

Catholic magisterial theology and the challenges facing Christology in light of the confusing aftermath of Vatican II. And as brilliant as his treatment of historical critical exegesis was in chapters two and three, the remainder of the text is simply breathtaking in its ability to detail the development of christological doctrine while not getting bogged down in overly technical jargon that in many writings obscures the central theological issues. It is this latter point that makes the text so eminently suitable for use in both upper level undergraduate courses as well as in introductory-level graduate courses. At once erudite and yet clear in its linguistic constructions, the text is a masterpiece of theological writing.

But beyond its beauty and usefulness, the text is also profound in its own theological perspective. O. concludes with a heavy dose of Ratzinger/Benedict and makes the observation that the “failure” of Vatican II to achieve the high ambition that many had for it (a reinvigorating and renewal of the church by opening to the world and unleashing her untapped creativity) can be placed at the feet of the failure of Christology to reach anything remotely resembling a consensus on the issue of the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Jesus as the linchpin for a renewed understanding of the nature/grace, God/world dynamic. Instead, we got a confusing array of attempts to resurrect a host of old heresies in new garb—i.e., we got a hermeneutics of rupture. O. agrees with this analysis of the council’s aftermath and argues for a *ressourcement* theological context as the council’s own proper hermeneutic—a hermeneutic of both rupture and continuity as a renewed Christology takes the older Chalcedonian categories and repristinates them by developing the old categories in directions influenced by modern personalism, phenomenology, and the existential Thomism of scholars like Pieper and Gilson.

Finally, to deal with some contested issues that are important but not critical to the flow of his general analysis in given chapters, O. frequently includes at the end of chapters some conversations in the form of an “excursus.” In sum, I repeat what I said at the beginning: this is the best Christology text in English I have seen in years.

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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE: DISCOVERING A DISCIPLINE. By Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. xi + 322. \$34.

In a collection of articles “spanning twenty years” (ix), Miller-McLemore argues the thesis “that scholarship in pastoral and practical theology has disrupted conventional theological boundaries, suggesting an expanded subject matter (Part I), alternative ways of knowing (Part II), and richer

terms for analysis in doing Christian theology (Part III)" (1). Practical and pastoral theology "share common interest in lived experience," but they are distinct and not interchangeable. "Whereas practical theology is integrative, concerned about broader issues of ministry, discipleship, and formation, pastoral theology is person- and pathos-centered" (10). Practical theology is the broader "web" within which pastoral theology is situated. As a pastoral theologian with strong feminist concerns, M.-M. recognizes the role of psychology as key to personal care, especially for those who suffer, while advocating that psychology cannot be disengaged from the wider social and cultural world in which we all live. Similar to the aims of liberation theology, "practical theology redefines what constitutes theological knowledge and seeks a theology for the masses. It explores the dissonance between professed beliefs and lived realities through the study of practice and serves a 'critical function' of testing of the practical veracity, as Karl Rahner says, of the claims of other theological disciplines as embodied in the life of faith" (18).

Part I proposes "the living web" as an expanded subject matter that moves beyond psychology alone to "the interlocking, continually evolving threads of which reality is woven" for adequate understanding (37). This entails "a multilayered analysis of human strife" (45). In seeking to define practical theology, M.-M. recognizes "at least four distinct enterprises with different audiences and objectives" (101): (1) "an activity of believers" who seek to live out the gospel of love and justice; (2) "a curricular area" that teaches practice for the sake of ministry; (3) a method or way of doing theology on the basis of "lived faith," because all theology is practical insofar as it is oriented toward making a difference in the larger world; (4) "an academic discipline" that is "a multifaceted confessional, ministerial, theological, and academic enterprise" (106–9). Hence, M.-M. seeks to integrate the other facets under the rubric of an academic discipline.

Part II, on practical wisdom, offers an insightful analysis of "maternal knowing" that has "immense possibilities for informing social, ethical, economic, and political stances" (132), and is a possibility for nonmothers (including males) as well as for mothers. In my view, M.-M.'s analysis of maternal knowing is the most creative and interesting part of the book. Maternal knowing is often overlooked or ignored. It is a unique experience for women who are mothers, yet it can be shared on a level that integrates praxis and theory. In a way, everything relates to maternal knowing and gives substance to subversive practice grounded in concrete, lived experience.

Hence, Part III, on gender as a key and critical category for understanding the human situation, embraces feminist scholarship in pastoral theology. It includes the conventional modes of pastoral care—"healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling"—but emphasizes the radical importance of

“resisting, empowering, nurturing, and liberating” (217). Gender studies has revolutionized pastoral theology to the point that it “has sparked a shift in focus from the individual to the community, from personal distress to social injustice, from personal fulfillment to the common good, from an ontology of separative selfhood to an open web of relationality” (307).

The book is very repetitive and could have been synthesized into a more focused statement. Nonetheless I highly recommend it for the wealth of insights and resources on pastoral and practical theology and their relationship within a unified academic discipline.

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IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE SPIRIT. By Diarmuid O’Murchu. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012. Pp. x + 240. \$22.

O’Murchu, an Irish priest of the Sacred Heart Missionary Congregation, is enthusiastic about the numerous ways indigenous peoples believed in “the Great Spirit.” He is convinced that the Pneumatology of Western Christianity needs to be repotted, that is to say, removed from the meta-physical soil that located the Spirit in the trinitarian personhood plant and inserted into this much earlier evidence. His conviction is shored up by several other enthusiasms. One of these is the findings of modern science, especially those from paleoanthropology and quantum theory. The other is Pentecostalism, though not in its often literalist, fundamentalist mode of operating. His biggest distress is Western dualism that has been produced in a Christianity that cleaves matter from spirit.

From all his readings and thinking, a synthesis emerges that he hopes will “stretch the inner spirit—of human and earth—toward the Great Spirit” (195). It will take some time for orthodox Christian minds to stretch as far as he is recommending. One dimension of his Pneumatology is that he wants to get rid of the propensity that modern monotheistic believers have for confecting religious systems whose purported clarities obscure the freedom and playfulness of the Spirit. This must be done because the Spirit is where energy originates from in both matter and humans. This Spirit energy also interconnects everything, from subatomic particles to the vast galaxies. Therefore, we must discard our functional personhood and enter into the ongoing event of a relational personhood. He sees the latter as what the Spirit would “lure” us toward. He traces the wrong notion of personhood back to the anthropology of ancient Greece and to an “imperial theological arrogance” in modern theologians who have not seen the depth operating in the prehistoric religions whose anthropology and Pneumatology were innate and intuitive rather than articulated.