

imagination is the Body of Christ—the resurrected body of the Lord, the eucharistic meal, and the living, yearning people of God.

The introduction maps the path between literalist millennial theological interpretations of eschatology, like the *Left Behind* series on the one hand, and theological reductions of eschatology to this-worldly utopian visions of justice and peace on other. Chapter 1 retrieves eschatological references in the texts of early Christian rituals and prayers as well as instructions on how to pray (e.g., facing toward the east). The chapter also surveys the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and key postconciliar developments including the postmodern ethos, the impact of secular sensibilities on the liturgy, religious indifference, a new emphasis on the historical Jesus, and new directions in theology brought about by engagements with religious pluralism. Discussions of creation, time, and memory—three notions central to eschatology—conclude the chapter.

Chapter 2 traces the shift in the Jewish religious imagination under the influence of prophetic preaching and the press of exile as the ancient Israelite people grappled with the question of the Lord God's faithfulness in the midst of tragedy, evil, and death. From this wrestling the categories of eschatology, apocalyptic, and resurrection of the body emerge.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Christology. The former emphasizes the challenge the biblical notion of the kingdom of God presents to modern religious individualism through engaging the work of several theologians including Johannes Metz, Jon Sobrino, Elizabeth Johnson, Peter Phan, and Terrence Tilley. The latter chapter probes the mystery of the resurrection, attending to the thought of theologians Joseph Ratzinger, Brian Robinette, and Dermot Lane; this chapter also calls attention to the social nature of the resurrection.

Chapter 5 begins with exploration of the personal dimensions of human destiny then moves to the *eschata*, the traditional last things (death, judgment, heaven, and hell) and finally the fullness of salvation—in biblical terms, seeing God face to face.

Chapter 6 reengages the eschatological imagination through attending to the liturgy and social justice as well as moments and actors in the sacred drama of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The closing chapter reminds us that the “risen Jesus is not just remembered but encountered in a holy communion that incorporates us into his paschal mystery” (158).

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THE POOR IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY: PATHWAY TO GOD OR IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT? By Tim Noble. Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2013. Pp. xii + 244. \$99.95.

If the risk of idolatry is a perennial challenge to theological discourse, perhaps nowhere does that risk show itself more clearly than in liberation

theology. As liberation theologians refigure the historical character of the eschatological reign of God in light of the church's preferential option for the poor, the question of the concrete life of poverty comes into view. But it poses a theological paradox. On the one hand, the option for the poor requires theological determination of poverty and of "the poor"; on the other hand, the manifold, sociologically complex character of real-world poverty defies totalizing description. Thus, liberation theology's language concerning "the poor" seems perennially impoverished by a discursive or conceptual inadequacy.

In this book Noble addresses this inadequacy with some novel resources, namely, the figures of Jean-Luc Marion and Emmanuel Lévinas. This ambitious work, fruit of his doctoral thesis, does not escape the hermeneutical circle of liberation theology as N. might have sought to. But it does offer creditable summations of the option for the poor from a variety of Latin American sources, as well as combining helpful selections of Marion's reflections on iconicity and Lévinas's notions of alterity into a liberationist critique of idolatrous discourse of "the poor."

For N. the whole focus on poverty begets methodological risks that sometimes buffet liberation theology into idolatrous straits. The most important statement of liberationist method has long been Clodovis Boff's 1993 article, "Epistemology and Method in the Theology of Liberation." It traces a three-step methodology modeled after the see-judge-act pastoral method of lay Catholic communities. But the circular frame of the methodology—moving between theology as a reflective praxis and theology as liberating pastoral action—introduces ambiguities in interpretations of poverty that beget two problems: (1) reflection that tends to hypostatize and reify the category of "the poor" into a meaningless cipher, often invoked to suit ulterior theological agendas; and (2) distortion of the category of "the poor" into an idolatrous figure that loses sight of the divine power sustaining life in the face of desperate poverty.

N.'s novel proposal is to inform reflection on the poor as other by way of Lévinas's thinking on alterity and Marion's sacramental theology of the icon. The basic argument is that the only way to overcome idolatrous reification of "the poor" is to develop a radical sense of the otherness of the poor person, and of the irreducible singularity of each impoverished other. From Lévinas's reflections on transcendence and Marion's thinking on the icon, N. situates the otherness of the poor other in terms of a divine economy whose salvation gives the poor person a sacramental dignity, an identity as one sign of the power of God. In effect, the poor person, properly regarded, is understood as iconic, indicating the divine horizon by her or his very life.

This approach may radicalize one's sense of the divine irreducibility of otherness. But the argument does not make the logical pivot into a more

sociological or historical determination of the manifold life of poverty, which remains lost in translation. N. does not attend to the narrative of a single poor person, nor to particular contexts or passages in Latin American history. The sociological dimension of poverty goes entirely ignored in favor of an exaggerated focus on economics. Critical axes of gender oppression, racial discrimination, and sexuality get short shrift. N. says nothing about feminist theology's articulation of the impoverishment(s) of women beyond mention that it would not be a topic for his book. He entirely omits questions of the many cultural, legal, and religious exclusions imposed against nonheteronormative sexualities and identities.

While N.'s introduction mentions experiences he had in Brazil with Christian base communities, those experiences do not surface elsewhere in the book. Even though he is presently on a university faculty in Prague, the matter of poverty and liberation in Eastern Europe or the Czech Republic do not arise. Indeed, the question of the contexts of poverty vanishes from the scene. This is strange in a text that deftly summarizes debates in Latin America around the option for the poor, yet misses the spirit of a committed, contextual theology that seeks to overcome the massive experience of poverty. In following N.'s interrogation of whether portrayals of "the poor" offered a "pathway to God" or an "ideological construct," I had the feeling that the category of "the poor" was indeed being reified and nullified.

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JOSEPH RATZINGER: EIN BRILLANTER DENKER? KRITISCHE FRAGEN AN DEN PAPST UND SEINE PROTESTANTISCHEN KONKURRENTEN. By Thomas Rießinger. Münster: LIT, 2013. Pp. ii + 217. €29.90.

Rießinger, retired professor of mathematics and information technology at Fachhochschule Frankfurt am Main (1992–2010), examines Pope Benedict XVI's theology. Under the heading "Papal Purification" (3–33) R. treats *Deus caritas est*, followed by "Papal Hope" analyzing *Spe salvi* (35–82). "Papal Economics" (83–140) reflects on *Caritas in veritate*. He rounds off his treatment of Ratzinger's theology with a section titled "Papal Hermeneutics" (141–71) on *Jesus of Nazareth*, volume 2. In a final chapter he critiques the central positions of Protestant thinkers Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfgang Huber, and Margot Käßmann.

The various chapters of the book had previously been published as articles in the journal *Aufklärung und Kritik*, issued by the *Gesellschaft für kritische Philosophie*. R.'s background and the venue of the original articles help explain both his style and line of argumentation. His language is nontechnical and his worldview is decidedly Deistic. He approaches theological texts not only as a layman, but more importantly as a non-Christian,