

(which L. argues against Barth, is not irresistible to rational creatures [175]); election; and a commitment to the unrestricted plenitude of God's love. The commitment to divine love (191) is best understood and expressed doxologically and eschatologically: "We must remind ourselves once again of two irreducible truths about the eternal Trinity: he is Love and his eternal gifting is the source of every created good" (199). Even though L.'s style of quotation from scriptural and theological texts seems sometimes to leave more questions than answers in his expositions, he has put forward an impressively strong case for biblical scholars, historians, and theologians for considering their concepts of God, Scripture, theology, and humanity.

*Blackfriars, Oxford*

ALFRED H. YUEN

SHARING GOD'S GOOD COMPANY: A THEOLOGY OF THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS. By David Matzko McCarthy. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. viii + 174. \$28.

McCarthy addresses the question of why saints are essential for our own time by arguing that saints mediate relationships that are at once historical and transcendent. His investigations are a labor of love and a manifestation of a *fides quaerens intellectum*. M.'s clear personal commitment to the saints leads to a theological anthropology revolving around social desire, the human longing for shared meaning that is personal without being individualistic, and that aspires to participate in a reality inclusive of the metaphysical. He employs social desire thoughtfully to explain why people are drawn to the saints and to emphasize the saints as agents within communion. Although he admits the difficulty of defining saints, M. describes them as men and women whose social desire is so marked by their relationship to God that they bear the family resemblance of kinship with God. The metaphor of family is deliberately chosen for its general emphasis on relationality and for its implicit allusion to various types of kin relationships, underscoring M.'s sensibility that we are not meant to relate to the saints as abstract brothers or sisters, but rather as particular members of God's family.

M. contends that through and with the saints we participate in a community that is deeply incarnational, being both receptive of the divine presence within history and drawn into the divine communion transcending history: "In the case of the saints, the history-bound people and events are simultaneously universal by personal association, by kinship, so that the relationship of historical and transcendent is not textual or symbolic, but social and practical. On the one hand, the saints are members of a heavenly communion, and on the other, they are remembered and venerated in and over time" (53). M.'s research develops a view of the saints as agents who

share personally our social desire and who help us account for our lives by providing a metaphysical horizon of communal meaning. M. is to be commended for a metaphysical emphasis that does not eschew history but rather attempts to compensate for the interpretative limitations he perceives in modern and postmodern approaches to meaning. He seeks to avoid a radical reduction either of persons and histories to the material or of stories to texts whose interpretation resides with the reader alone.

The first chapters of the book describe social desire, the saints, realism, and participation; here is where M.'s insights are most evocative of the need to think through our relationship with the saints in a way that accounts for the personal, social, and metaphysical aspects of human experience. Even though he stays true to his central thesis, M.'s later chapters are persuasive to varying degrees. For instance, although M. argues against narrowing human knowledge to the standards of radical materialism, additional development of the theology of God, creation, and grace that informs his apologia for miracles might render it more compelling for those who are influenced deeply by empiricism. When M. touches on Trinity, Christ, and the Holy Spirit at points throughout the book, systematic attention to these theologies in an early chapter would serve as a complement to his theological anthropology and provide a stronger basis for his investigations in later chapters.

M. is more successful at exploring the intersection of social desire and history. He illustrates how historical narratives can be constructed in order to relate the parts of history to a whole; in such a system, various social agents stand at the narrative's center and render others into outliers whose roles are understood in relation to the center. M. retains this approach while moving away from the modern characterization of history as the progress of one set of social agents over another. Rather, he places God's communion and the social agency of the saints at the center of human history: meaning is found through orientation to that communal center, and "progress" is not linear but relational and eschatological. By contextualizing daily life within a metaphysical framework that unites the quotidian and the eternally meaningful, M.'s view of history also acknowledges but does not ultimately surrender to the postmodern view of existential fragmentation.

Overall M.'s book offers many insights and a plausible foundation for understanding the saints as sharing and mediating our social desire. When he affirms the importance of embodied relationships within history he also underscores a metaphysical reality that is mediated by saints and has the power to transform how we interpret our lives in relation to God and others. Further development of some theological foundations would aid M.'s claims, but his study both reflects and provokes a thoughtful reconsideration of the saints.