although this is a highly questionable assertion, Oh does not make much of this claim in the remainder of the book.

Oh moves on in the second chapter to identify the complementary character of Barth's concept of analogy. Analogy places God and humanity in a complementary, rather than merely contrary, relationship. He highlights this complementarity by showing that, although he misappropriated Kierkegaard's dialectic by focusing solely on its negative side, Barth eventually developed a position similar to Kierkegaard's real intention. For both thinkers, the two sides of the dialectic were opposed so stringently in order to bring them together in a bipolar complementarity without undermining the integrity of either.

In the third chapter of Part One, Oh pursues the ontological basis for analogy. Oh uncovers Barth's actualist and relational ontology by examining Barth's deployment of the *analogia actionis* and the *analogia fidei*. This ontology in turn shapes Barth's soteriology, enabling Barth to speak of a perichoretic relation between divine and human action. In other words, divine and human being are understood relationally in reference to one another. It is at this point that Oh's thesis begins to surface.

The last chapter of part one argues that trinitarian *perichoresis* is the ontological archetype of the hypostatic union, as well as for all other communion between God and humanity, and among humans. This chapter is far too brief a nod toward Barth's Christological mediation of divine-human communion. Oh moves more smoothly from trinitarian relationality to divine-human relationality than Barth does. This move could be perceived as a development beyond Barth, but since Oh does not advertise it as such, one wonders whether Oh has really understood the nature of Barth's Christocentrism. For Barth, all divine-human relations must be understood by means of the unity of God and humanity in Jesus Christ and his movement to other human beings. Not, as per Oh, via an account of relationality abstracted from the actuality of the atonement and the living history that results.

In Part Two of his book, Oh focuses his attention on Barth's analogical use of the trinitarian pattern of *perichoresis* in the context of ecclesiology. Part Two consists of three chapters dealing with ecclesiology (ch. 5), baptism (ch. 6), and moral redemption (ch. 7). In Chapter 5, Oh shows that Barth consistently employs the language of unity-within-difference when describing the relation between God and the church. This language certainly permeates Barth's own exposition, but it does not prove Oh's point, given that unity-within-difference is not the conceptual equivalent of *perichoresis*. For Barth, divine *perichoresis* refers to the mutual indwelling of God's three modes of being so that both God's self-differentiation and singular subjectivity are maintained. God's communion with humanity in the church is never a matter of a single subject, but of a unity of correspondence between distinct subjects. Oh understands this difference, but does not account for it within his proposal.

This problem persists into the next chapter on baptism. Oh rightly argues that Barth's distinction between Spirit-baptism and water-baptism coheres with his understanding of the differentiated union of divine and human action. However, he wrongly cites this as evidence of a perichoretic relation between the Spirit and the believer. Two subjects acting in union is not *perichoresis*.

In the last chapter, Oh speaks of Barth's theology of moral redemption in terms of the Christian attitude of faith, obedience, and prayer. These three are nicely correlated with the *analogia fidei*, the *analogia actionis*, and the *analogia relationis*. Here Oh, for the first time, cites texts where Barth makes an explicit analogical use of the trinitarian pattern of *perichoresis*. However, these texts do not posit a perichoretic relation between divine and human action, nor even between fellow humans, but only between different modes of human action. Barth states that human faith, obedience and prayer mutually indwell one another in a manner analogous to the *perichoresis* of God's three modes of being. Thus, even though Oh succeeds in identifying an analogy between divine *perichoresis* and human *perichoresis*, his main argument fails. He simply does not provide sufficient evidence of an analogical relationship between divine *perichoresis* and divine-human *perichoresis*. Perhaps if Oh had given more attention to the perichoretic analogies actually present in Barth, this would have been a more fruitful study.

Despite its lack of success in arguing its thesis, this is an important book. The connection between trinity and church is a major research agenda in contemporary theology. What Barth offers this debate remains poorly understood and is worth investigating. Such an investigation would need to take into account the architectonic of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, with its Christological movement from God's self-differentiated action to a corresponding human action. Although Oh does not proceed this way, he at least brings Barth to the ongoing

conversation about trinity and church. Therefore, I can recommend this book to specialists who will be stimulated toward further engagement with this important topic.

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God in the World: A Guide to Karl Rahner's Theology, Thomas F. O'Meara, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007 (ISBN 13: 978-0-8146-5222-0, ISBN 10: 0-8146-5222-0), viii + 145 pp., pb \$15.95

The life of Karl Rahner, perhaps the most influential Catholic thinker of the twentieth century, closely parallels the turbulent story of pre- and post-Vatican II Catholic theology. Born in 1904, this energetic and ever-inquisitive Jesuit began his career by writing a doctoral thesis at Freiburg which was never accepted by his director Martin Honecker because 'the focus was too much on the active subject' (p. 18). It was later published under the title *Geist in Welt (Spirit in the World)*, which, along with *Hörer des Wortes (Hearer of the Word)*, became a seminal work in contemporary philosophical theology. Rahner later ran into trouble with church authorities over progressive assertions he made regarding the dogma of Mary's Assumption and his critique of the over-multiplication of Masses in light of the one sacrifice of Christ. Although Pope John XXIII's selection of Rahner as a participant in the preparatory sessions for the Second Vatican Council indicated that his scuffles with Rome were not so serious, he was constantly criticized by fellow Jesuit professors at the prestigious Gregorian University and by Vatican bureaucrats. Since his death in 1984, the name of Rahner still sparks intense controversy regarding many basic theological concepts including nature, grace, redemption, and church.

While 'avoiding academic intricacies' and hoping to 'attract beginners and disciples' (p. 7) to Rahner, Thomas O'Meara, who studied under the German theologian at the University of Munich in the mid-sixties, intends to present the reader with a straightforward guide to the Jesuit's fundamental ideas, devoting special attention to the themes of scripture and ministry. Disappointingly, the author ends up skirting the more contested points of Rahner's systematics and fails to sufficiently probe the central questions that initially inspired Rahner.

O'Meara begins this short volume with some fascinating reflections on Rahner's personality and the historical context in which he and other progressive Catholic thinkers did the bulk of their work.

Exhausted by the turgid formulaic approach pervading neo-Scholastic manuals, Rahner sought to broaden theology's horizon by seriously engaging Kant, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and twentieth century philosophy in general. An ardent desire to initiate a meaningful dialogue with modern culture, literature, and the arts, without renouncing the Catholic tradition, would characterize Rahner's work in the years to follow. O'Meara recalls how Rahner was always ready to converse at length on any number of topics, as evidenced in several seminars which he enthusiastically offered in Munich and Münster. In fact, Rahner left Munich for Münster in April of 1967 precisely because the theology faculty at Munich refused to allow him to direct doctoral dissertations in theology since he was technically a member of the philosophy faculty.

The next three chapters of O'Meara's book explore the issues that most interested Rahner and the fundamental points underpinning his distinctive anthropology. O'Meara calls Rahner a 'theological psychologist of the human life' (p. 61). He illustrates how Rahner pushed the limits of the theology of grace to include all men and women, even nonbelievers, within the mysterious life of the Trinity. Influenced by the Jesuit philosopher Joseph Maréchal, and convinced that the human quest for understanding and love discloses the action of God in the life of every individual human being, Rahner elaborated a 'transcendental method' which became the standard pedagogy in countless Catholic seminaries and colleges throughout the 1970s and 1980s. O'Meara touches upon several disciplines inevitably affected by Rahner's method, including Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and biblical hermeneutics. In regard to the last of these, O'Meara defends Rahner against the critique that he was a weak scriptural exegete, arguing that Rahner was more interested in how the hearer of the Word is drawn to the sacred text and how the Word is assimilated by the believer.

The next two chapters offer a commentary on Rahner's impact on the complex and controversial issue of ecclesial ministry. The author points to Rahner's unmistakably pastoral emphasis on this issue, and suggests ways in which the Jesuit's insights could help broaden our understanding of the evolving dynamic between local church life and centralized authority. As in many of O'Meara's previous writings, his personal sympathy for the ordination of women to the priesthood is thinly veiled. He bolsters his critique of recent Catholic magisterial reaffirmations of the reservation of priestly ordination to men with a series of passages from Rahner's later writings.

Whether or not one agrees with O'Meara on such concrete issues as ecclesial ministry and the hierarchical structure of the church, there are more fundamental problems with this book. O'Meara's treatments of difficult, though inescapable, metaphysical and epistemological issues which are at the core of Rahner's revolutionary approach to theology

are superficial. He drives an artificial wedge between Rahner's 'transcendentality' and traditional Catholic 'ontology' by too facilely equating the latter with 'extrinsicism' (p. 49). Rahner was thoroughly schooled in Thomism, and he never considered his theology as strictly juxtaposed to Aquinas. O'Meara exaggerates when he asserts that 'from 1850 to 1960 the Catholic Church sought to ignore any move to the subject', and that 'Church authority feared democracy and freedom, teaching that there was only one perennial perspective: Aristotelian and medieval' (p. 40). Although it is true that there were some circles in Rome that looked suspiciously on such figures as Mohler (1796–1838), Rosmini (1797–1855), and Guardini (1885–1968), the influence of the historical and personal approaches to theology exemplified in their writings had an enormous effect on academics, bishops, and even a few popes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although O'Meara is to be commended for highlighting Rahner's 'both/and' approach, he fails to make adequate distinctions that would have been axiomatic for Rahner himself. For example, the author claims that 'Christian belief in a Trinity and in the Incarnation suggests some slight facet of alteration' in the Godhead (p. 73). He suggests that Rahner was unique in allowing space for this 'alteration'. Yet, he refrains from providing any detail as to what this divine alteration entails. To make matters worse, O'Meara misquotes Rahner when he writes that 'God can become something, he who is changeable in himself can himself become subject to change in something else' (p. 73). The word 'changeable' should in fact be 'unchangeable', as correctly quoted in O'Meara's preceding paragraph. Though this is probably only a typo, it is hard not to think that a Freudian slip may have been involved.

There is no doubt that Rahner's was one of the most comprehensive and wide-reaching theological minds of the twentieth century. It is also clear, as O'Meara observes, that this German Jesuit was a man of the church. His immediate legacy is unquestionable, though his place in the broader history of theology remains to be seen. His thought deserves a more careful and exacting analysis than O'Meara gives, even in a book intended for the beginner and the general reader. This book does contain several helpful summaries of the broad themes covered by Rahner, but I am afraid that a more discriminating and precise scrutiny of his innovative thought will have to be left to others.

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Sacred Heart Major Seminary



The Challenge of Practical Theology: Selected Essays, Stephen Pattison, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007 (ISBN 978-1-84310-453-7), 300 pp., pb £29.95

Stephen Pattison has, for many years, been in the vanguard helping Practical Theology to be taken seriously beyond the Scottish academy and to be valued as a discipline in a much wider context. To a great extent, this project has been a success, although there remain some feelings of marginality about the discipline and there are a number of British theology faculties where it continues to be unrecognized or treated with amused disdain. Nevertheless, Practical Theology has moved a long way from its origins as 'hints and tips for the clergy' and, while Pattison would be the last to claim all the credit for this, his own contribution as a theologian with a grounding in 'secular' contexts and disciplines, in practical ministry and in academic life, has been, and remains, extremely important. This collection of twenty of his best essays over the last twenty-plus years, demonstrates some of the ways in which he has helped put Practical Theology on the map and, at the same time, perhaps offers some clues about the discipline's continuing ambiguity – the sense that Practical Theologians often want to be recognized within the church and the academy without losing the freedoms and privileges of the misunderstood outsider.

The essays are collected in five sections, each reflecting a phase in Pattison's career or a distinctive turn in his thinking. Reflecting his work among health care professionals and managers, the first section explores the relationship between ethics and values and the limitations of professional codes of practice. As he says, there is little that is overtly theological here; yet, the insights addressed to the secular context go some way to substantiate Pattison's claim later in the book that the theologian is not without his or her uses to the secular world. In the second section, however, Pattison brings theological concepts into conversation with managerialism's pretensions: this is a topic he has dealt with at greater length in his book *The Faith of the Managers*, but here we can see more clearly how the theme relates to his understanding of the role of Practical Theology. Third comes a substantial section on Christian thought and practice – here, the therapeutic context which underlies most of Pattison's concerns emerges to the foreground and the church (and, indeed, the Christian theological tradition) is not spared for its failure to enact with consistency its expressed concerns for human well-being. These ideas are developed further in three essays on the public role of theology in section four, and the book concludes with the examination of the nature of Pastoral and Practical Theology, including Pattison's most recent work which asks if the latter is 'Art or Science'.

'I am', says Pattison, 'a critical practical theologian of care; a person who seeks to analyze and create action-guiding strategies of religiously informed care which will preserve, develop and enrich human well-being within a horizon of faith' (p. 197). Pattison's self-definition reflects the trajectory of his own life and career which very openly informs all these essays: each has been occasioned by a specific set of circumstances, a particular audience or a concern that has grown out of personal and practical engagement with the way people live their lives and pursue their vocations. Indeed, the book is even more personal, for Pattison, rather bravely, exposes a good deal of his own human and emotional journey in order to locate himself honestly and overtly in relation to the materials with which he is working. By the end, one feels one has met the author and not just been exposed to a segment of his thinking. More importantly, one has been led through a kind of worked example of how theology can be genuinely practical as it addresses real lives and real human concerns.

Pattison's Practical Theology is, of its essence, interdisciplinary. It is theology which believes that it must learn from disciplines and experiences beyond itself, beyond the confines of the church and beyond the realm of practices which are usually associated with the 'religious'. Immediately, then, Practical Theology has to face the liberal dilemma of wishing to enter as a partner into dialogue with modes of discourse which make no space for the concepts of transcendence and divinity. For Pattison, Practical Theology is happy to embrace the 'liberal' label but, importantly, he often asserts its evangelical nature as well, for it is theology concerned with enabling people to live well, and for the Christian this must entail an encounter with God-in-Christ. It is a pity that these labels are not analyzed more searchingly, for the time is surely ripe for evangelical theology to be won back for the cause of human flourishing. Yet, Pattison's liberalism remains more problematic than he acknowledges. And here I am attempting to comment on the mental atmosphere of the book as a whole, acknowledging that, with all the essays derived openly from particular moments and contexts, it is unsurprising that an overarching analysis of terms and ideas is not to be had within these covers.

The challenge to the theologian of any interdisciplinary venture includes, as Pattison notes, the risk of failing to do any theology at all, although he is surely right to face that risk rather than remain deaf to all forms of knowledge that originate outside the company of the faithful. The problem remains, however, that liberal theology tends too often to accept subordination to other ways of knowing. When Pattison discusses the role of theology, there seems to be no way for it to set out its own agenda of human well-being but only to contribute, more or less well, to a version of human flourishing defined in wholly external terms. Theology, it seems, is rather like the study of Latin in schools – a

good thing to do for the side effects it engenders, rather than something which is of immediate and intrinsic value. Thus (p. 208), theology 'can have an enormously positive role in pointing up and helping people to negotiate the forest of symbols, myths, and meanings which permeate all aspects of human life with critical commitment'. But what of theological narratives themselves, and their own content and meaning? Theology, it seems, is to be valued against criteria that emerge externally, rather than being the source of those criteria. We are told that, 'people need theologies that help to affirm incarnate worldly existence rather than to escape from or to deny it' (p. 190). Well, yes, but . . . Is all worldly existence so capable of affirmation? The genesis of a more distinctive commitment to the unique narratives of faith is certainly present, not least as Pattison warns against the dilution of health care chaplaincy into a kind of brokerage of spiritual services across all faiths, but the tension between this robustness and the liberal tendency to judge theology against canons of secular knowledge, but not vice versa, goes unexplored. One really wishes for Pattison to engage more than cursorily with Radical- and Neo-Orthodoxy, or perhaps with Hauerwas. Not that these sources are right and Pattison wrong, but because so much of his work is offered as a corrective to the partial, self-serving or even mendacious uses to which theology has been put that it would be good to see him getting to grips with the corrective of other theologies which approach the problems differently.

Indeed, the need for corrective readings recurred, at least for me, throughout this book. So much of what Pattison writes is deeply humane, generous of spirit, and full of insights on subjects that theologians too often ignore, and yet one still wants to argue from other perspectives. One example is the brave and thoughtful essay on child abuse and its challenge to theology. Reflecting, helpfully, that writers on child abuse too often opine from a position above and beyond the phenomenon they are describing, Pattison starts by laying out his own story of suffering abuse as a child. To his great credit, he nowhere claims the spurious moral authority of the 'victim' to substantiate his arguments, yet the personal dimension muddies the waters considerably. He notes that many children suffer much worse abuse and neglect, and yet, without some scale – some calculus – of what constitutes abuse rather than misfortune, it becomes very difficult to see where his subsequent arguments are leading. Implicitly, abuse is virtually everything which falls short of engendering a thoroughly happy and fulfilled childhood. Worse, the motives of adults are unexamined so that good will, or even love, becomes irrelevant and only the judgement of the child looking back from the standpoint of adulthood seems to count (his or her moral framework formed who knows where?). If separation from a parent through the latter's illness is abuse, does it follow that the absent adult is an abuser? Is the stigma of that terrible label to be

applied so carelessly? If so, not only have we no way of differentiating the wicked from the weak in terms of making practical judgements, but the consequences are deeply theological in ways which Pattison's very theological essay does not address.

One does not have to read between the lines to realize that Pattison is often writing about frustrations of his own, mostly with the church but also with the changing ethos of public service, the marketization and commodification of the lifeworld in general, and the entrenched utilitarianism of much that purports to be about education. His targets are those which good-hearted people who value social cohesion and care for others will recognize and sympathize with. He deals with areas of life which numerous faithful Christians encounter day by day and yet which seem invisible within the churches and for which accessible Christian resources are negligible. All this is massively to his credit. And yet, strangely for an interdisciplinary theologian, Pattison gives little space to considering why things have come to this pass. He strikes incisively against many of the dominant mindsets of our time but skates over the question of how they came to be dominant in the first place. The answer is rarely about malice or viciousness in government or elsewhere, although it is often about myopia. The problem is that many of the approaches which Pattison prefers have been found wanting. The rise of managerialism is, at least in part, a reflection of the fact that professionals have too often allowed self-interest to trump professionalism. That does not vindicate management ideologies but does suggest that the case for rule by professionals has to be argued afresh. And the dominance of market economics (a kind of ghost at the feast which lies just below the surface of several of Pattison's arguments) has something to do with the problem of achieving moral consensus in a profoundly plural society. Unless the problem of plurality is adequately (and theologically) addressed, the champions of the market will remain in the ascendancy.

When Pattison turns his challenges toward the church, the picture he paints is depressingly familiar. He is surely right to conclude that the churches' current obsessions with, and negativity toward, issues of sex and sexuality function 'as emblems or ciphers for other matters' (p. 162), although if he had looked beyond the psychological and therapeutic dimensions, he might have found some fascinating alignments between punitive attitudes to sexuality and commitments to right-wing politics and economics. But overall, his critiques of the church leave one wondering how the church on earth can ever become the church redeemed, or even a beacon of hope in the world. The church is obviously of great importance to Pattison – he notes, helpfully, that 'ethicists must needs become ecclesialogists' (p. 162) – but it would be nice to be offered some stronger indication that the flawed, damaged, empirical church might just be an attractive and even holy thing to be a part of.

What, then, is the challenge of Practical Theology and to whom is it addressed? Pattison is challenging the theologies of church and academy to engage respectfully with sources of knowledge and understanding which are generated beyond themselves, to recognize that members of faith communities work, in reality, with all sorts of world views and ways of knowing which are too rarely allowed to impinge critically or creatively with theology. Most of all, he asks what faith and theology might look like if 'secular' understandings of living well were allowed to inform religious communities. It is, ultimately, the challenge to stop the pretence that the faithful live in sealed communities called churches. Practical theology, then, is a noble cause. Whether it is, yet, a coherent discipline is, perhaps, another matter. On the evidence of this one Practical Theologian's lifetime journey, the challenge to Practical Theology may be to engage more intensely with the problems facing all liberal theologies which seem caught between the necessity for finding a voice in a profoundly plural world and the uncompromising particularity of believing in God.

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The Triune God: An Essay in Postliberal Theology, William C. Placher, Westminster John Knox Press, 2007 (ISBN 9-787774-580853), x + 156 pp., pb \$24.95

Professor William C. Placher has come to be known as a standard-bearer of the 'Yale School' postliberal theology, typically associated with the likes of George Lindbeck and Hans Frei. He has not rested content in his previous books simply to embroider the work of his teachers, however, as he has sought to do contemporary systematic theology in conversation with the broad history of premodern theologians, postmodern thinkers, and (particularly) his own Reformed tradition. The current volume finds him in his bailiwick, approaching the doctrine of the Trinity through these very lenses, and in the process contributing to the ongoing retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity in Christian theological reflection.

Throughout the book, Placher holds before his readers two related propositions. First, he intends to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not a means of explicating the ineffable, that is, of resolving the mystery of God into something less than mysterious, but rather is an appropriate way of preserving God's mystery and otherness. Any doctrine of the

Trinity which would purport to grasp and explain the inner workings of God would be idolatrous, Placher contends. Second, he sets out to show the propriety and fruitfulness of approaching the doctrine of the Trinity as a means of showing how the Three – Father, Son, and Spirit – are actually One. This is over against what he sees as a widespread tendency in Western theology to start with the unity and oneness of God and only later explicate this oneness in terms of the Trinitarian hypostases. In order to establish these two theses, Placher examines his subject in four chapters, looking first at each of the Three and then concluding with a chapter entitled ‘These Three are One’.

While Placher draws to some degree on contemporary philosophy throughout the book, he spends more time in explicit engagement with it in the first chapter, ‘The Unknowable God’. He begins with a brief history of the Enlightenment and Modernity in order to show how the impulse to ‘prove’ the existence of God has been dangerous, rendering no more than the likely existence of one thing among others – in Placher’s terms, an idol. In contrast to this later tendency, Placher plunges back into the earlier tradition of ‘proofs’ for the existence of God as found in Anselm and Aquinas and finds there a rather different sort of enterprise; rather than attempting to independently establish God’s existence, they dwelt in faith seeking understanding. Yet, it is impossible and undesirable to return to the Middle Ages. He turns instead to the philosophers Kierkegaard, Levinas, and Wittgenstein for help in thinking more than the secular and immanent, without bringing the transcendent and the other into a totalizing system (and thereby rendering it into an idol).

In the second chapter, Placher turns to the Son under the rubric of ‘The Word Made Flesh’. He maintains that the way that God is known is through God coming to us in Jesus Christ and the way that Jesus is known is through Scripture and its stories about him. Much of this chapter is devoted to consideration of the gospels, and how they function in the church. Placher gives an account of the biblical narrative about Jesus that is much indebted to Hans Frei, styling the gospel account as ‘history-like witnesses to truths both historical and transcendent’ (p. 58).

Considering the Spirit, Placher follows Calvin and holds that the principal work of the Spirit is ‘bringing us to faith’ (p. 92). By this – and in focusing on the ‘epistemological function of the Spirit’ – Placher does not intend to constrict the work of the Spirit but to provide a particular lens through which to see this work, contending along with the Reformed tradition for an expansive notion of faith as referring to ‘matters of head, heart, and all of life’ (p. 92). In bringing about faith, the Spirit is always to be considered a gift, rather than an achievement.

Finally turning to the doctrine of the Three in One itself, Placher notes how often the doctrine of the Trinity seems to serve to explicate God in

such a way as to negate God's mystery and otherness. In this last section, Placher draws especially on Aquinas's distinction between *significatum* and *modus significandi*, which holds that we can know something to be true of God – that God is good, for example – but that we cannot know or imagine the way in which God is good (p. 120). This distinction, along with the three previous chapters, help him in this chapter to conclude strongly in arguing for the two theses of the book.

This book is classic Placher, with all of the clear, engaging prose that one has come to expect from him over the years. Now and again, he will provide a gloss for a theological term. Typically, he engages with a breadth of resources from the tradition, East and West, Protestant and Catholic, early and recent. In addition, he includes a number of penetrating explorations of issues related to the Trinity, namely the Filioque clause, appropriations of the persons, and perichoresis. All of this will serve to make the volume a helpful resource for students at nearly all levels, whether as an introduction to the Trinity or as an exemplary introduction to postliberal theology.

One might possibly think there is an odd sort of transferal going on through the book: the chapter about God (the Father of Jesus) occupies itself with philosophy and idolatry; the chapter about the Son examines Scripture and the church's use of it in some depth; the chapter about the Spirit is largely devoted to issues of faith and epistemology. The chapter on the Trinity proper does discuss the doctrine of the Trinity, but spends a fair bit of space exploring how the various terms – *personae*, *hypostasis*, etc. – are not fully adequate and how the various models East and West (social and psychological, respectively) actually serve to deconstruct each other. In a book about God, there is surprisingly little talk about God, and much more talk about human talk about God.

But this is not strictly an unfair bait-and-switch move on Placher's part, so much as a reflection on what sort of account he (and postliberal theology generally) provides. This work is not intended as a first-order statement about God as in preaching, witnessing, or hymnody, but rather an elucidation of the grammar of Christian speech about God. Placher is more interested in how doctrines function in the church, what they enable to be said and what they counsel leaving unsaid. In that sense, this is a second- (or, really, third-) order statement about the Trinity. In this aspect of the book especially, one detects the influence of George Lindbeck.

One might well ask, however, whether theology ought to inhabit (in Rowan Williams' terms) not merely the critical, but also the communicative and celebratory. That is to say, it seems that theology ought not only to consider its own talk about God, as Placher does, but also to converse with the (uncommitted) world around it, and also to make first order theological statements. I see no reason why Placher could not have included some brief examples of these other sorts of theological

activity in order to show what difference his account makes, to take it for a 'test drive' as it were. This could have been as simple as a reflection on how a doctrine of the Trinity which preserves mystery might inform interreligious conversation, or how the Three being the One leavens a popular hymn or prayer. It seems that this could have expanded the illumination that this otherwise very accessible and helpful book provides, even while, to some degree, pushing the boundaries that postliberal theology observes.

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Aquinas on Friendship, Daniel Schwartz, Clarendon Press, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-19-920539-4), xviii + 189 pp., hb £30/\$55

This slim but dense volume is the re-working of the author's DPhil thesis written under the supervision of John Finnis. It joins a number of recent *theological* works on the topic of friendship, such as those by Liz Carmichael, and the excellent work of Jean-Marie Gueullette OP. But this is an avowedly *philosophical* take on friendship which tries, not always successfully (for how could it?), to separate out philosophical from theological concerns. The author does not aim to give an exhaustive account of Thomas Aquinas's views on friendship, but rather a 'journey into' his thoughts on this topic (p. vii), and, as he says, this particular journey is constituted by a 'number of interrelated problem-based investigations' (p. viii). Such a journey is dictated by the fact that Thomas did not leave a treatise *de Amicitia*, and thus Schwartz has very usefully hunted out and brought together the Dominican's dispersed writings on friendship from throughout his vast corpus and then questions Thomas's reasoning on a number of connected points largely to do with the role of the will in friendship. What he finds is at times very suggestive and Schwartz effectively but gently asks whether Aquinas's views on friendship might not be instructive to us today in a variety of different contexts.

The book is divided into seven chapters followed by a conclusion and an appendix which presents some texts on the duality of Christ's rational volition and explores their connection with friendship (the purpose of the appendix in relation to the rest of the book is not clear). Three of the chapters draw on previously published material. The first chapter considers some broad themes. How close are Thomas's *amicitia* and Aristotle's *philia* to our contemporary understanding of friendship?

Not very. Our friendship is largely a private affair, withdrawn, even a refuge, from the public arena. For Thomas and Aristotle, the range of beings with whom one could be friends was far wider than we would consider appropriate today. For Aristotle, all those who share a common goal can be friends, such as fellow-travellers. For Aquinas, friendship is the paradigm relationship between rational beings (humans, angels, God). As such it is central to the cultivation of the life of virtue which cannot be undertaken successfully alone. Friendship is based on communication and for both Aristotle and Aquinas has three central and interrelated components: benevolence, concord, and beneficence. Volition and fiction of the good for one's friend necessarily implicate each other. Concord is a more tricky quality, and it is the one on which Schwartz dwells most for the rest of the book. In Schwartz's account, Aquinas's most significant difference from Aristotle on friendship is the importance he gives to hope within its operation.

The next chapter goes on to consider a maxim which Aquinas quotes a number of times: 'concord is a union of wills, not of opinions'. Schwartz (somewhat mysteriously) thinks this is problematic, for how can one have a union of wills between friends without a union of opinions? He considers various kinds of union of will and rejects some, such as a fusion of friends' wills into one. Rather, in Aquinas's view, a union of wills is to do with willing the same thing and having the same goal. He points out that opinions belong to the intellect and are therefore prior to the operation of the will. Aquinas proves himself to be an optimistic realist: there is necessarily going to be some disagreement as to opinions between friends, but this does not impede concord and union of wills between them. The epistemic limitations which affect all of us in our present context necessarily imply that we have different opinions, but this does not, in Aquinas's view, stop us being friends in a fairly robust sense. Schwartz adds meat to these questions by investigating what Aquinas has to say about friendship between heretics and non-heretics (a live issue in Aquinas's time – as indeed in ours!). In Aquinas's careful understanding of the heretic he shares a common goal with the non-heretic, namely being a Christian, and this would seem to indicate a possible friendship between the two. Aquinas argues to the contrary: the heretic rejects the authority of the teacher, namely the church, preferring his own authority in picking and choosing the various doctrinal means to the final end which he admittedly shares with the non-heretic. In other words, the heretic is proud.

In the third chapter, Schwartz notes that Aquinas agrees with Cicero that friends will and nill the same things. Given the fact that Aquinas also believes that friendship between humans and God is desirable (Aristotle is not entirely clear on friendship with the gods), this raises the interesting question of how humans can will and nill the same things that God does. The primary difficulty of course is knowing what

God wills and nills, and this is interestingly frequently the case also between solely human friends. In the case of friendship with God, Aquinas distinguishes between the matter of the will provided by its object, and the end of the will given by its form. It is likely that in God's case we can only know clearly the final end of his will. Schwartz explores these issues using Aquinas's example of the doctor prescribing bitter medicine to a patient (or proscribing the wine the patient wants). He also considers the challenge to Thomas's position from the Scotist point of view that we cannot know God's will. In interesting reflections on Aquinas's commentary on Job, it transpires that friends can will and avert at the same time, that is to say while willing some good final end (our health), we can still avert and nill some proximate evil (like the bitter medicine). As friends (of God), we are not, according to Aquinas, asked to override or ignore our natural emotions and inclinations, but rather to set them in a wider context.

Chapter 4 considers the attitudes which oppose the conformity of wills between friends, such as the vices of schism in the church and sedition in the State. Such discord Aquinas argues rests on vainglory (inordinate expression of one's own excellence) and pride (misascription of goods to oneself). Proud people wish to be more than they are, to stand out, deceiving both themselves and others. Schwartz argues that this does not conflict with healthy aspiration which is ordered by an accurate self-knowledge. The proud, however, delude themselves about themselves and their desire to stand out necessarily implies certain kinds of false relations to others. Interestingly, this also leads to an impaired and warped use of reason: false knowledge of self implies false knowledge of others and indeed God. Pride has spiralling epistemological consequences. Curiously, Aquinas thinks that the law is a useful tool for the proud to come to a corrected view of themselves.

The fifth chapter considers the role of hope in friendship. Hope is again linked to epistemic limitation: we cannot have certain knowledge about future contingents, for instance the working of the friend's heart, just as it is hard in any case to know the working of another's heart in the present. How, then, is one to have union of wills? Aquinas argues that we are always to assume – in the absence of substantial evidence to the contrary – the best of everyone. To do otherwise would be to harm them or their reputation. We are also to assume that what our friends say is what they mean, a presumption of authenticity, as Schwartz puts it. Hope enables us to strive toward ends which are possible for us in the face of doubt and anxiety. Hope is not vague or unrealistic. Interestingly, it assumes self-love as well as desire. The hopeful friend is 'tensed' between doubt about some future contingent but striving toward a hoped-for goal, between dark and light, we might say. The proud person will not see the dark, while the pessimist cannot hope for the light.

Chapter 6 asks whether friends can or should have recourse to the mechanisms of justice when they fall into discord. Aristotle proves high-minded in indicating that they should not, but Aquinas is realistic in realizing that friends will have disagreements (again because of epistemic limitations, or 'cognitive distance' as Schwartz puts it) and that recourse to justice is permissible, even if not to be undertaken lightly. This was important in Aquinas's historical context in disputes between the mendicant orders and the secular clergy, the latter suggesting the friars should not use the secular courts to defend their common property. For Aquinas, there is a close and necessary connection between friendship and justice.

The final substantial chapter considers corrective justice through the lens of friendship. If friendship with God is the goal of humans, then this alters the way reconciliation is sought and conceived. Schwartz looks briefly here at Aquinas's views on satisfaction both for original sin and also for particular sins. In contrast to both Anselm and Gennadius of Marseille, Aquinas gives significant room to friendship in his account of satisfaction. The emphasis here is on the (re-)establishment of relation between wronged parties rather than a mechanistic exchange of *quid pro quo*. Schwartz looks at Christ's role as friend of humanity in re-establishing our dignity and thence our friendship with God. The author admits that he expands the role of friendship here beyond that assigned to it by Aquinas.

Not only does this study ably present us with interactions with Aquinas's views on friendship, but it also suggests a number of points of contemporary resonance. It is obvious, for instance, that our conception of friendship is very narrow, both in terms of those with whom we are friends, but also because friendships are usually cut off from our public lives in society: friendship is privatised. We do not primarily or often see friendship as a significant motor in a virtue-seeking society. Schwartz's account of Aquinas suggests interesting lines of reflection on punishment in a society conceived of as a friendship: how would it look when conceived of as the restoration of relation between friends? Aquinas is pleasingly sanguine about the possibility of discord in friendship. It is hard to miss the heavy emphasis on the will in Aquinas's account of friendship (heavily dependent on Aristotle's *homonoia*). Is this emphasis perhaps the Achilles' heel of Aquinas's and similar accounts? If I have not a clue what my neighbor five doors down the road, let alone a citizen of Ulan Bator, wills, how can I be her friend on this account of friendship, and how can we live in a society conceived of as a friendship?

There are relatively few misprints to mar the text (40, 124, 125, 128, 159). The prose is always clear, but rarely gripping. The theologically minded would probably welcome further treatment of the links between friendship with God and divinization (hinted at but not developed, 56–7), as well as investigation of possible links between

theological apophaticism and the epistemic limitations which Schwartz emphasizes as afflicting the context of friendship. This seems to be not just at the basic level that there are plenty of things we cannot know certainly about our (human) friends, just as with God, but more interestingly, that in both cases there is a striking, complex intertwining relation of positive and negative, both in faithful reasoning about God, and in the hopeful striving toward friendship with humans and with God. This is a surprisingly stimulating book.

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Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology, J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-8028-3246-7), xviii + 347, hb \$40.00

An original view on the science-theology interaction is offered by J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, James I. McCord Professor of Theology and Science at Princeton Theological Seminary. In this work, the author collects the contents of his own Gifford Lectures, which were delivered at the University of Edinburgh in spring 2004, in order to revision Lord Gifford's idea of natural theology and deal with the relationship between theology and paleoanthropology.

Since the beginning of this book, a common rational ground for science and theology is affirmed to establish human uniqueness as a clear instance of the way we get in touch with natural world, including ourselves, and God. 'Darwin's conception of human identity and human nature, with its very specific focus on the evolution of human cognition, still functions as the canonical core of the ongoing discourse on human evolution' (p. 75). These words represent the starting point of the contents highlighted in Chapter 2 (pp. 45–109), in which the author emphasizes human uniqueness as the outcome of evolution. Darwin's view on human identity, resumed by the author into six main points, involves the contemporary debate about evolutionary epistemology, whose progress in understanding human uniqueness deals with the most important theological questions: above all, the creation of man in the image of God. 'Human uniqueness and the image of God' is the subject of Chapter 3 (pp. 111–62), in which the analysis of that question considers the opinions supported by famous theologians. The idea of man as the image of God implies that since the beginning of Revelation 'first humans' were deemed to be anticipators of that stage of humanity,

during which a special relationship with the divinity was established. Thus, religious awareness and responsibility can be considered to be integral parts of human beings' evolution. At this point, the author turns to pay attention to paleoanthropology in order to discover which elements, connected with the human uniqueness, emerge from the paintings of Paleolithic art. That argument is discussed in Chapter 4 (pp. 163–215), in which the analysis of the cave art reveals human uniqueness to be connected with consciousness and symbolic behavior which, at their turn, are linked with the presence of religious awareness. In other words, the distinctive features of humans, as unique beings, are related to religious behavior which cannot be separated from the other typical human behaviors. That hypothesis is strengthened in the following chapter (pp. 217–70), in which the above mentioned achievements of the study of the cave art are confirmed. In fact, the existence of those early kinds of religious belief is a clear example holding up the natural and rational character of religion; therefore, religious attitude forms part of the 'human uniqueness' in the natural world. As regards to that specific aspect, the author agrees with Niels Gregersen, according to whom 'imagination, and also by definition religious imagination, is not an isolated faculty of human rationality but can be found at the very hearth of human rationality. Thus the naturalness of imagination also applies to religious imagination, and religious imagination should not be seen as something esoteric that can be added to, or subtracted from, other mental states' (p. 261). Science cannot fully account for the religious experience and that situation entails the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach opening the way to an easy recognizable rational dimension of faith. The link between the results of scientific investigation and the theological idea of human uniqueness, namely the affirmation of 'Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology', is fully stated in the last chapter of this book (pp. 271–325). The achievements of science allow theologians to reconsider their concept of human uniqueness and enrich the discussion concerning all the questions related to the human religious dimension. According to the author, indeed, the interdisciplinary theological and paleoanthropological approach leads to the conception of religious belief as a natural phenomenon. The contribution coming from different disciplines lays stress on common grounds for scientists and theologians, as embodied human nature resulted a fundamental notion for arranging the scientific human uniqueness and the theological principle of creation in the 'image of God'. In other words, in conformity with the contemporary progresses in evolutionary epistemology, paleoanthropology, and neurosciences, the biblical conception of man is confirmed, as only human beings correspond to the idea of creatures made in the 'image of God'. Scientists agree in pointing out the uniqueness of humans among living beings and stressing human culture as the distinctive feature of that

uniqueness. As Pope John Paul II declared in his message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1996, we can speak of an 'ontological difference' between humans and the other animals, upon which the core of Biblical Revelation is founded.

Van Huyssteen deeply answers the questions concerning how theology relates to the scientific inquire. Thus, even paleoanthropology confirms the rational dimension of faith, in opposition to all those researchers who claimed, and still claim, that science, and particularly Darwinian theory, struggles with any kind of religious belief. The original subject of this reading renders it suitable for students who have got more than a basic learning about the connection between evolution theory and Christian theology. The attention paid by the author to the viewpoints held by famous contemporary scientists and theologians shows the complexity of this very interesting publication.

The arguments forming part of this work can be seen as a continuation of the ones expressed by Van Huyssteen in his previous books (*Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology*, 1997 – *The Shaping of Rationality*, 1999), in which the defense of a common rationality for science and theology is based upon the adhesion to the essential principles of critical realism. The assertions made in this interesting volume indicate human uniqueness as an instance of the full compatibility between scientific achievements on evolution and the idea of a divine design for the world. As already stated above, some contemporary researchers, as other their colleagues did in the past, use scientific theories to support the groundlessness of religion. The consideration of evolution as a proof of the inexistence of a superior divine project is another failure attempt to show the irrationality of religious belief.

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The Scandalous God: The Use and Abuse of the Cross, Vítor Westhelle, Fortress Press, 2007 (ISBN 0-8006-3895-6), xii + 180 pp., pb \$22.00

In *The Scandalous God: The Use and Abuse of the Cross*, the Brazilian theologian Vítor Westhelle, now professor of systematic theology at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, undertakes a difficult and perhaps ultimately impossible task: to speak of the cross without domesticating it. His central and guiding source for this project is Luther, but Westhelle also draws on a wide range of literary sources:

Pier Paolo Passolini, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Gabriel García Márquez, Toni Morrison, and a number of Latin American poets. This unconventional list of sources reflects the unconventional nature of the work itself. It does not offer a systematic exposition of a doctrine of the cross, because for Westhelle, the theology of the cross names not a positive body of propositions but rather a certain swerve or twist that interrupts theological discourse: 'it is neither a theology among others nor a doctrine but a way of doing theology; it does not cancel any other theology but brings a provoking, ironic gesture' (p. 110). Westhelle's work is thus best characterized as a fragmentary intervention into the theological field.

The book can be divided into two sections. The first four chapters give an historical account of the emergence and evasion of the theology of the cross, and the remaining six each address a contemporary theological concern from the standpoint of the cross. The first chapter reveals Westhelle's basic trajectory, briefly outlining the original trauma of the cross, the way that trauma was ultimately domesticated in Constantinian Christianity, and finally the reemergence of the theology of the cross in Luther. The second chapter traces the early church's attempt to come to terms with the cross in the gospel narratives and later in normative orthodoxy, which for Westhelle provides a conceptuality that can help theologians not to evade the cross. The third chapter focuses on Luther and in particular on his insistence on an irony that interrupts analogy without destroying it altogether, while the fourth chapter lays out the basic modern critiques of the cross, reappropriating them as critiques of those strains of Christian theology that evade it.

The second half of the book opens with a consideration of the questions that we bring to the cross. In the fifth chapter, Westhelle argues that we need to get beyond the initial question of the moral or soteriological effects of the cross and face the radical effect that the cross has on the very structure of our epistemology. Taking Luther's famous claim that 'a theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is' (p. 85), Westhelle links the theology of the cross to Foucault's understanding of '*parrhesia*, to speak the truth boldly, or plainly saying it all, without reserve' (p. 86). In the sixth chapter, he turns toward a consideration of a major contemporary theological concern, the doctrine of creation. Admitting that the cross and Luther's teachings more generally seem initially to militate against a positive valuation of the created world, Westhelle nonetheless argues that the cross provides a privileged means to discern the true meaning of creation. Specifically, it allows us to see that God 'is hidden in the beauty and goodness of nature as much as in ugliness and evil' (p. 101). The seventh chapter approaches the resurrection through the Shabbat of Holy Saturday. Theology of the cross reveals itself as the necessary obverse of a 'practice of resurrection', but this 'practice of resurrection can only be exercised in the face

of the dismal experience of the cross that in the Shabbat is remembered and thus brought back' (p. 124). The eighth chapter reads Aristotle's notion of *theoria* through this concept of Shabbat, arguing for a rehabilitation of the allied notions of *praxis* and *poiesis* as distinct modes of human doing (roughly speaking, as the political and the economic, respectively). The ninth chapter argues for an eschatological understanding of space, and the tenth accordingly provides a kind of itinerary for the continual movement through the space of cross and resurrection. Instead of a fixed doctrine, Westhelle gives us a way of keeping in motion and avoiding overt betrayal, while insisting that this itinerary could be interrupted at any moment by God's ever-new act of *poiesis*.

Westhelle not only provides a strong argument for regarding the theology of the cross as a style of doing theology but also provides a good model. He is at his best when working within the Christian tradition, and he particularly shines in his reading of gospel texts. When he ventures outside of this familiar territory, however, his readings sometimes seem to move too quickly in assimilating the text to his own project. Another notable shortcoming stems from his desire to be faithful to Luther while remaining accountable to Latin American liberation theology. In his eagerness to portray Luther as a forerunner of liberation theology and a 'contextual theologian' (p. 58), Westhelle fails to even mention the well-known facts of Luther's political interventions against the peasants and tirades against the Jews. Given the ways that he later brings the theology of the cross into dialogue with liberation theology, Westhelle could likely have made a persuasive case that Luther's own actions contradicted the true subversive force of his thought, but as it stands, his treatment of Luther seems like something of a whitewash. Overall, though, Westhelle has given us a thought-provoking and often quite poetic text, one that offers many suggestive avenues for further reflection.

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The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology, A.N. Williams, Cambridge University Press, 2007 (ISBN 0-521-79317-9), xi + 252 pp., hb £45.00/\$85.00

Williams's *The Divine Sense* is a deeply learned and astute presentation of 'the broad temper' (p. 1) of patristic theology, which ultimately becomes an argument for the importance of the intellect in patristic theology.

The author begins her book by acknowledging 'a shift in the role of the intellect' (p. 2) in patristic and modern theology. In the theological literature of the early church, there was 'the lack of tension, or even proper distinction' (p. 2) between technical theological deliberations and spiritual/ascetical ones. All theologizing cohered into an integrated system of an 'intelligent adoration of God' (p. 2). Such interconnectedness of all theology justifies Williams's selection of very different kind of texts for describing the intellect in patristic theology (e.g. Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Evagrius's *Praktikos*). It also justifies her particular scrutiny of the concept of *theōria* or *contemplatio* which back then designated both theology and prayer. As the author herself put it, this book is a 'detailed exposition' of Evagrius's maxim, 'The spiritual knowledge [*gnōsis*] of God is the breast of the Lord; the one resting upon it will be a theologian' (p. 8).

In addition to her well-demonstrated knowledge of the subject-matter in the main five chapters of the book, there is a lot of wisdom in Williams's Introduction and Epilogue as well. Among other things, a reader learns from the Introduction about making the proper distinction between similarity/resemblance and influence/source, as Williams wisely cautions against the 'too-easy assumption of causality' (p. 8) by various 'influence hunters' (p. 13, n. 15), who explore the relations between philosophy and the Christian faith.

Chapter 1 ('The dawn of Christian theology') considers the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists, including Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. To exaggerate a bit, the Apostolic Fathers function like a 'warm-up band' for the material found in later writings. Williams herself admits that although almost all the themes she is interested in, with the notable exception of contemplation, occur in the earliest post-biblical Christian writings, these themes are worked out there 'less fully' (p. 21). Chapter 2 inspects the writings of the early Alexandrians (Clement and Origen) and affirms the systematic character of their theology – systematic in the sense of the internal coherence. Chapter 3 appraises the 'paradigmatic' (p. 142) Cappadocian theology, omitting Basil for legitimate reasons (p. 19). Chapter 4 is exclusively on Augustine and, in addition to many other insights, it provides an illuminatingly revisionist analysis of the anthropological analogies of the Trinity. Chapter 5 reviews various monastic writings. Although I expected Evagrius to be the main monastic theologian under scrutiny, Williams has preferred Cassian, because arguably his works 'exhibit the deepest and most persistent concern with mind of all the monastic writers' (p. 201). The presence of a chapter dedicated to monastic writings is really significant, because despite the rather common perception of the desert monks as unlettered simpletons, they actually taught the 'strongly intellectual character of prayer and contemplation' (p. 231).

Williams offers 'a close thematic reading of a broad range of texts, seeking above all the systematic interconnection of the constituent ideas relevant to the subject' (p. 20). She considers the intellect to be a 'meta-principle' (p. 234) or a 'kind of glue . . . binding discrete components [of patristic theology] together' (p. 232). The intellect is the 'connector' (p. 234), which relates (rational) human beings to their Creator and also to their psychosomatic selves. 'The mind is the locus of the divine-human encounter that may be described as either theology or prayer' (p. 173). In short, 'the intellect is the central attribute of both God and humanity' (p. 187).

Thus, in her quest for determining the importance of the intellect, Williams navigates through various theological *topoi*, such as, the theology of God and the attributes of God, Christology and especially the problem of the human mind of Christ, anthropology and the concept of *imago Dei*, and spirituality, that is, the ascent of the mind and its purification from passions through asceticism. Because so many human activities are dependent on the mind as a cognitive organ, she also has to consider epistemology, reasoning, argumentation, and doctrine. No less significant is the mind's relation to will and body. In fact, the author has two good reasons for focusing on (theological) anthropology: (1) the explicit discussions of the divine mind in patristic literature are rare – although its existence is always presupposed; and (2) conversely, in patristic literature, the human mind is discussed often as the God-given means to know God (p. 233).

Granted, Williams's appraisal is systematic in the patristic sense of the word (defined on p. 3). But there is also the problem with her analyzing the bewildering variety of topics which are interconnected with the mind: at times, it is hard to discern the precise structure of her discussion, especially when the many topics and a group of authors are discussed (e.g. pp. 190–231). Although Williams generally does a good job in tying everything back to her main topic, I still sometimes wondered why I was reading what I was reading. In other words, the obvious difficulty is that when the author describes how everything is integrated into a coherent system, such description can easily become an enlightened summary of everything and lose its comprehensible structure and accessibility. I believe that Williams could have helped her readers to understand her truly great analysis by inserting subtitles and other such helps.

References are provided with great care and abundance. This reminds me of my New Testament professor who once asked whether we read the assigned chapter from Kümmel's *Introduction of the New Testament*. The class said 'Yes!', and then the professor (a German!) reminded us that if we did not bother to read the references, we really did not read the chapter. Something similar is true about Williams's book: in order to have a profound grasp of her argument, one indeed

needs to consult the primary sources. (I tried this with certain sections and it made a huge difference.)

Despite Williams's focus on the intellect, in her presentation, patristic theology does not become drily intellectual and thus unattractive. It is a rare quality in monographs focusing on a narrow topic (e.g. the intellect in patristic theology) that the importance of the investigated topic is not overemphasized. An opening statement, which guides a reader to see the omnipresence of the mind in patristic theology, can be used as an example of her balanced approach: 'The treatment of the intellect is not the only means by which the Fathers hold all things together coherently, but it is one of the most powerful and important ones' (p. 8).

There are books which tend not to open by simply opening them. Studying Williams's monograph requires some serious effort before it yields its rewarding results. Because of the depth and density of Williams's discussion, the monograph is recommended primarily to the scholars of early Christianity, as well as to anyone who considers him/herself a theologian.

Tarmo Toom

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The Violence of God & The War on Terror, Jeremy Young, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2007 (ISBN 0-232-52666-4), iii + 217 pp., hb £12.95

Although aware that the Bible contains numerous acts of violence done in the name of and by God, we often assume that these depart from the central image of a loving and peaceful God. Jeremy Young, an Anglican priest, pastoral theologian, and family therapist challenges this view in *The Violence of God & The War on Terror*, in which he argues that the core testimony of the Bible is to a violent God, who exhibits striking similarities to an abusive male. Young suggests that reading the Bible primarily through the lens of violence and abuse provides important insights into the relationship between religion and violence, especially as manifested in the so-called war on terror.

Chapters 1–6 take up the theme of abuse as found in the relationship between God and Israel portrayed in the Jewish scriptures. Noting that the covenant between God and Israel is often understood metaphorically as a marriage, Young argues that 'the Hebrew Bible depicts God as a patriarchal male who is abusive toward his wife Israel' (p. 35). Like an

authoritarian male who blames his victim for his own insecurity and flies into fits of narcissistic rage when his wife is perceived to have acted with disobedience and unfaithfulness, God often acts violently toward Israel, when the latter goes against the stipulations of the covenant. Because of God's apparent tendency to act more out of jealousy than genuine concern, especially when Israel turns toward other gods, and even capriciously, as with Job, Young suggests that Israel lived under the threat of constant punishment and violence.

Two of the psychological consequences of this constant threat are what Young refers to as 'the cycle of abuse' and 'the reversal of victimhood' (pp. 36–7). The cycle of abuse and the reversal of victimhood refer to the ways in which victims of abuse attempt to alleviate their oppression by repeating abusive patterns in their own subsequent relationships, in effect taking their internalized anger out on others and becoming abusers themselves. According to Young, this pattern is clear throughout the Bible and continues to the present day. Israel, as a people abused by both God and other colonizing nations, projected their victimization outwards, as seen for instance in the conquering of Canaan. When this process is coupled with what Young refers to as 'the moral defense' and 'the chosen people defense', the view that God is justified to treat Israel violently because they have been disobedient and the assumption that God has favored Israel over all other nations and peoples, the results are pernicious, becoming 'a rationale for the violence of human beings towards other human beings' (pp. 39–43).

God's abusiveness continues into the New Testament and Christian theology, which is the subject of Chapters 7–9. Alongside the abusiveness of God and other nations present in Israel's psychology, Young notes that Christianity adds a third element of abuse – sin. In the economy of salvation, Christians are given a stark choice between 'being under the rule of sin or God' (p. 89). According to Young, this oppositional logic completely devalues human autonomy, setting 'individuals free not for independence or to follow their own desires, but to fulfill their essential destiny of loving, obeying, and living for God' (p. 89). Insofar as it eschews human autonomy, the doctrine of sin reinforces the feeling of subordination found in abusive relationships.

Young goes on to note other aspects of abuse woven into the themes of Christian theology. Although Young finds patterns of abuse in various Christian teachings, the most persistent image of violence is the crucifixion of Jesus, in which God's anger with human beings is diverted onto his son in an act of divine child abuse. Likewise, the various theories of atonement that have been developed on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection, although different in emphasis, all 'start from the assumption of God's alienation from humanity because of sin and the inevitability of his punishment of human sinners without the intervention of Christ' (p. 92). God thus continues to act as 'a

controlling and abusive lover', who constantly threatens punishment for disobedience and unfaithfulness (p. 92). God's abuse is repeated, once again, in the cycle of abuse and the reversal of victimhood, through which Christians direct their internalized abuse outwards and perceive themselves to be 'the new chosen people who are predestined by God to fulfill a special imperial and civilizing destiny over other nations and races' (p. 120).

In Chapters 10–13, Young applies these insights to contemporary forms of religious violence, particularly as found in the current war on terror. America, as Young observes, was founded in part by individuals and groups who had experienced certain forms of oppression and persecution. This record of abuse was combined with the theological heritage mentioned above, contributing to a reversal of victimhood, which allowed the American settlers to view themselves as especially favored by God as a new chosen people. Such a view continues today in the form of 'American exceptionalism', the doctrine that America is under a divine mandate to impose its convictions on others unilaterally (p. 134). When America's understanding of itself as privileged by God was challenged on 9/11, 'America could be portrayed as the innocent victim of unprovoked aggression, and its status as the injured party could be co-opted as a justification for retaliation' (p. 150). America's attempt to alleviate its perceived victimhood through the violent reassertion of its chosen status, combined with the competing claims of victimization and divine favor asserted by Jihadist groups, Israelis, and Palestinians, turns the war on terror into a war of competing religious ideologies rooted in a cycle of abuse.

Young hopes that by acknowledging and coming to terms with the violence of God and the way in which the cycle of abuse operates, we can better understand the roots of religious violence and how these contribute to the current war on terror. Although Young largely focuses on the violent elements of the Bible, he does point out that there are important biblical and theological traditions that challenge the cycle of abuse, witnessing 'to a God who is non-violent and genuinely loving, and who is working to redeem the human race from the cycles of violence and abuse to which it is so often subject' (p. 196). Upholding these authentic images and protesting against those which endorse abuse may allow us to move beyond religiously motivated violence.

Young presents a compelling case for understanding the biblical and theological traditions through the metaphor of abuse. Nevertheless, the metaphor often becomes strained at times, as when Young speculates that George Bush is using the war on terror as a means to confront and expel his own 'inner demons' (p. 152). It also remains unclear how far the cycle of abuse extends, given the fact that many religious persons do not seem to display the patterns of abuse and propensity toward violence in the manner in which Young describes. A more thorough

examination of the way in which the violent and nonviolent elements of the biblical tradition are related would perhaps clarify this point. Despite these criticisms, Young's book is a welcome contribution to the current literature on religion and violence and the war on terror.

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