

Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics. By Lisa Sowle Cahill. *New Studies in Christian Ethics.* New York: Cambridge University, 2013. Pp. xiv + 312. \$99.

As one of the leading theological ethicists of our time, Cahill has written watershed volumes on issues such as war and peace, sexual ethics, and bioethics. To that already impressive list, the current volume adds the area of “global justice.” It focuses on Jesus Christ (including some of the controversies and creedal statements surrounding Christ) and the Spirit’s role in bringing about such justice in the world. What makes this book particularly noteworthy is that C. reminds Christian ethicists who should shape their work: Jesus Christ. This fact itself has a concrete payout in the world: “If God’s full incarnation in human existence is a fact, and resurrection life a present reality, then Christian politics must be, can be, and is transformative of its social world” (2). C.’s thoroughgoing argument in these pages is that, moved by Christ’s fundamental gospel message, his followers, in order to move toward a more just world, must shift from a political worldview motivated by self-interest toward one motivated by solidarity.

Clearly, with such an intense focus on the figure of Jesus, C. often consults Scripture to advance her argument. Masterfully weaving a number of biblical narratives into her work, C. studies the biblical creation narratives, the fall, the relationships of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, and the story of Job, all alongside a portrait of Jesus as new creation. She neatly draws together all these events into the current situation of sin and redemption in the twenty-first-century world by reminding us that these scriptural examples are not meant to be read in isolation from the reality of injustices in today’s society. Much to her credit, C. does not use these scriptural images uncritically. Instead, she often questions God’s role in unjust relationships and astutely observes that many religious groups have used God’s scriptural commands for violence to spur on their own violence. These actions constitute, for her, a wholly inadequate reading of Scripture: “More must be done to show how biblical faith and the communities that transmit it can, should, and do repudiate violence and foster human dignity, peace, and justice” (70).

Further, C. spells out precisely what the call to discipleship should mean for followers of Christ (chap. 3, “Kingdom of God”). It is both a blessing and a curse that Christian ethicists are never completely satisfied with the world as it is. This chapter prompts readers to recall that in avoiding passive resignation in the world, Christians must embrace the present reality of God’s kingdom. As C. eloquently reminds us, “The second coming is the christological ‘not yet’ of the kingdom; the resurrection is the ‘now’” (101). The consequences of this fact are momentous. If Christians are to live as resurrection people, their lives must assume a practical model. In laying out the tenets of two heretofore competing christological frameworks—Word Christology and Spirit Christology—C. argues for a synthesis of these two views, making the central claim that “all christology is political” (127). The political response of the Christian community is spurred on by the renewing power of the Spirit.

It is precisely the Spirit that allows Christian communities to live their resurrection lives faithfully. This view of Christian discipleship today allows C. to articulate a fruitful understanding of the atonement that carries an explicit option for, and is in

solidarity with, the poor. The final two chapters illuminate concrete ways in which Christian communities can work, along with the Spirit, toward authentic justice in the world. C. advances “a revised version of Thomistic natural law” (249) as an adequate method of attaining a more just society. Part of this revision of Thomistic natural law includes a study of the traditional just-war theory as well as a discussion of natural law and ecology. These two sections should prove to be particularly substantial fare for Christian ethicists.

C. admits that she hopes to receive “productive critique” of her work (28). Along these lines, I wish to suggest one area that could strengthen this already impressive text: the issue of LGBT rights in global justice. Ethicists would do well to apply a key argument of C.’s book to the suffering of the LGBT community: “personal, communal, social, and political transformations are real possibilities, despite the intransigence of sin and evil” (6). When members of this community suffer hate crimes and feel shunned by church and society, this is a wonderfully liberating message to hear, and an even better one to live out in faith. C.’s work ends with a chapter fittingly entitled “Hope,” and indeed, this is a book that should be read by all who wish to engender that theological virtue in their work.

Daniel Cosacchi
Loyola University Chicago

Wycliffite Spirituality. Edited and translated by J. Patrick Hornbeck II, Stephen E. Lahey, and Fiona Somerset. *The Classics of Western Spirituality*. New York: Paulist, 2013. Pp. xii + 412. \$39.95; \$29.95.

The very fact that a volume on the Wycliffites has warranted inclusion in a series devoted to spiritual writings in the Western tradition illustrates the significant transition that has been taking place over the last few decades in the study of late medieval Christianity. Not too long ago the notion that Wycliffites might take their place within the great chain of Catholic spirituality would have raised some eyebrows. Were not the Wycliffites a confederation of English “heretics” (Lollards), destructive outriders in an otherwise pious Catholic society, most accurately defined by all that they opposed rather than by any positive spiritual vision of their own? The present volume goes a long way toward dispelling such a reductionist and deeply engrained characterization.

A new appreciation for the richness and complexity of late medieval Christian culture has meant that we have substantially revised previous categories of orthodoxy and heresy. We have come to recognize just how difficult it can be to designate a given belief as uniquely heretical in the fifteenth century amid the range of opinions that sat side by side, however uneasily, and lacked formal confirmation. As it was, the determination of heresy in the late Middle Ages remained a matter for ecclesiastical courts to decide; but these judicial decisions, although theologically informed, were not designed to withstand sustained theological reflection. Indeed, the defendant in a heresy trial—as this volume lucidly demonstrates—was most often asked to abjure a set