I recommend the book to all Asians and others who wish to become aware of some of the social situations in Asia and their challenges. Its insightful, informed, astute, and critical analysis of issues and problems can be very helpful in planning strategies and actions that, as a consequence, will take on an Asian feel.

Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions, Channai MICHAEL AMALADOSS, S.J.

RETRIEVING NICAEA: THE DEVELOPMENT AND MEANING OF TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE. By Kaled Anatolios. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. Pp. xvii + 322. $39.99.

Fundamental and dogmatic theologians might easily overlook this important and provocative study. One of the great values of the book is precisely its careful work of historical theology. A. writes admirably well, sketching in the very helpful first chapter the trinitarian debates before and after the Council of Nicaea. Indeed, the bulk of the book is a careful analysis of the trinitarian work of three late-antique theologians: Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine of Hippo. Here A. is in his element as interpreter, especially of Athanasius. But while much of the book concerns historical theology, A. "rejects as simplistic any sharp distinction" between historical and systematic theology (1). Instead he insists that if we are to understand the development and meaning of trinitarian doctrine "we must creatively re-perform the acts of understanding and interpretation" that led theologians of the fourth century to formulate the creedal statements of Nicaea I and Constantinople I (1). This is no easy task, given the language referents used to express trinitarian doctrine in late antiquity. Still, A. argues, these referents had meaning for those who first articulated them. Our task as theologians is to reappropriate "their acts of meaning and judgment" and come "to affirm the things they said and mean them approximately as they meant them" (7). Whether that is possible and, if so, desirable, is another matter and the focus of what follows.

A. believes this translation is possible if we examine what these early theologians were doing. Borrowing from Gabriel Marcel's distinction between primary and secondary levels of reflection, with the two levels separated by a break in the flow of experience, A. argues that the early fourth century occasioned a break in the common human experience of the church and its theology. Clearer thinking about the utter transcendence of God created tension with traditional notions of the primacy of Christ and his divinity, and caused a break in the flow of the church's experience. Associated with this was controversy over the existence and significance

of a human soul in Jesus and an overall perceived need for systematization in reconciling these matters. A. shows that both prior to and after this break in the church's collective reflection, there was an amazing level of agreement. The disagreement came over how to reconcile the primacy of Christ with the transcendence of an unbegotten deity. Theologians resolved this tension along two general and conflicting trajectories: some theologians attempted to reconcile the difficulty by associating Christ with the will of God; others, by associating Christ with the substance of the Father. When one looks at what the Fathers were doing in this way, Arius, for example, who located the point of unity between God and Christ in God's will, appears less the archetypal heretic and much more a coherent and systematic thinker. While there is nothing new in this observation, what is unique about A.'s exposition is the way he is able to demonstrate how Arius and his opponents were systematically attempting to reconcile the shared and agreed tradition with the new challenges posed by the late-antique world. In other words, the theologians of the fourth century were doing what theologians in every age do. Because they were among the first to do it, paying attention to how they did it is a rich source of methodology for our own trinitarian reflections.

But theologians beware! A. is concerned with not only the *how* but also the *what* of fourth-century trinitarian reflection. This reflection became so important in the fourth century precisely because the doctrine was a kind of metadoctrine for the entirety of Christian confession and living. As A. puts it, "the historical development of trinitarian doctrine took place through a syntax that enfolded the entirety of Christian existence" (8–9). Trinitarian doctrine was not simply a matter about God; it was also a matter about creation, sin, grace, revelation, human nature as bearers of the divine image, redemption, relations within community, and all the rest. A. insists that any contemporary trinitarian reflection must attend to the same issues. Few would disagree with such an assertion. However, the disagreement would likely come from a careful analysis of what was essential in the articulation of fourth-century trinitarian theology. To take but one example: is gendered language essential to express ideas about the Trinity? Feminist theologians have argued that theological language is inherently metaphorical. This is but one example (one could also cite "third world" theologies, postmodernism, postcolonialism, globalization) of circumstances that have caused a collective pause in our theological reflections. Any "retrieval" of Nicaea along the lines A. suggests would have to take account of all these matters. While A. does not even begin to address this pressing issue, his careful analysis of how early theologians addressed their issues has provided a helpful guide to thinking about our own.

University of San Francisco STEPHEN K. BLACK