

Book reviews

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Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. xii + 610. \$39.00.

Gorman has written a good introduction to Paul, but it has its drawbacks. The book will be well received by those who prize a very traditional approach. According to Gorman, the Acts of the Apostles gives an historically reliable account of Paul; Paul wrote all the letters attributed to him, with the possible exception of 1 Timothy and Titus, where Gorman prefers to remain ‘agnostic’ about authorship; and the letters were written as we now have them without interpolations or major editing. Gorman points out disagreement among scholars on these fundamental points, but generally argues that no evidence compels one to abandon the traditional approach.

Several aspects commend this book. First of all, Gorman is a fine writer. His prose is clear and precise. Students will not have to labor with the ponderous ‘gobbledygook’ of so many other scholarly works. Furthermore, the book is thorough. He covers the entire Pauline corpus, in effect providing a concise commentary of each letter in its entirety. Gorman is at his best when he is laying out the compositional structure of the passages and then drawing out the thought associations found in that structure. For instance, Gorman shows how the pattern of the christological hymn of Phil 2:6–11 underlies statements Paul makes about himself.

The six introductory chapters, replete with maps and diagrams, provide a lucid overview of Paul’s background and major positions. Here Gorman gives a clear view into the Greco-Roman world of Paul as well as into first-century Judaism. The remaining chapters on the letters are each organized into three parts: (a) ‘the story behind the letter’, where Gorman deals with issues of the church addressed by Paul and other circumstances surrounding the writing; (b) ‘the story within the letter’, where Gorman explains the contents of the letter section by section; and (c) ‘the story in front of the letter’, where Gorman cites a handful of paragraphs from later writers commenting on the letter. At the end of each chapter a series of ‘questions for reflection’ raises modern pastoral issues. The annotated bibliography after each chapter forms a comprehensive, well-guided and up-to-date path into further scholarship, although the allocation of books into ‘general’ or ‘technical’ is a bit difficult to follow. A scripture index concludes the book.

Several drawbacks, however, may limit this book's contribution to understanding Paul's theology. In my opinion, the results of Gorman's theological commentary at times fall into two traps frequent in such efforts. On the one hand, at times he simply repeats the associations Paul makes in the text, resulting in a kind of paraphrase or rehash of Paul rather than a penetration of Paul's insight by linking back to a cardinal idea of Paul. On the other hand, Gorman at times appears to introduce later church positions into Paul. A good example of this trap appears in his development of Rom 11 and Paul's description of the salvation of the Jews. Gorman concludes: 'For Paul there is no way to salvation (e.g. via the Law) except confession of Jesus as Messiah and Lord', declaring that the larger context of this letter 'demands this answer' (p. 387). In fact neither the general context nor the formula in Rom 10:9 demands this answer, an answer which in turn runs counter to the cardinal theological idea of Paul developing throughout the authentic letters that salvation is not reached through any human performance, not even that of Christian confession, but rather through a creative act of God. Similarly, Gorman's insistence on the equality of Jesus with God in being coheres well with the later trinitarian synthesis but neglects the cardinal Pauline position of Jesus as the locus of God's saving action.

I do not want to exaggerate these weaknesses. Gorman does a fine job uncovering the 'cruciform' pattern of Paul's theology. However, his repeated attempts to identify basic tendencies in Paul with such descriptions as 'counter-cultural' and 'trinitarian' say more about Gorman's faith than Paul's.

Personally, I think the core problem with this book lies in Gorman's attempt to integrate 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, 2 Timothy, and Colossians, along with other probable interpolations, into the thought of the historical Paul. Given the almost impossible job of trying to find a coherent structure of thought in all the 'pauline' writings, Gorman seems pushed into the corner of focusing on the expressions of each letter point by point, with inadequate integration into earlier contexts and into earlier letters. What is lacking in this theological introduction is an adequate presentation of Paul's fundamental and distinctive positions which develop through his authentic letters and which guide his interpretation of the church situations that he addresses. Without those positions, Gorman appears to drift into later traditional and even fundamentalist Christian ideas. Similarly, by trying to integrate what I would consider 'deutero-Pauline' letters into the Pauline position, he is forced to focus on those details of these letters which cohere with Paul and to neglect their rich idiosyncrasies.

It is a good introduction. It will probably work well with undergraduate students. However, in my opinion Gorman does not attain an adequate view

of Paul's theology in its distinctiveness from the later Christian synthesis, a theology which developed organically through the authentic letters and which could address Christians today theologically with a serious challenge.

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Steven J. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. x + 267. £12.99 (pb).

Steven Sutcliffe has established himself as something of an expert on so-called 'new age' spirituality, and this book will undoubtedly enhance his reputation as an analyst of contemporary spiritual trends. His thesis is that though the adherents of 'alternative' spiritual pathways have in the past applied the label 'new age' to themselves, and continue to form identifiable networks of like-minded people, the term itself is no longer serviceable, partly because many of its concerns have now been incorporated into a widespread 'popular, functional, everyday spirituality' (p. 223), but predominantly because he believes the phenomenon as a whole is no longer sufficiently coherent to be understood as a single identifiable entity. While being clearly sympathetic to many of the questions which sparked off the current interest in spirituality, Sutcliffe is by no means uncritical in his analysis, and expresses some concern about the essentially white western orientation of much that is going on, as well as what he perceives to be an underlying ambivalence about the nature of 'inclusivity' more generally, which he suggests actually excludes some sections of the population. He recognizes the attractiveness of 'a universalised lay spirituality, open to all, yet with no stigmatising label or fussy membership criteria' though in the end concludes that 'such a spirituality must be inherently unstable' (p. 224) and is therefore unlikely to deliver on its promises.

In the process of presenting this argument, the book surveys a number of 'alternative' movements covering the period from about the 1930s to the end of the twentieth century, tracing the change from an emphasis on other-worldly – even apocalyptic – concerns up to about the 1970s (which typically gave rise to ascetic lifestyles and values), to a more world-affirming frame of reference (with a corresponding emphasis on self-indulgence). Though others feature in the narrative (especially Alice Bailey), the largest part of the book is taken up with a study of the Findhorn Foundation, one of the most influential 'alternative' communities in the world, situated on the Moray Firth in north-east Scotland. While Sutcliffe sketches the early history of Findhorn, his account of its current activities is derived from his own attendance at workshops and seminars, including the 'experience

week' which, for those who are serious about it, is the indispensable entry point into the life of Findhorn. I personally found this to be the most interesting aspect of the book, not least because it recognizes something that scholarly discourse all too often ignores, namely that 'spirituality' has no meaning at all apart from the 'spiritual biographies' of real people.

It is probably in his methodology, therefore, that Sutcliffe has made the most significant contribution to this field of study. Not only does he take seriously people's embodied lives and subjectivities as the fundamental starting points of his study, but he also – significantly – includes his own presuppositions as key elements of the story that he is telling. This is therefore no disembodied Cartesian approach that starts with the accepted canons of what is 'supposed' to be going on and then examines the evidence in the light of that, but one that begins with the lived experience of individuals and communities, and then proceeds to locate these concerns within the context of wider structural fields. All this is achieved in a coherent and convincing fashion, which makes his book worth reading just as an example of how to carry out an effective and worthwhile ethnography that will go beyond mere reporting of experiences. In the process, interesting possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration are opened up, for the way in which Sutcliffe wants to do religious studies has fascinating parallels with the way in which some of us are now doing practical theology – while both have obviously learned a good deal from the emerging field of cultural studies.

In the light of Sutcliffe's insistence on self-reflexivity and openness, there was just one thing that I felt was missing here, for there is no consideration of how traditional religious institutions like the church might connect with the burgeoning spirituality which (whether or not we continue to call it 'new age') undoubtedly is a significant force in Western culture. Perhaps that is the question of a practical theologian rather than a phenomenologist, and may reflect one of the points at which different disciplines will explore their own questions. But whatever Sutcliffe might think about that, we should all be grateful to him for this book. For those already familiar with the field, he has raised important new questions about the definition of 'new age' and also concerning the appropriate way to study such movements – while those who know absolutely nothing at all about the subject could well find here an accessible introduction to some important aspects of the emergence of spirituality as a major concern in the discourse of twentieth-century Western culture.

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Nicholas M. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian of the Christian Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 182. £16.99.

The first in the Great Theologians Series by Ashgate Press, Nicholas Healy's book is a remarkable achievement, especially when one considers its brevity. Its readable yet scholarly style makes it an excellent resource for seminaries, theology courses, and general readers interested in Aquinas. The book reads like a well-paced survey of the *Summa Theologiae* through the lens of Aquinas's scripture commentaries (particularly John's Gospel). I commend it especially for its intentionally theological reading of the *Summa*, an interpretation that brings the full richness of Aquinas's trinitarianism and Christology to bear on everything from his account of creation and *analogia entis* to his anthropology. Healy successfully shows how Aquinas's own vocation as a Dominican preacher and teacher informs the substance and presentation of his theology, infusing it with pastoral and practical significance. According to Healy, Aquinas's theology is for the sake of preaching and teaching, which is ultimately for the sake of forming obedient followers of Jesus Christ.

To this end, Healy devotes his first chapter to understanding Aquinas's own life and legacy, and the second chapter (the highlight of the book, in my opinion) to the impact of his christocentric Dominican formation on his theological method and hermeneutic. The next three chapters concentrate on God and his action: the third chapter traces our ascent to God in the first part of the *Summa*. Because God is utterly transcendent, our knowledge of God in himself begins with the witness of scripture and proceeds by means of arguments from 'fittingness'. The fourth chapter describes God's work in creation and in the life of Christ (that is, God's relation to us, both in creation and redemption): 'The Word plays the central role both in creation, the *exitus* from God of that which is not God, and in the redemption, the *reditus* of all things back to God' (p. 103). The fifth treats God's act of making Christ's work actually transformative through the operation of grace (note here the divine *concursus* with our free acts, p. 113), and the sixth, our response to that grace. The work of the three persons of the trinity, focused through the prism of Christ's person and work and the *exitus-reditus* schema of the *Summa*, are the organizing principle of the book's various topics.

One of Healy's main objectives is to counter a more self-contained philosophical ('two-tiered') reading of Aquinas, with a view of nature informed from the start by grace (pp. 53, 85); this theme is a steady undercurrent in most of the book. In addition, Healy defends a conception of God's transcendence (p. 59) that seriously attenuates our ability to know or speak of him; thus scripture, not philosophy, both enables and limits theology. For Healy, reading Aquinas as a *theologian* is essential to

understanding how radically he transforms Aristotelian philosophy (p. 119; see also p. 151), his lack of attention to natural law, and the non-apologetic character of the five ways. In his main thesis, Healy is a welcome and convincing voice, as his theological reading deliberately distinguishes the book from rival strands of Thomism that conceive of Aquinas as a source of *philosophia perennis* (see Chapter 1).

The book falters on the interpretation of the second part of the *Summa*, where we find Aquinas's moral theology. This is unfortunate because Aquinas's detailed and extensive attention to the particular virtues remains inexplicable on Healy's reading ('the details are comparably less significant for Thomas's theology', he says (p. 154), although the *Summa* is supposedly theology-for-Christian-living). Moreover, a better interpretation of this section actually fits beautifully with Healy's overall interpretation of Aquinas's project and purpose – to help Christians morally 'conform' to the person of Jesus Christ (p. 157).

It is mainly here that we find flaws in an otherwise compelling book, flaws symptomatic of a less philosophically rigorous reading of Aquinas throughout and an inability to fit the second part of the *Summa* into the book's general thesis. For example, Healy apparently misses the fact that even the moral virtues have infused (grace-caused) and not merely acquired forms (pp. 120–1). Hence, unlike his treatment of the theological virtues, which fall under 'grace', he relegates them to the last chapter, 'our response'. They don't fit well into the chapter's overall discussion of law, sin, and ecclesiology, and more importantly, appear to be the grand exception to Healy's push toward integration against a sharp nature/grace distinction. Or take the book's order of topics: God (Part One), Christ (Part Three), and an assortment of leftover topics that don't fit neatly anywhere (Part Two), that are collected mainly in Chapters 5 and 6. Moreover, one finds more conceptual errors on this topic than on others: for example, on the theological virtue of faith Healy blurs Aquinas's faith/knowledge distinction, among other things (pp. 121–2).

What is disappointing about the unsatisfying treatment of the moral theology in the *Summa*'s second part is that, read well, this material could have significantly bolstered Healy's claim that Aquinas is best read as a christologically centered theologian. Aquinas intentionally models his accounts of the virtues on the person of Christ, and this emphasis accounts for the ways Aquinas transforms otherwise Stoic or Aristotelian virtues into Christian ones (see my essay 'Power Made Perfect in Weakness: Aquinas's Transformation of the Virtue of Courage', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11/2). Healy stresses throughout his book that our transformation (the project of the Christian life) is ontologically and morally Christoform (p. 109; see

also p. 38); Christ is ‘the way’ by which all other ways are tested (Ia prol., IIIa prol.; 58). The structure of the *Summa*’s second part also reflects this idea, however. The particular virtues of the second part concretely describe Christ as moral exemplar – the model of the perfection and sanctification of human nature – while the third part, as Healy recognizes, treats Christ as the principle of our ontological transformation through his incarnation, death, and resurrection (and, I might add, sacraments, which are also unfortunately relegated to the last chapter). Thus Healy glosses over the part of the *Summa* that shows us concretely the character of Christ that we are trying to imitate in the Christian life.

Misinterpreting the place and point of the second part also explains Healy’s somewhat deflationary treatment of the role of the Holy Spirit. The second (moral) part of the *Summa*, by contrast, just is the way the Holy Spirit transforms, by grace, ‘rational creatures’ who are *imago dei*, into their perfected form – Christ, the image of the Father. Hence the second part fits into a theologically informed, trinitarian scheme, emphasizes Christ as model of perfect virtue, and gives a more robust role to the Holy Spirit to balance the third part’s focus on Christ. In sum, the moral theology of Part II supports Healy’s own reading of the *Summa* as well as Parts I and III.

It is odd that Healy apparently resists this reading, likely on the same grounds that he dismisses contemporary virtue theories: ‘Perhaps the most important thing to say about Thomas’s moral theology is that the point of being a Christian is to work toward eternal life with God. It is not, as it seems to be for some contemporaries, primarily to become a particular kind of person, namely, a good Christian’ (p. 153, my emphasis). The last clause is puzzling indeed, if to be a good Christian is nothing but to be an obedient follower of Christ himself. Doesn’t our virtue, as imitative of Christ, bear witness to him (ST II-II 124)? Perhaps Healy is resisting the idea that virtue emphasizes being, rather than doing (‘following Jesus obediently’, p. 27). The criticism feels odd, however, given that both Aristotle and Aquinas value virtue as a habit *ordered to operation*, and doubly odd given Healy’s own insistence that our basic call as Christians is ‘internal transformation’ into people who are more and more like Christ himself (p. 153). Moreover, the virtue of charity just is our participation in the eternal life of God; thus Healy seems to contradict what he has said just pages earlier: ‘To become a Christian, and even more, to become one who is united as a friend of God and neighbor in charity, is primarily a matter of becoming a certain sort of person’ (p. 134).

These concerns notwithstanding, Healy has given us an excellent and useful book. It lives up to its title, making a convincing case that Aquinas is best read as a certain kind of theologian – one whose contemplation aimed

to bear fruit in a richer interpretation of scripture and to help Christians more faithfully and obediently follow Christ (p. x).

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Geffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson, *The Cost of Moral Leadership: The Spirituality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. xvii + 300. £17.99.

This book attempts to explore a connection not often exposed in contemporary theology. It seeks to link Bonhoeffer's theology, spiritual resources and practice with his effectiveness in sustaining the Christian community of which he was a part. The authors' intentions are not so much to add to the great corpus of academic scholarship on Bonhoeffer, as to extract from it those insights which connect his theology and spirituality to his gift for moral leadership. The book is intended for a wide readership, beyond the confines of academia.

After a brief account of Bonhoeffer's life, the authors begin with his focus on the necessity of the encounter with Christ and the call to service that results from this. They raise brief questions about the implications of this for contemporary American churches. It is interesting to note their appropriation of Bonhoeffer's call for Christian solidarity with all peoples, 'Jews, socialists, gypsies and homosexuals' (p. 48). However, both here and throughout the book accessibility is achieved at the expense of generalizations which risk superficiality.

Bonhoeffer's calls to the church to speak in the name of Jesus on behalf of the oppressed are presented in the context of prophetic leadership, guided by the Spirit. Bonhoeffer relied on a Spirit-led biblical hermeneutic for discernment in this context. The role of the Holy Spirit in empowering church community is discussed as it emerges both in Bonhoeffer's academic writings and in his practice at the Finkenwalde seminary.

In a short chapter the authors briefly refer to the appropriation of Bonhoeffer's concept of 'being alongside' the oppressed by theologies of liberation. They note his critique of the American Christianity that he experienced on his pre-war visits to the USA.

More space is devoted to a review of Bonhoeffer's pacifism, from his early hope that the ecumenical movement would have a demilitarizing effect, through his reflections in Finkenwalde that peace making involves inevitable suffering, to his recognition in the *Ethics* that opposing a tyrannical state may have to involve violence. Again, the precision that is needed to really appreciate Bonhoeffer's position is in danger of being lost in generalities.

The authors discuss the September 11th attack on the Twin Towers and the subsequent war in Afghanistan in the light of Bonhoeffer's position in the *Ethics*. They note that Bonhoeffer stresses the boundaries of his position: that killing is never without guilt; that war must always be exceptional. They observe that in the present situation in the USA, Bonhoeffer 'would ask the tough questions' (p. 119). What actions and policies of the USA have led to a sense of injustice among their present attackers? The authors go on to consider the recent history of American militarism. Bonhoeffer also criticized the ideology of national security, and the authors draw parallels with the testimony of Archbishop Oscar Romero. They apply Bonhoeffer's questions about the complicity of the church to contemporary church leadership in the USA, and cite Hauerwas as a faithful but unpopular voice, but do not have the space to develop any nuanced discussion of this.

Faithfulness to Jesus Christ as the centre of the Christian's life cannot be maintained without paying a price. The authors review this as Bonhoeffer laid it out explicitly in his account of cheap and costly grace in *The Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer builds on the Sermon on the Mount as the essential guide to faithful discipleship and, therefore, to moral leadership. The authors reflect Bonhoeffer's assertion that Christians are to be conformed to Christ by the impact of God taking shape in them, not by their own efforts, but they do not discuss what this might mean in contemporary church contexts.

This discussion of the cross in Bonhoeffer's thinking is followed by similarly weighted consideration of the nature of the community created by following Christ. From the very first, Bonhoeffer sought to understand how Christ brings community into being among those who follow him. He was very critical of the failure of the established churches of his time, both in the USA and in Germany, to be effectively inclusive. The authors draw a parallel with present-day American churches – 'people come together without knowing each other, live without loving each other, and die without grieving for each other' (p. 151). Against this, they summarize Bonhoeffer's evolving practice of community formation as set out in *Life Together*. The significance of shared narrative – common reading of scripture – and the use of the Psalms in private and communal prayer is listed but not explored in any present context.

The authors include another very short chapter on Bonhoeffer's understanding of the vulnerability of God, and weight it with a further comparison of Bonhoeffer with other figures of the twentieth century.

The final two chapters consist of summaries of material on Bonhoeffer's sermons and his written prayers and poems. Preaching is an explicit exercise in moral leadership, and Bonhoeffer's basing of it in engagement with scripture in the context of personal prayer is made clear. Some of Bonhoeffer's

prayers and poems are discussed in the context of his final years. But this material is not satisfactorily linked with what has gone before, and one is left with too many questions.

The book concludes with a series of questions associated with each chapter, which are intended to help discussion or study groups. They are rather numerous and wide ranging, and would be improved by a much tighter focus.

The aims of this book are laudable, but one is left with the feeling that it has fallen between several stools. It would have been better, perhaps, to concentrate on smaller sections of material in greater depth. Bonhoeffer was a man of his time, and the book's tendency to suppress his context with almost hagiographical generalities cannot be of service in the stated aim of bringing his practice to bear on our present situation. Nevertheless, the authors offer an introduction to Bonhoeffer's life and writings which may have application in adult Christian education, and which will hopefully stimulate further work.

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Anthony S. Sanford, ed., *The Nature and Limits of Human Understanding* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2003), pp. xviii + 259. £19.99 (pb).

This collection of essays has its genesis in the 2001 Gifford Lectures in Natural Theology, and thus marks a creative departure from the norm of the lectureship. Rather than allowing a single scholar to develop a thesis over a series of presentations, five lecturers were invited to present two lectures each, and these make up the five parts of the book. The editor writes in an introductory preface: 'The idea was that the series as a whole should provide some insights into how much we know about our own understanding, its limits and its place in the scheme of things' (p. xii). Because of the interdisciplinary character of the contributions, the five lecturers, each renowned in his or her own field, have been pressed to communicate the state of play in their specialities without the benefit of highly technical language. The result is an erudite but accessible entree into issues of mind, knowledge, and interpretation in the context of contemporary study in linguistics, cognitive psychology, and evolutionary theory, and the nature and limits of scientific, philosophical, and theological understanding.

Phil Johnson-Laird, of the psychology faculty at Princeton, contributes the first two chapters, aimed at illustrating the nature and limits of our understanding of language. He focuses on our crucial dependence on the construction of mental models from perception, imagination, and the

comprehension of language, a dependence that limits our understanding because of our difficulty in modeling what is false in a possibility, by our stubborn possession of mental models that do not represent the world envisaged, or by our inability to adjudicate among a plethora of possible models. At the heart of Johnson-Laird's argument is his discussion of our inability to construct mental models of causal relations.

Chapters 3 and 4, written by the University of California at Berkeley cognitive scientist George Lakoff, argue that understanding is embodied and that the consequence of embodiment is a complex metaphorical system that underlies human thought and communication. For Lakoff, then, 'thought is largely unconscious, embodied, and metaphorical' (p. 50). In his two presentations, he first develops the notion of an embodied metaphorical mind, drawing on research in neuroscience and cognitive science; second, he draws out the significance of this new theory of mind for a range of human concerns: morality, aesthetics, and spiritual experience. The result is an emerging view of 'the self' that has profound implications for theological discourse.

Michael Ruse, a philosopher at Florida State University, has written widely in evolutionary biology, and this is the interest governing his two lectures. His emphases are several, but his primary argument is for 'the intimate and inextricable fusion of the biological and the cultural' (p. 130), and his insistence that both may be comprehended in terms of evolutionary theory. How evolutionary science might offer a basis for our understanding of ethics is the particular concern of Chapter 6, where Ruse puts forward his own view regarding how the innate human disposition to collaboration might give rise to ethical principles.

Also a philosopher, Lynne Rudder Baker, from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, insists in her contributions that the explanatory value of science is limited by its reductionism, that reality is greater than the sum of the parts from which it is physically made. She highlights what she takes to be a unique characteristic of humans vis-à-vis nonhuman animals – namely, a complexity that gives rise to 'first-person perspective', 'the ability to conceive of oneself as oneself, from "within" so to speak, without any name or description or demonstrative' (p. 166). Science, she avers, cannot apprehend first person knowledge within its framework. She then urges that our third person understanding, the commonsense conception by which we make sense of the world, is a legitimate way of knowing that takes us beyond the reality that science may reveal. Thus, she insists, 'Respect for science should not beguile us into endorsement of scienticism' (p. 205).

Finally, to Brian Hebblethwaite, former lecturer in the philosophy of religion at Cambridge, falls the task of exploring the contribution of metaphysical (Chapter 9) and theological (Chapter 10) thinking to our

portrait of human understanding. His remarks center on five areas: the phenomenon of consciousness, morality and freedom, art and beauty, philosophy, and religion. Theology outdistances the natural sciences by (1) drawing and reflecting on revelation and religious experience, sources not available to the natural sciences, and (2) concerning itself with all of the dimensions and modalities of reality.

As an essay collection, this one holds together remarkably well in its focus on how far especially scientific knowledge can take us currently in human understanding. This includes both the necessity of the natural sciences for human understanding, and science's inability to provide full and satisfying answers. Overall, these lectures underscore the importance of the natural sciences in demonstrating that human life is essentially and manifestly embodied life. Lakoff, Baker, and Hebblethwaite are particularly pointed in their remarks against dualism and in drawing out the explanatory power of this view of an integrated, embodied human person. Conspicuously absent from this exploration are other voices – including evolutionary psychology and consciousness-studies (which at least make cameo appearances) and cosmology (altogether lacking). Moreover, as a whole, these lectures are less oriented toward the theological end of the 'natural theology' equation that defines the Gifford Lectures. On the other hand, persons interested in theology and the natural sciences will find here a most stimulating point of departure.

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Luke Timothy Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. v + 290. \$30.00.

In this collection of essays, Johnson has compiled the fruit of nearly two decades of research and reflection upon the letter of James. Several of the chapters consist either of essays previously published or of older studies appearing in print for the first time, while the prologue and epilogue appear as new essays written specifically for this text. In order to summarize the various theses forwarded in this collection of essays, it will be helpful to organize the themes Johnson pursues around some major trajectories.

First, Johnson sets his work within the trajectory of ancient sources, including Greco-Roman, Jewish literary background and discernible sayings of Jesus. In several essays, Johnson demonstrates the numerous Greco-Roman parallels running through James. Noting specifically the resemblance between James and Hellenistic moral philosophers, Johnson addresses several *topoi* of moral instruction. He considers the virtue of brevity, namely the

impact of the tongue on true religion ('Taciturnity and True Religion: James 1:26–27', pp. 155–67). He draws several parallels between the use of the 'mirror' as a call to self-reflection specifically in Epictetus and Plutarch with James's exhortation to look into the perfect law of liberty (1:25). Here the 'mirror' metaphor is used not as a means to examine one's own appearance so much as the 'mirror' is the ideal example shown in the law, from which James offers the concrete examples of Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah ('The Mirror of Remembrance: James 1:22–25', pp. 168–81). In two other essays, Johnson calls attention to the Hellenistic moral instruction, specifically the *topos* of envy ('James 3:13–4:10 and the *Τόπος περὶ φθόνου*', pp. 182–201), and the key idea of friendship as alliance ('Friendship with the World and Friendship with God: A Study of Discipleship in James', pp. 202–20). In the latter essay, Johnson argues that friendship in James 4:4 embodies the letter's key challenge to its recipients: to align themselves with the value system of 'friendship with God' rather than that of 'friendship with the world'.

Though it is evident throughout these writings, Johnson considers the literary debt James owes to the OT in a single essay ('The Use of Leviticus 19 in the Letter of James', pp. 123–35). Here he identifies several verbal and thematic allusions in Lev 19 and shows how the love command of 19:18b functions in James (a topic skillfully taken up in Luke Cheung's *Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of James*). Finally, Johnson circumspectly considers the influence Jesus' teaching exerted in the wisdom of James in a single chapter: 'The Sayings of Jesus in the Letter of James', pp. 136–54.

Another clear trajectory set within these essays is the reception history of the epistle. Several essays consider different aspects of the history of interpretation of James (e.g. 'A Survey of the History of Interpretation of James', pp. 39–44; 'The Reception of James in the Early Church', pp. 45–60; 'Journeying East with James: A Chapter in the History of Interpretation', pp. 61–83; 'How James Won the West: A Chapter in the History of Canonization', pp. 84–100). In a closely related essay ('Prologue: James's Significance for Early Christian History', pp. 1–23) Johnson proposes that the letter was actually written by James of Jerusalem before AD 62 and shows how such an assessment might impact an understanding of earliest Christianity.

Finally, Johnson sets his work on James within the trajectory of the social and theological impact of the letter. Here he deals specifically with the discernible social context in James ('The Social World of James: Literary Analysis and Historical Reconstruction', pp. 101–22). And continuing to probe social realities in the letter, Johnson considers issues of gender revealed in the address of the author ('Gender in the Letter of James: A Surprising Witness', pp. 221–34). Finally, Johnson examines the lasting theological

implications of James ('Epilogue: The Importance of James for Theology', pp. 235–59). This last essay is a good bit of theological reflection upon the text. Here Johnson traces the theological assessment of James in classic NT theology, taking up the interesting conversation partners Schlatter, Bultmann, and G. B. Caird only to move on to an engaging section considering Richard Bauckham's recent theological assessment of James (*James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage*). He ends the essay by listening to James's abiding theological voice for the contemporary world and church.

These essays represent some of the original impetus against Dibelius's dominating voice on virtually every interpretive issue in James. Though some essays here are dated, they remain helpful, if not crucial, pieces of scholarship which consist in the groundswell of new research considering James on its own terms. In several of the essays Johnson's comparative approach with regard to Hellenistic moral literature seems forced and at times irrelevant, though fruitful insights have come to light in this way. For those already familiar with Johnson's essays, this text will only be of interest with respect to the opening and concluding essays – the latter of which, because of its serious engagement with the theological issues of the letter, is alone worth the price of the book. While some of the essays are quite technical, most are accessible to general readers accustomed to biblical study. Though most of the essays are concerned with historical-critical issues, Johnson admirably turns the discussion toward the theological riches of this oft-neglected text.

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Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium. Literature and Theology 1550–1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 224. #39.50.

In the introduction, Crawford Gribben outlines some of the previous studies which have treated puritan eschatology, from William Haller and Perry Miller, to Peter Toon, Bernard Capp and William Lamont. One significant difference in this study, so Gribben claims, is the use of the Derridean analysis of ambiguities and indeterminacies, though the justification of this and its implications are never really unfolded. Gribben traces the interest in apocalyptic from Joachim of Fiore to the English exiles in Geneva, and the notes in the margins of the Geneva Bible. However, after a wider discussion, Gribben focuses on five particular writers – James Ussher, George Gillespie, John Milton, John Rogers and John Bunyan – though with little explanation of why this selection.

The treatment of Ussher is interesting, and Gribben notes his early commitment to a quasi-millennial future, but in later life he distanced

himself from such views. George Gillespie is discussed in relation to the Westminster Assembly. However, Gribben does not really underscore the fact that Gillespie was aligned with the radical or confessional presbyterian party of the Kirk, and there is no discussion as to how his views related to other groupings in the Kirk. There is some misunderstanding of the liturgical and sacramental disagreements from 1615. The same lack of attention to historical setting results in a facile view of Laudianism, and confusion over the relationship of the Scottish Commissioners at the Westminster Assembly with the Independents. Gillespie never favoured their sectarianism, and his fellow commissioner Robert Baillie did not hide his mistrust and dislike of the Independents. Of course, this does not affect Gribben's discussion of Gillespie's apocalyptic views, but this lack of historical context is disconcerting. His discussion on Bunyan brings to light that in later writings, he came close to the realised eschatology of the Quakers.

Gribben's conclusion stresses the need to understand the evolution of the puritan concern for apocalyptic – a flux of meaning generated by a discourse intimately concerned with 'literalness' and figurative language. The politics and portents of their day encouraged such speculation, but this would become more difficult as the early modern period became the Enlightenment, with a very different world-view. This is a useful study for those wishing to explore eschatology in this period, though attention to historical detail may mean that some of Gribben's observations on the significance of these writers will need some careful qualification.

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Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp, eds, *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. xvi + 176. £15.99.

It hardly needs to be reiterated that Jonathan Edwards is one of the most important figures in the American history of philosophy and religion. Yet in spite of this, what does deserve more attention is an examination of Edwards's religious and natural philosophy. This volume, edited by Helm and Crisp, which marks the tercentenary date of Edwards's birth, serves as an estimable venture into this scholarship. Edwards also served as a bridge of European thought and what would become a more distinctive system on the American continent. With chapters written by notable scholars on both sides of the Atlantic it continues the dialogue.

The myriad issues addressed in the volume are constructed in an introduction and ten commissioned essays. In the first two chapters, Jonathan L. Kvanvig and William J. Wainwright discuss Edwards's view of hell. Kvanvig

presents Edwards's defence of a strong view of hell, which he considers to be as sound an argument that can be found, yet he remains 'unconvinced'. Wainwright as well stands in deep respect for Edwards's three-part defence of eternal punishment yet concludes that Edwards was only partially successful. Hugh J. McCann, in discussing Edwards's argument against Arminian free will, posits that there is a way to reconcile what he considers to be the normal Arminian concept of freedom with a strong view of God's sovereignty that stands in contrast to Edwards's explicit claims, but not too far distant from his philosophical underpinnings. In one of the richest chapters, Paul Helm critiques Edwards's use of Locke concerning personal identity. Helm rightly recognises that Edwards had other issues that were central to his thought that 'crowded out' Locke at precisely the point where Locke could have been most helpful to his argument. In what is clearly the most analytic essay of the book, Oliver D. Crisp concludes that Edwards is indeed a 'defender of occasionalism' in spite of recent arguments to the contrary. Philip L. Quinn's presentation of the underlying argument of *The Nature of True Virtue* sets it in dialogue with contemporary virtue ethics and objections found in Paul Ramsey's work. Amy Platinga Pauw sets Edwards over against the problematic doctrine of divine simplicity through his insistence upon the multiplicity required for relational excellence. Gerald R. McDermott places Edwards and John Henry Newman in comparison concerning non-Christian religions, concluding that there is legitimacy in comparing them yet Newman was willing to go much further in affirming salvation for those outside of the Christian faith. The final chapter by Michael J. McClymond is on Edwards's theological use of Neoplatonism which McClymond sees especially in the concept of divination.

This new work serves in many ways as a rejoinder to Sang Hyun Lee's very important *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* published in 1988. Through periodic direct references (including a chapter by Stephen R. Holmes as an explicit response to Lee's presentation of dispositional ontology and a section of Crisp's chapter) as well as latent response throughout, this new work speaks to many of the same issues as Lee with new insight. As Holmes states, 'Lee pays great attention to Edwards's text, but little to his context' (p. 100). It is this that he hopes to correct. This does not mean the topics and positions are limited to Lee's purview. Lee has little to say on hell and non-Christian religions, while the present volume has much devoted to these topics. Additionally, as has been recognised, while there are strengths to Lee's unified approach through the centring of Edwards's philosophy upon the concept of 'habit', there are also many aspects of Edwardsian philosophy that inherently get left aside. *Jonathan Edwards* attempts to address some of these. Generally, the authors have done an excellent job in explicating a

wide variety of ideas present in Edwards's thought. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings in the book as I see it. There is only cursory mention of Berkeley, Hobbes and Hume. Leibniz did not even receive a mention in the book. Newton and Descartes receive a bit more attention, though limited to paragraphs. As would be expected, Locke receives the most attention, though this is nothing new in Edwardsian studies. What would have been more interesting to me, taking a more historical turn, would have been more development of the context that Holmes points towards. Edwards's reaction to Hobbesian materialism and Cartesian dualism and their implications for practical theology are vital to understanding his philosophy. Edwards was at least familiar with the work of Hume, whose *A Treatise on Human Nature* he referred to in his correspondence with John Erskine as a 'corrupt book' that was written by a man of 'considerable genius'.

Newton was almost as important to Edwards's philosophy as Locke, but does not receive the same attention. The other giant contemporaries of Edwards, Berkeley and Leibniz, share so much with Edwards which was arrived at independently that there needs to be some contextual ploughing going on in analysis of this fertile era. These aspects are largely overlooked in the process of doing an exceptional job on the issues the editors and authors have chosen to address, especially their placing of Edwards in dialogue with many of today's philosophical concerns.

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Marguerite Shuster, *The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. xii + 280. \$30.00.

The Fall and Sin is at once an apologia for a quasi-literal reading of the Genesis story of the fall of Adam, an explication of a doctrine of sin and a collection of sermons. The entire goal of the project is to argue that an 'existentialist' approach to the fall misses the mark in presenting a true interpretation of sin that is theologically compelling. Shuster argues that unless one reads the story literally one cannot read it as being true and consequently one cannot appreciate the radical nature of human sinfulness. As well, she is concerned that if we do not take Adam to have been 'real', then this affects our ability to take the work of Christ to be 'real' (Rom. 5:12–21). This posture causes Shuster to engage in a biblical hermeneutic that might best be described as a theological calisthenic. The book begins with an extended treatise on why we must believe Adam to have existed, even if we are persuaded by the work of historical criticism and the natural sciences that the story of the fall could not have actually happened as scripture recounts (pp. 8ff.). After the

introduction, the book becomes an insiders's text – it moves into what I term the space of 'echo chamber Calvinism', by which I mean that stream of the Reformed faith that unselfconsciously roots itself in American evangelicalism and presumes its particular piety is the Reformed tradition. This unfortunate turn becomes clear when Shuster lumps together all readings of the fall which are not neo-orthodox evangelical interpretations as 'existentialist' (i.e., Tillich, Process and Postmodern) and therefore specious. This reductionism substantially diminishes the value of the work and leads Shuster to engage in a type of theological discourse that is unnecessarily haughty and glib: 'after all, it [Marjories Suchocki's theology] is intended as "natural theology"; and Suchocki's dialogue partners are Niebuhr and Tillich rather than the Bible' (p. 53). Perhaps most tragic is that in the end Shuster presents a doctrine of sin which so focuses on personal righteousness that there is little room left for a generous concern about the well-being of God's creation. The sermons are elegant, and the text is well written. The book may well be an interesting source of theological reflection and conversation, if the reader can get past the sense that, unless you agree with her, Shuster is really not that interested in other ideas – because they are probably wrong.

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Craig Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, Robert Song and Al Wolters, eds, *A Royal Priesthood? The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), pp. xxiv + 445. £24.99.

I fear there is a tendency to dismiss Oliver O'Donovan as a restorationist because of his defence of the idea of a Christian state. In fact, O'Donovan is one of the most interesting figures in political theology today, not least because of his bold and subtle attempt to distil a coherent theology of the political from the whole of the biblical narrative. The essays in this volume comprise the most thorough engagement with O'Donovan's work available. The essays are appreciative, yet probing and critical. O'Donovan's responses to each essay show an erudite and patient mind at work. This volume originated in a Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar consultation in July 2001. The group of scholars gathered is good, though somewhat narrow: of fifteen voices in the volume, there are no Catholics, Orthodox or Anabaptists, and the only woman is O'Donovan's wife. The dialogue format of the meetings is preserved, to the reader's benefit. Also to the reader's benefit is the fact that the authors often explain O'Donovan more clearly than he explains himself. Those who have had a hard time slugging their way through O'Donovan's prose will appreciate the many helpful distillations

of his positions in this book. Chief among them is the Introduction by Craig Bartholomew, the best initiation into O'Donovan's thought I have yet seen.

One of the primary concerns of the volume is to address O'Donovan's use of the Bible as a continuous, reliable and unified narrative. Andrew Lincoln, for example, points to insights that O'Donovan has missed by compiling a composite portrait of Jesus from all four gospels, and not treating each gospel as a literary unit in its own right. R. W. L. Moberly questions O'Donovan's use of the biblical narrative without attending to discrepancies between what the Bible says happened and what historical criticism says happened. Moberly recommends a canonical approach to avoid the problem, but O'Donovan responds that we must not let the solution be driven by the historical-critical method which, he says, has produced 'remarkably few' reliable insights. 'These insights carry authority because the text reads itself so much more clearly with them than without them' (p. 66), not because of the intellectual authority of historical criticism. The insights of historical criticism are best incorporated into a 'pious' reading of the text, not a hermeneutics of suspicion. O'Donovan's rejection of suspicion is addressed by Gordon McConville, who urges O'Donovan to take more seriously the critical strains within the biblical text itself. The contrast between conceptions of political authority in Deuteronomy and Samuel-Kings, for example, means 'the concept of "suspicion" appears to be embodied in the narrative' (p. 75).

O'Donovan resists the recent emphasis on the plurality of voices in the Bible because he seeks to extract a coherent political theology from the biblical text alone; as Bartholomew says, O'Donovan 'continues to affirm *sola* and *tota scriptura*' (p. 20). Christopher Rowland and Peter Scott press O'Donovan to entertain a more dynamic relationship between the text and the church. Rowland pleads for a 'looser', more imaginative range of uses of the book of Revelation in conjunction with the praxis of politically engaged Christians. Scott addresses the contrast that O'Donovan draws between the recovery of the idea of authority in political thought, which O'Donovan thinks is essential, and the 'suspicious' critique of legitimation, which O'Donovan thinks is poisonous. Scott wants to bring the two together by speaking of the authority of the poor as a crucial source for the interpretation of scripture. The recovery of authority can only escape being a legitimation of unjust power if it is rooted in the praxis of God's special concern for the poor.

The subtitle of this volume would lead one to believe that it is a volume of essays on hermeneutics, and it is in part, but it is also much more: it is a sustained debate over the nature of political theology. Central to O'Donovan's political theology is his conviction that there exists an analogy between God's saving acts and the acts of humans in ordering the human community.

Similar to the liberation theologians, O'Donovan argues that there are not two histories, one sacred and the other secular, but one public stage on which God's saving actions and human political actions unfold. All the contributors to this volume are in basic sympathy with this conviction. They disagree on the particulars.

One of the primary bones of contention is O'Donovan's theology of government, which sees political authority as part of God's providential plan for history, but not part of created order as such. Coercive government is ordained by God only to restrain evil in the present age, but it belongs essentially to the powers of the past age over which Christ has triumphed. Coercive government is therefore marked for elimination, but short of the eschaton, it is meant to serve the church, to protect the church so that it may carry out its role in God's plan of salvation. Gerrit de Kruijf objects that O'Donovan thus gives the state too grand a role to play in the drama of salvation. James Skillen, on the other hand, believes O'Donovan has ignored the Bible's positive presentation of government as part of a restored creation. O'Donovan believes that neither de Kruijf nor Skillen appreciates the role of the church in salvation. In both de Kruijf's strictly limited state and Skillen's more active version, the state directly embodies God's activity for the protection of humanity; O'Donovan argues, in contrast, that God's authority is always mediated through the church.

Church is a central notion for two more of O'Donovan's interlocutors in this volume. Bernd Wannenwetsch endorses O'Donovan's contention that the church's understanding of its own political practice should help the world rethink its own assumptions about the political life. Wannenwetsch uses Rom 12 to suggest that the church offers the world a better way of conceptualising the common good and political representation. Colin Greene emphasises the prophetic witness of the church, but in such a way that questions O'Donovan's reading of Christendom. According to Greene, the great mistake of Christendom was to try to unite church and empire into one society with two rulers – pope and emperor – rather than see church and empire as two societies with one ruler, God. According to Greene, if the church sees itself as a distinct society it will better be able to serve as prophetic witness to God's rule.

Though I can only hint at the issues raised in this volume, I hope it is clear from this brief review that this book is much more than an engagement with Oliver O'Donovan's work. It is a substantive contribution to hermeneutics and political theology, and I recommend it to anyone with interests in those fields.

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W. Kraus and K.-W. Niebuhr, eds., *Frühjudentum und Neues Testament im Horizont Biblischer Theologie. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 162 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 417. € 99.00.

This volume is a *Doppelfestschrift*, the essays arising out of a symposium celebrating the 70th birthdays of Traugott Holtz and Nikolaus Walter. The academic careers of these two scholars have been particularly intertwined; from the time when they were students of Gerhard Delling in Halle, they have both been involved in the *Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti* project which is also featured in the present volume. As is often the case with a *Festschrift*, there is no particular coherence to the essays in the volume, so it will be necessary to pick out certain contributions which may be of particular interest to readers of the *Journal*.

Part I consists of essays on early Judaism. Pieter van der Horst's essay ('Der Zölibat im Frühjudentum') deals with the phenomenon of permanent celibacy in early Judaism from Alexander the Great to the rise of Islam. He rightly commends recent scholarship for avoiding the polarity of a Judaism on the one hand which is affirming of sexuality and an early Christianity which was suspicious of it. After a brief treatment of rabbinic Judaism, the focus is on Philo and Qumran. On the subject of celibacy in the Dead Sea Scrolls, he concludes that there must have been two kinds of Essenes, those celibate and those not, but that it is impossible to tell whether these two groups existed simultaneously or whether there is some kind of chronological development. Van der Horst is somewhat less cautious in his closing treatment of John the Baptist and Jesus. Of the rest of the essays in this section, Lutz Doering ('Jeremia in Babylonien und Ägypten: Mündliche und schriftliche Tora-paränese für Exil und Diaspora nach 4QApocryphon of Jeremiah C') offers a particularly learned treatment of an example of biblical interpretation in the second-temple period.

Part II consists of eight essays on the New Testament. Among these are K.-W. Niebuhr's excellent essay ('Jesu Heilungen und Exorzismen. Ein Stück Theologie des Neuen Testaments'), which is particularly focused on the healing and forgiveness of the paralytic in Mark 2:1–12 and parallels. He offers the challenging conclusion that: 'When Jesus forgives sins, he does not simply mediate an activity of God to men, but himself embodies the one God of Israel, who is merciful to his people' (p. 109). Jörg Frey's essay ('Der Judasbrief zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus') argues – in dialogue with scholars such as Bauckham – against the thesis that the intellectual background of Jude is predominantly that of Palestinian-Jewish Christianity. Christfried Böttrich analyses in great detail the tradition-historical background to the designation of Jesus as 'the morning star' in Rev 22:16, and along

the way explores a number of texts relating 'light' and messiahship in early Judaism and Christianity. Finally, Wolfgang Kraus's essay ('Das Heilige Land als Thema einer Biblischen Theologie') tackles the all-too-relevant issue of the land of Israel. After criticising the approaches to biblical theology of Childs, Hübner and Stuhlmacher, Kraus proceeds on the principle of the unity of divine action in the OT and NT. Inquiring into the logic common to the treatment of the land in both testaments, Kraus – via Rev 21 in particular – attempts a metaphorical interpretation of the land which at the same time avoids supersessionism and spiritualising.

There follows, in Part III, an *Anhang* on the *Corpus Hellenisticum* project, an extremely ambitious enterprise which went on for much of the twentieth century (and still continues), aiming to provide a comprehensive account of the parallels to the NT from extra-canonical literature. Some of the early history of the project is documented in previously unpublished pamphlets: Georg Heinrici's 'Instruktionstext für Mitarbeiter am Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti' (1915) and Ernst von Dobschütz's 'Probedruck zum Johannes-Prolog' (1930) are particularly interesting, and are reproduced in facsimile form. There are two further previously unpublished pieces on the progress of the project (H. Hanse's *status quaestionis* essay from 1934; N. Walter's summary of the progress to 1958), and finally K.-W. Niebuhr provides an up-to-date treatment, and a helpful bibliography.

The essays come from the cream of contemporary German (van der Horst excepted) scholarship, including contributions both from senior scholars (Roloff et al.) and the younger generation (Frey, Doering). Many of the essays offer good interaction with scholarship internationally, though the footnotes of others restrict themselves almost exclusively to German literature: Kraus and Roloff include only two or three English-language works among their numerous other references. This is clearly not a must-read book for all readers of the Journal, as its contents are of a very technical nature. But the individual essays, almost without exception, offer significant contributions to early Jewish and NT studies.

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Rik van Nieuwenhove, *Jan van Ruusbroec, Mystical Theologian of the Trinity* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2003), pp. xii + 250. \$45.00 (hb); \$22.00 (pb).

Rik van Nieuwenhove demonstrates with admirable clarity the richness and depth of Jan van Ruusbroec's (1293–1381) theology, laying special emphasis on Ruusbroec's views concerning the Trinity, anthropology, Christology and

deification. Nieuwenhove argues that Ruusbroec is a mystical theologian, ‘concerned with the transformation of the human person who acquires a selfless, theocentric focus in whatever she does’. For Ruusbroec, to be “‘intent” on God in whatever we do’ is to “‘rest” in God’. This leads to the ‘common’ life, ‘in which contemplation and virtuous activity are perfectly integrated in a reflection of the “common” nature of the Trinity, which is both activity in the Persons and “enjoyable rest” in unity (p. 5).

Nieuwenhove’s exposition of Ruusbroec’s work is careful and clear, yet gives due attention to the complexity of Ruusbroec’s thought and the intertwining of key themes within it. Nieuwenhove demonstrates Ruusbroec’s debt to the idea of *epektasis*, the unsatisfiable yearning of the soul for an inexhaustible divinity (ch. 2). He clarifies Ruusbroec’s understanding of the Holy Spirit and its role in the process of *regiratio*, the return of the three persons of the Trinity into their shared unity (ch. 3) and provides a detailed exposition of Ruusbroec’s understanding of the way in which human beings are created to the image of God, which is Christ (ch. 4). Finally, he articulates the importance of Ruusbroec’s understanding of *regiratio* and creation for his account of how Christ saves (ch. 5) and how the ideal state of the Christian should best be understood (ch. 6). Through the process of detailed textual exposition, Nieuwenhove amply demonstrates the beauty, coherence and importance of Ruusbroec’s theological vision.

Nieuwenhove also argues repeatedly for Ruusbroec’s originality. This is a more difficult task, both theologically and historically, and one wonders why it is so important to Nieuwenhove given the intense ambivalence towards originality in the Middle Ages. Nieuwenhove shapes his account of Ruusbroec’s work in relationship to two tendencies in contemporary Ruusbroec scholarship – tendencies Nieuwenhove strenuously opposes because he believes that they obscure the theological quality and originality of Ruusbroec’s work. Nieuwenhove’s emphasis on Ruusbroec’s ‘originality’, then, has less to do with medieval values than with modern scholarly debates. This in itself is not a problem, yet at various points in Nieuwenhove’s study I wondered if contemporary debates overshadowed more historically nuanced approaches to Ruusbroec’s thought and its relationship to late medieval mystical theology.

The more understated of Nieuwenhove’s theses with regard to modern Ruusbroec scholarship is that Ruusbroec is best understood within Augustinian, Dionysian and especially Franciscan theological traditions than as an exponent of the Rhineland mysticism of Meister Eckhart, Henry Suso and John Tauler. In addition, Nieuwenhove consistently downplays Ruusbroec’s potential debt to the writings of the thirteenth-century Flemish beguine Hadewijch. These positions are more asserted than argued, although

in an earlier essay Nieuwenhove makes the case for reading Ruusbroec independently of Eckhart by carefully articulating the ways in which they use similar terminology to different theological ends. Hadewijch, however, simply disappears. Nieuwenhove points to the importance of the women's religious movement as the audience for much of Ruusbroec's work, acknowledges that Ruusbroec most likely knew Hadewijch's writings, and then rarely mentions her again. We now know, however, that the beguine tradition was crucial for Eckhart's writing and reception and that Suso and Tauler are best understood as responding to the condemnations of Eckhart and the beguines in the early fourteenth century. Might a related context not help explain the particularity and 'originality' of Ruusbroec's theology?

For example, in his account of Ruusbroec's debt to the notion of *epektasis* Nieuwenhove concedes that it is virtually impossible that Ruusbroec knew the work of the fourth-century theologian Gregory of Nyssa, in which the idea is first articulated. Nieuwenhove argues that the idea came to Ruusbroec from the twelfth-century Cistercians, particularly Bernard of Clairvaux, for whom 'every encounter between God and the human person is always lacking in final satisfaction' (p. 174). This is no doubt correct, yet also inadequate. In Hadewijch's poems, the soul's insatiable desire for an inexhaustible Godhead takes on an intensity and fervour unmatched in Cistercian and Victorine texts. Moreover, Hadewijch is the most proximate source for Ruusbroec. My suspicion is that Ruusbroec both borrows from and transforms Hadewijch's thinking on this and many other issues (perhaps most crucial among them the interplay of rest and fruition in the Trinity and the soul's participation in that double movement through the imitation of Christ). His relationship to Hadewijch's texts is no doubt shaped by the suspicions raised against the beguines through the Council of Vienne's association of them with the so-called heresy of the Free Spirit (just as his relationship to Eckhart is clearly shaped by Eckhart's condemnation). Nieuwenhove attends to Ruusbroec's polemics against proponents of the Free Spirit only in order to insist – with Ruusbroec himself – on the theological distance between their seemingly similar languages. The contexts in which these polemics take place, however, are never articulated.

Instead, Nieuwenhove focuses on a debate with modern Ruusbroec scholars, chief among them Paul Mommaers, who, according to Nieuwenhove, insist on reading Ruusbroec as 'a phenomenologist of religious experience' (p. 3). Nieuwenhove's eschewal of the language of experience is premised on a narrow reading of the term derived from William James. Experience for Nieuwenhove is Jamesian mystical experience, marked by its noetic quality, immediacy, transience and ineffability. Nieuwenhove is

surely right that Ruusbroec's vision of the 'common life' cannot be subsumed by James's categories. Yet experience is a term found within the religious writing of the Middle Ages and a concept operative within the debates that shape late medieval mystical theology. Ruusbroec's polemic against the heretics of the Free Spirit, who eschew all works in order putatively to rest in God, seems less an argument against Jamesian-style 'mystical experience', as Nieuwenhove argues, than an attempt to articulate the kind of experience that marks the pinnacle of Christian life. Nieuwenhove faults Mommaers for conflating Ruusbroec's language of transformation and deification with modern, Jamesian-influenced accounts of mystical experience, but then goes on himself to conflate the Free Spirits' conception of the mystical life with Jamesian accounts in ways that seem only slightly less problematic. Arguing against the analytical value of the term 'experience', Nieuwenhove too often allows eschewal of the term to dominate his otherwise insightful readings of Ruusbroec's work.

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John Yocum, *Ecclesial Meditation in Karl Barth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. xxiii + 200. £45.00.

In contrast to his earlier theological reflections, by CD IV Barth has come to identify the category of sacrament (and therefore grace's mediation) exclusively with Jesus Christ. By offering suggestions on the radicality of this shift John Yocum dis-eases those who see in the CD a consistently static Barth whose later volumes are directly continuous with the earlier ones. The Barthian corpus is much more interesting than the 'continuity' model would allow for, and its theological reflections are endlessly figured, and reconfigured.

However, a question needs to be asked, particularly since the type of work done by Timothy Gorringe and F.-W. Marquardt about this book's relative lack of contextualising features prevents it from asking about the 'why' of Barth's shift. All too briefly recited are the widely known factors of Barth's increasing aversion to all forms of synergism, in particular with his polemical concern with Roman Catholicism, existentialism and secularised European Christianity in the 1950s (p. 124). But is this suggestion, largely read out of CD IV.3.1, sufficient to explain what was going on? Barth's theology is inadequately understood unless it is read contextually and politically. This point could be reinforced by observing that, as is typical of a great many Barth commentators, the CD largely dominates Yocum's reflections (there is occasional comparison with *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*).

Yocum does a decent job of suggesting that the shift is more serious than a change in nomenclature. For him something theologically important is lost – the mediation of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, and the *effective sign* of the church’s bearing witness to this (unfortunately less is done on the possible contribution of this mediation for both good and ill).

Yet the material reflections are quite thin on certain important occasions. For instance, although there are some hints, there is insufficient delving into the theological ontology that is necessary for a robust theology of ecclesial sacramentality. Just what would a theology of ecclesial mediation look like, and what dangers would this concept need to be attentive to? Perhaps a conversation with one such as John Milbank would help clarify some of the issues and the pitfalls involved here. Yocum is quite right, nevertheless, to lay trinitarian grounds for a sufficiently theological account of ecclesial mediation, and the theme of ‘covenant’ features prominently in places.

Secondly, Yocum does not ask whether CD IV.4 itself corrects any weakness in CD I. Yet it is the implications of a dominating Logos-sarx christological model in volume I that has troubled in different ways the likes of Rowan Williams and Hans Frei. Thirdly, can the concept of the one Word of God and parables of it (CD IV.3.1) not perform a similar function to the earlier material on the threefold Word of God (CD I.1), while more carefully differentiating the singular form of the Word incarnate from its (ecclesial) witnesses? Fourthly, it is similarly arguable that CD IV.4’s ethic of correspondence in certain ways parallels Barth’s earlier work on the epistemic *nachdenken* (most famously articulated in the *Anselm* text). Fifthly, the thesis in CD IV.3.1 on the prophetic work of Christ can well open, if handled carefully, pathways to a trinitarian notion of ecclesial mediation – that the church’s witness is what is meant by the ongoing prophetic work of Christ. Finally, Barth’s treatment of the activity involved in praying the Lord’s Prayer could arguably be compared to earlier material on mediations of grace, especially when Barth develops it in terms of a theology of *concursus*.

Certainly, the later work can tend to make the divine–human *concursus* sound more external. It is this dominating imagery that enables Yocum to argue that ‘the distinctions [between divine and human agency] are perhaps too sharply drawn’ (p. 134). Yocum’s generalised and occasionalistic, but nevertheless suggestive, comments on the need for a more robust pneumatology could here be pressed. The advantage of this pressure could force him to consider a no less important question about the relation of the sacramental and the non-human world.

The introduction of Congar into the book’s conversations is problematic – in the early chapters in particular it is too piecemeal, brief and unannounced. Moreover, I am only partially convinced that there has been a significant

theological shift in Barth's work for the worse (but I do feel that several of the models Barth uses later can create certain problems, and that therefore it is their introduction that has, at certain key points, been a disimprovement). Nevertheless, Yocum's documentation of his thesis is on the whole useful, especially since it entails that the significance of the developments in Barth's later work is more far-reaching than its previous tracings with regard to Barth's later theology of baptism would suggest. On the whole, then, with all the caveats mentioned, this remains an interesting study.

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Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 160. £16.99.

George Lindbeck has made an art form of writing clear, concise, highly distilled texts distinguished by an illuminating freshness of perspective. This significant study, representing the matured fruits of a period of research jointly supervised by Lindbeck and Kathryn Tanner, evinces these qualities in full.

Complementing and extending a number of other recent works, Karen Kilby seeks to disrupt the once standard reading of Rahner's thought as a tightly structured whole in which the theology is founded upon and shaped by prior philosophical commitments, the supposed *foundations* of his system. One strategy has been to argue for the *de facto* priority of Rahner's specifically theological commitments over the philosophical. Where Richard Lennan, for example, has focused upon ecclesial existence as Rahner's determining concern throughout, others, notably Philip Endean, have specified this further by exploring the relationship between Ignatian spirituality and key aspects of Rahner's theology. Following a different tack, Joseph Di Noia has pointed to the way in which the typical essay form of Rahner's writings stands in tension with the account of him as a grand systematician. Related to this, Nicholas Healy has floated the idea that Rahner is to be viewed as an 'ad hoc apologist', adopting various strategies to suit the needs of the moment.

For her own part, Kilby's reading – acknowledged by Fergus Kerr as being instrumental in causing him to revise his own influential reading – represents a thoroughgoing, philosophically articulate challenge to the pivotal assumption that Rahner's theology is logically dependent on his philosophy for its justification (pp. 10, 133 and *passim*). Her argument proceeds on two levels.

First, underwriting Di Noia's bid for an unsystematic reading she carefully lays bare the problems with regarding Rahner's *œuvre* as a tightly constructed

system. In chapter 2 Kilby argues that Rahner's attempts in *Spirit in the World* to establish that the human knower has a pre-thematic knowledge of God in all she knows simply fail. Countering with an illuminating analogy, she likens Rahner's claim that we only know particular finite things by contrasting them against a prior implicit knowledge of being in its totality to the manifestly disproportionate suggestion that 'in order to recognize that one's own house is one among several . . . one needs to be taken into outer space and given a view of planets and stars and whole galaxies' (p. 30). More generally, in chapter 3 she argues that transcendental modes of argumentation fail if taken as attempted proofs rather than as rhetorical commendations of previously held convictions. In turn, chapter 4 points to a significant discontinuity between Rahner's view of the human person in *Hearer of the Word* as one who waits on the hiddenness of God and his later understanding of the supernatural existential as itself being the revealing self-communication of God within every human being. The combined effect is to argue that Rahner's philosophical writings simply cannot provide the justifying grounds for his theology.

Following this, Kilby seeks in chapters 5 and 6 to demonstrate the relatively less problematic character of a nonfoundationalist reading of the relationship between Rahner's philosophy and theology and, in chapter 7, tests this out in relation to his notion of the anonymous Christian. Central throughout is the claim that whilst Rahner frequently draws upon the notion of a pre-thematic experience of God, it is best understood as 'something to which his theology concludes rather than as its supposed starting point' (p. 10). Or, in Healy's terms, it is one of the various strategies Rahner uses in a relatively *ad hoc* way to indicate the reasonableness of faith without intending, thereby, to build his theology upon a supposedly neutral foundation.

This is an important contribution to Rahner studies. Where the likes of Lennan and Endean demonstrate the extent to which Rahner's lived practice of faith exerted an appropriately prior, shaping influence on his theology, Kilby unsettles the potential counter-claim that the articulated form of his writings nevertheless reflects a consistently foundationalist mode of proceeding in which all is grounded in a formally prior analysis of human subjectivity. If sound, this should serve to free Rahner's writings to be engaged with and assessed on their own particular merits rather than in prejudiced relation to his early philosophical writings.

The remarkable thing about this book is that Kilby not only succeeds in bringing fresh perspective to an already well-tilled field, but manages to do so whilst writing throughout in a clear and comprehensible manner – a quality all too rare in Rahner studies. Related to this, she respects her readers.

Whilst she defends her own reading of Rahner as the best available, she acknowledges that others are nevertheless possible.

Indeed, this last point could profitably have been developed further. Ultimately there is something more convincing about Kilby's critical evaluation of strictly foundationalist readings of the relationship between Rahner's philosophical and theological writings than there is about her contrary presentation of him as exemplifying an explicitly and consciously nonfoundationalist approach. This just has a somewhat anachronistic ring to it. Is not the reason variant readings of Rahner are possible in this regard something to do with the fact that he lived precisely through and between the erosion of widely held foundationalist assumptions in theological circles on the one hand and the explicit articulation and refinement of viable modes of postfoundationalist theological rationality on the other? In other words, the ambiguity is not simply in the eye of the reader but in the texts themselves and in Rahner's own attempts to think through and speak to the situation in which he found himself. This is not to invalidate Kilby's fine reading but it is to make clear that hers is an exercise in retrieval and repair; one aimed at healing the tensions and difficulties in Rahner's writings with a view to allowing their constructive contribution to live afresh. For this act of theological ministry she is to be thanked and her book commended.

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Patrick Burke, *Reinterpreting Rahner: A Critical Study of His Major Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. ix + 322. £14.95.

In this ambitious, learned and demanding study Patrick Burke ostensibly seeks to move beyond the starkly contrasting interpretations of Rahner characterising much recent Catholic theology. Where the sympathetic have viewed him as the authentic voice of Vatican II Catholicism whose work requires continuing appropriation and extension, others have held him responsible for a falsely progressivist, incautiously liberal debasement of Catholicism. Apparently foregoing any concern with this bigger picture, Burke leads the reader through a finely detailed, sober analysis of the Rahnerian corpus. His concern, we are told, is to recognise the sophistication and brilliance of Rahner's theology whilst also allowing a significant structural tension to emerge into view.

The technical competence of Burke's scholarship is exemplary. His analysis is methodical and carefully presented. He displays expert knowledge of the original sources and complements this with a good knowledge of the vast range of secondary literature, although there are some recent notable

omissions. A question exists, however, as to whether Burke is somewhat disingenuous in appearing simply to pursue an internal exposition of Rahner's writings. Both the structure and the substance of his critique reflect significant prior commitments which, in key respects, are left unexamined.

As regards the structure, following in a well-worn path of Rahner scholarship Burke starts out with a close reading of Rahner's two early works, *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word*. He takes the metaphysics of human knowledge to be found there as foundational for the rest of Rahner's theology viewed as a tightly integrated, thoroughly consistent system. Guided by this assumption, each subsequent chapter follows a similar pattern. First, Rahner's approach to a given theological theme as articulated in his pre 1960s writings is situated in clear continuity with the aforementioned philosophical foundations. Second, his later writings are viewed as generally reflecting a more problematic negotiation of these foundations in such a fashion as exacerbates an underlying tension. In a long final chapter previous findings are again summarised and a further strict continuity identified with the late *Foundations of Christian Faith*, treated here as a final synthesis of Rahner's 'whole theological project'.

Such foundationalist readings of the relationship between Rahner's philosophical and doctrinal theology have long been commonly assumed by friend and foe alike. It is an assumption, however, that has increasingly been called into question in recent years, and this from a variety of angles (compare the review of Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner. Theology and Philosophy* in the present volume). Given the rhetorical structural importance of this assumption in Burke's analysis – it is what enables him repeatedly to insist that any perceived problems in Rahner's thought are truly fundamental rather than mere unresolved ambiguities – it would have been appropriate for him to have tested it against the relevant literature. This he does not do.

As regards the substance of Burke's critique, here he follows John McDermott's lead in using the phrase 'dialectical analogy' to refer to what he regards as a consistent problematic structure at the heart of Rahner's theology, according to which human reality exists as a state of continual, mutually conditioning oscillation between a unifying transcendent dynamism and a distinguishing, conceptualising attention to particularity. It is this pattern of thinking, for example, that led Rahner most famously to maintain that God's self-communication is both universal and something requiring to be brought to particular and definitive expression. For Burke, the problems associated with this pattern of 'dialectical analogy' come particularly to the fore in Rahner's later writings, where he prioritises the unifying pole of his thinking at the cost of maintaining the permanent inadequacy of all explicit, conceptual understanding, even that affirmed within the dogmatic tradition.

But this is not simply a late aberration on Rahner's behalf. It flows ultimately, Burke claims, from the inadequate emphasis Rahner places, in contrast to earlier neo-Thomistic philosophy, on the intellect's passive reception of the formal reality of any genuinely known object. Without this, Burke judges, all is inevitably open to degrees of uncertainty and conceptual relativity in a modernist-leaning fashion that is deeply inimitable to genuine Catholic understanding. It is in this, it would seem, that the agenda of this book apparently without an agenda actually consists.

As earlier, given the significance of these claims for Burke's critique, it would be appropriate for him to subject them in turn to critical scrutiny and, likewise, to consider the possible constructive responses that might be offered, neither of which he does. Some relevant questions might be: how might one seek to retain the receptive, realist instinct of an Aristotelian–Thomistic epistemology without thereby appearing to require – as Burke's retention of a strongly propositionalist account of dogmatic truth tends so to do – the notion of a conceptual system that is perfectly adequate, without qualification, to the reality in question? Related to this, how might a rule theory of doctrine allow both for definiteness and conceptual underdetermination? More generally, how adequate is it to give a label – 'dialectical analogy' – to a certain pattern of thinking in Rahner's metaphysics of human knowledge and then simply to point to the ways in which it supposedly recurs in seemingly univocal form throughout the rest of his theology? Sure, there are recurring patterns, in the plural, but also significant differences. For example, it would be problematic in the extreme to treat Rahner's understanding of the relationship between the immanent and the economic trinity as a direct parallel to his understanding of the relationship between the transcendental and categorial poles of human knowledge. The interrelationships and distinctions between these related yet varying patterns requires closer analysis than they here receive. In place of such analysis, Burke's tends to settle simply for pointing and saying, 'There it is again'.

In conclusion, this is a serious if somewhat contentious work. It is to be hoped that it in turn receives the attention it deserves from Rahner specialists.

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