

prayer . . . remains . . . the focal prayer of the assembly, voiced by the presider in their corporate name, and not a privileged prayer of a mediating figure who then dispenses the fruit of that sacred deed to the observing recipients” (61). Yet his rhetoric, while always earnest, is never polemical. One weakness in the writing, however, is the length of sentences. Sometimes particularly dense portions can require a careful rereading in order to unpack a long sentence.

“Standing together” is truly the hermeneutical lens through which J. sees the liturgical act of celebrating the Eucharist. This book should be required reading in every seminary curriculum. It can likewise prove very helpful in feeding the hunger of all who yearn more deeply to celebrate the liturgy and live its implications in their daily lives.

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THE PREDICAMENT OF BELIEF: SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, FAITH. By Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp. New York: Oxford University, 2011. Pp. x + 184. \$29.95.

The volume treats the “predicament” of contemporary Christian belief, that is, the real possibility of genuine doubt about the rationality of core religious beliefs. Clayton and Knapp meet this challenge first by frankly admitting their own doubts about the rationality of some basic Christian beliefs, and then by making clear how they resolved these doubts in favor of a new understanding of those same beliefs. This approach, to say the least, is unusual in the conventional defense of Christian doctrine. It is curiously akin to the style, if not the precise content, of Augustine’s *Confessions*.

The authors present their case in eight closely reasoned chapters: (1) evaluation of honest reasons for doubt; (2) Ultimate Reality (UR) as the mindlike and agentlike numinous Reality that purposely brought into existence the universe or multiverses of which ours is only one; (3) the problem of evil and alleged divine action to deal with it; (4) the plurality of religions dealing with UR; (5 and 6) the scandal of particularity, first, with Christian belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and then with Christian belief in the doctrine of the Trinity; (7) inevitable degrees of rational justification for one’s beliefs in the eyes of a relevant community of experts; and (8) ongoing church identity, given such a broad range of beliefs among its members.

In what follows I will make a few comments about the obvious strength and the possible weakness of this approach in the eyes of some readers. Then I will offer what could be called a “long shot” alternative in case the actual response to the book is somehow less positive than what the authors hoped would be the case.

The strength of C. and K.'s approach is easy to detect. The authors are painstakingly honest in evaluating what they see as problematic issues in accepting their own religious beliefs as at least reasonable grounds for hope, given the absence of direct empirical evidence. The weakness is that some theists may be unimpressed by the authors' minimalist understanding of UR/God as a mindlike and agentlike reality but not necessarily as a person in the conventional sense (36). Likewise, some Christians might even be offended by the claim that the postmortem appearances of the risen Jesus were personal but nonphysical (97). The authors, however, emphasize that they are consciously setting forth a minimalist position on these cherished beliefs simply as a starting-point rather than as an endpoint for explanation of what they personally believe. But let us suppose that this eminently fair and reasonable approach to belief in God and/or the divinity of Jesus raises more questions in the minds of readers than it answers. What then?

Here one might argue that a long-term approach to the rationality of one's religious beliefs will be at hand only if somehow one's basic worldview or implicit metaphysical understanding of reality has undergone the equivalent of a paradigm shift. But how does one even initiate such an enormous project? My suggestion, in brief, would be, first, to rethink the conventional understanding of the relation between mind and spirit so that they invariably constitute a single nondual reality with neither being able to exist without the copresence and coactivity of the other. This is what Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Alfred North Whitehead in quite different ways seem to have envisioned in their own evolutionary understanding of reality. Second, with Whitehead one could raise the question whether God's purpose in dealing with a finite world is primarily ethical or esthetic. In other words, did God design a universe with the ultimate purpose of producing rational beings like ourselves to freely respond to God's "divine lure" (40), and thus to become involved in an interpersonal relationship with this "not less than personal" God? Or could the divine Persons have consistently found delight in the esthetic beauty of a supposedly mindless cosmic process even in its early stages, quite apart from reference to rational creatures like ourselves? In support of this latter claim, of course, one would also have to propose that all created entities from the least to the most complex must have something like a "mindlike" and "agentlike" internal constitution so as to respond or fail to respond to the divine lure for themselves at any given moment and thus to either delight or dismay their loving Creator. But, *caveat emptor*, this is indeed a "long shot" alternative with potential consequences more for the future than for the present moment.