Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity. By John Behr. Christian Theology in Context. Oxford: Oxford University, 2013. Pp. xi + 236. $110.

Second-century studies have been undergoing a "Copernican revolution" over the past three decades. Our approaches to understanding early Christian self-identification have been shaken out of the historical-critical structures that have framed it for over two centuries and into hybridity: the search for ways to interpret Christ evolving among diverse Christian groups in diverse social contexts with different hermeneutical practices as they rub against one another. Behr captures this revolution in this closely argued volume. He draws especially on Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* (henceforth *Haer.*) and what survives in later quotations from his letters to liberate him from the confines of the standard attributes that mostly obscure his real contribution. B. thus allows Irenaeus to give voice to a "community of interpretation" in understanding a common hypothesis. The hypothesis is that the one God, Father and Creator, willed from the beginning that the human would finally become wholly God's own image and likeness, and established an all-encompassing economy for this purpose, to be effects by the Word and Spirit of God (77, 205). Most crucially for biblical interpretation, Irenaeus articulates the belief that the economic activity of this Word of God was already manifest in the OT (123).

Thus, in his usual lucid and succinct manner, B. organizes in a modest three chapters a volume that is profoundly researched and the product of mature thought about Irenaeus and his theological legacy. It thus admirably meets the series's goal to produce "well-researched yet accessible books" (cover).

B. first contextualizes our limited information for Irenaeus's life (chap. 1). To do this, he takes account of recent advances in understanding Polycarp, Papias, the Marcionites, Montanists, Valentinians, and second-century Rome. This part of his exposition appears very derivative, but his critical reading is attested in his notes, and his meticulous use of the work of Cornelius Hill, Peter Lampe, Christine Trevett, Einar Thomassen, and others attends carefully to Irenaeus's own texts. Emerging from this background, in contrast to many earlier studies, is a sophisticated Irenaeus, architect of church unity in Rome and Gaul, with powerful networks in Smyrna, the Rhône Valley, and Rome. These findings inform the ensuing discussion of *Haer.*

Analysis of the structure and contents of the five books of *Haer*. occupies chapters 2 and 3 and, in contrast to earlier conclusions, portrays a sophisticated theologian with profound knowledge of the Scriptures and solid command of the organization of his long work. B. presents a relatively standard view of *Haer.*'s overall structure that appears uninfluenced by recent efforts to situate it in the rhetorical forms of the Second Sophistic (74). His useful outlines of each book, which note special issues with Book 5 and explanations in contemporary terms, aim to guide the reader through the long work's density and structural obscurity. The book-by-book analysis also incorporates the contextual analysis of B.'s chapter 1. It is a little surprising that Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, discovered in 1904 in an Armenian manuscript, is discussed only briefly on a few pages, chiefly in the overview of *Haer.* 3 where it is subsumed as a parallel work (88–89). However, this

reviewer agrees that (most of) *Haer.* 3 presupposes the *Demonstration*'s arguments, and it therefore postdates the shorter treatise (68–69).

Haer. 2–5 have a tripartite organization: one God, one Christ, one economy of salvation for the human (103). In *Haer.* 3–5 the discussion of all three topics is governed by the hermeneutical rule that the gospel proclaimed by the apostles must accord with the OT (chap. 3). By using this approach B. crucially reintegrates Irenaeus's theological themes, naturally dominant in his book, with the biblical interpretation lying at their heart. He rightly points out that the OT and the gospel reflect the single work of God in Christ, thus refuting Valentinian soteriology by the complete revelation of Christ in the cross and the salvation of the flesh, and refuting Marcionite limits of the canon to the gospel by Irenaeus's emphasis that the gospel can only be understood in the light of the OT (139).

Reading this volume will demand a good deal from the "students and general readers" in its audience. This is not B.'s fault. The gap between Irenaeus's objectives in his own context and the later adaptations and use of his work is long-standing. Despite its apparent familiarity, Irenaeus's work still grows "strangely unfamiliar" on closer reading (206) because it seems turned upside down. It requires patient reading. The book maps out a path that clarifies Irenaeus's thought.

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His Hiding Place Is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence. By Francis X. Clooney, S.J. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2014. Pp. xvi + 187. $24.95.

"Keep your mind in hell, and despair not." This was the word that the early 20th-century ascetic Silouan of Athos reported receiving from the Lord in response to his struggles with pride. It was later used to describe the work of love—being failed and forgiving, failing and being forgiven—by the philosopher Gillian Rose. This dictum provides a fruitful counterpoint to the chorus of voices assembled in this volume, which is both a deeply honest confrontation of the pain of loving a God who "is real enough to be absent" and a therapy for a particular sort of religious and theological pride (ix).

Clooney's book is rich in covering a number of topics in relatively few pages while remaining eminently readable. Its engaging quality is brought about, in part, by a structure that echoes its central argument: theology must wait upon and be generated from the experience of a poetic and dramatic encounter. C. does this by presenting readings of poetic laments over the absence of the divine beloved. These are taken from the biblical Song of Songs and its medieval Christian commentaries, which are juxtaposed to readings of similar laments in the ninth-century CE Hindu text, the *Holy Word of Mouth*, and its early commentaries. This pairing is motivated by C.'s conviction that readers adhering to one tradition will not have their particular loves adulterated but rather discomfited and ultimately chastened by unsettling