God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity." By Sarah Coakley. New York: Cambridge University, 2013. Pp. xxi + 365. $29.99.

The first of a series of books envisioned for a recasting of systematic theology (to be called *On Desiring God*), this volume takes as its point of reference the biopolitics that so deeply marks church and theological life today. Thus it is "written for all those who struggle at the intersection of the theological, the political, the spiritual, and the sexual, as well as for those whose theological vocation is to interpret this nexus" (xvi–xvii).

C. aims for a broad audience, but the unsuspecting reader should be forewarned that this is not light spiritual fare. C. goes deeper than the polemical level at which matters of sexuality often lie, and does not wish to line up with any one theological or socio-political ideology. Turning Freud on his head, C. understands desire as more fundamental than sex or issues of gender or orientation. Any form of sexuality points to the fundamental reality of God's protodesire that, implanted in the human *imago Dei*, is the source of our own desiring. The Trinity, and in particular the role of the Spirit in relation to the Son and Father, expresses the depths of divine desire. Eros for God and God's eros toward us lie at the heart of a living faith. Yet while sexual desire is a *locus theologicus*, C.'s aim is not to resolve theologically specific vexed matters for the church, such as homosexuality. More fundamental work must first be done; a theology that takes sexual desire seriously must begin with a rereading of the classical Christian theology of the triune God.

C.'s entire project is a presentation and application of a *théologie totale*, a methodology limned throughout the book, most explicitly in a series of nine theses (88–92). Here, theology is a perpetually unfinished project (*in via*), drawing upon classical sources and the social sciences but limited to neither sphere, scrupulously avoiding camps or the politics of ideological divides, drawing upon aesthetic and ecstatic forms of religious expression as *bona fide* sources for theological reflection, and looking to "desire" as the *arche* for the theological imagination. The reader who wants to pigeonhole this theology will have a hard time doing so, as C. models throughout the equally poised approach to all positions that her method facilitates.

There is no possibility for this total theology apart from prayer, particularly in the apophatic mode. Through contemplation, the Spirit purges the mind and senses, thus incorporating the theologian into the passion of Christ so that a necessary theological asceticism can be cultivated and deployed. (In this regard C. mentions Dionysius the Areopagite and John of the Cross whom she will treat in future volumes.) C. maintains that this "nexus" of relations among trinitarian theology, prayer, and the erotic "caused sufficient political difficulty to press the prayer-based approach to the Trinity to the edges of the more public, conciliar discussion of the doctrine, even in the patristic period itself, and further marginalized it as far as modern histories of dogma were concerned" (6). That role for prayer and even for an ecstatic experience of the Spirit must be retrieved. (Although C.'s excursus into the religious experience of Anglican charismatics comes off as a less compelling feature of the book, she is to be applauded for incorporating social scientific methods into a systematic project.)

The real heart of the book is located in C.'s masterful treatment of the place of sexual energy in the trinitarian projects of Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine. Seeking to avoid reductionist readings, much less a purely doctrinal exegesis, she uncovers dimensions of their thought that standard doctrinal accounts have been brushed over or ignored altogether. Here she has unearthed some long-hidden treasures, particularly in Gregory's work but also in Augustine, that will surprise the modern reader and help retire stereotypes about "Eastern" and "Western" approaches to the Trinity. The treatment of these two theological giants is in the service of a fresh explication of the Trinity, charged with a reading of Romans 8 that gives a formal primacy to the Spirit, but in a nonlinear pattern, and through whom we are led into the unfurling of the relations between Father and Son. C.'s densely argued treatise on the Trinity could well be read as a counterpoint to Catherine LaCugna's work.

C.'s lengthy chapter on iconography and art as sources of trinitarian theological reflection stands on its own as a gem in its own right. Extensive bibliographical essays at the end of each chapter are testament to the depth of C.'s erudition and serve as accessible and informative resources for the serious reader.

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Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World. By Wayne Morris. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Pp. ix + 197. $27.95.

Salvation has never been defined by any council, nor has any interpretation of salvation been universally agreed upon by Jews and Christians. Biblical texts are notoriously ambiguous, which is why salvation can be taken to mean different things such as material prosperity, a happy life, or a blessed hereafter. Christian theologies generally agree that salvation was wrought by the death of Christ, but there is no agreement about how or why precisely that death was salvific. Morris points out that in early Christianity, according to Origen, it was "a ransom paid to the devil for the sins of humankind" (40). In Anselm's theory of atonement, it offered satisfaction to God's honor for the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and only the Son could offer infinite satisfaction. According to Abelard, the crucifixion demonstrated Christ's love for the human race: "the cross thus causes humans to repent, allowing their forgiveness" (40). Calvin interpreted it in terms of substitution, with Jesus bearing the punishment for all the sins committed by human beings.

M. observes that despite their differences, all Christian theories of salvation have had one thing in common: they share a "presumption of superiority" toward other religions and the people who practice them (65). This presumption rationalized anti-Semitism throughout history, it justified the Crusades in the Middle Ages, it provided moral cover for modern colonialism and the denigration of non-Western cultures, and it allows for the demonization of non-Christians, especially Muslims, today.

At the same time, there is at the heart of the gospel "a commitment to ending human suffering, fostering well-being, and seeking human liberation, freedom and equality"