

treatment of Christian anthropology is exceptional. He clearly expounds on the nature of sex and the relationship of sexuality to the image of God, topics that, in his more mature works, are rather obscure. In fact, in his mature theological works, B. refers the reader back to this account. Here he argues that to be made in the image of God is to be made a sexual being, who is not only a member of one biological sex but also contains both the male and female sexual principles (294–311). Every person contains a “*dukhovnaya dvupolost.*” Although S. correctly translates this term as “sexual duality,” recent research by Evgenii Bershtein on the Russian Religious Renaissance, suggests that “sexual bisexuality” is a better translation, conveying more accurately to a modern audience what B. means.

Nevertheless, Smith’s attentive and careful translation, corrections to B.’s citations, and updates to his references are notable. With this exceptional translation, S., who also translated *The Burning Bush* and *Jacob’s Ladder* for Eerdmans, has established himself as one of the foremost translators of B. This work is highly recommended for readers interested in religious philosophy or B.’s theological development.

University of St. Michael’s College, Toronto

WALTER N. SISTO

CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. Edited by Stephen B. Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012. Pp. xi + 139. \$18.

This collection of essays brings together the work of eight scholars, who, in April 2009, took part in a conference on contextual theology held at United Theological College (UTC) in Sydney, Australia. As noted by Bevans in his preface (ix), the conference was sponsored by Communitas, a UTC program specializing in contextual theology and missiology. Speakers at the conference explored the nature and purpose of contextual theology in the 21st-century church, focusing on the challenges faced by the Christian churches of Australia and its neighboring nations, but also pausing to consider the role of contextual theological reflection in the life of the churches. According to the editors of this volume, the work of speculative theology, if it is to be relevant, must be grounded in a profound appreciation for the contextual character of every experience of “church”—something that ought to both color theological scholarship and inform the theological education of the next generation of Christian leaders.

The first three essays explore the question of contextual theology from a methodological perspective. B.—who authored the seminal study *Methods of Contextual Theology* (2002), as well as the more recent *Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (2009)—sketches a portrait of 21st-century

Christianity that in Europe and North America will increasingly take the form of “a multicultural church in a multireligious population,” while the more vigorous churches of the Global South will continue to be young, poor, and often persecuted (6–7). Against this background of great diversity, contextual theology will have to bring together the experience of the past—preserved in the Scriptures and in the tradition of the church—and the experience of the present as lived in particular contexts (9). The validity and the global relevance of a local theology will be in direct proportion to its grasp of the religious experience of a particular ecclesial community. B. points out that in fact this strategy was already pursued by the authors of Scripture and the “makers of tradition,” who were articulating their religious experience using the linguistic and conceptual resources of specific cultural contexts (10).

As James Haire notes in his essay on theological inculturation in the Moluccan islands of Indonesia, the emergence of new theologies is not incompatible with fidelity to the earlier doctrinal tradition; in the case of Chalcedonian Christology, for instance, the conciliar definition did not aspire to be an exhaustive description of the event of the incarnation, but merely established a “marker” or “rulebook” for further exploration of the mystery (32).

Indeed, lest we forget that theological contextualization does not enjoin the acritical appropriation of all elements of a local tradition, Jione Havea’s interesting essay on “the cons of contextuality” reminds us that theologians are also called to challenge and critique their culture of origin when the latter is perceived to be incompatible with the demands of the gospel (46–48).

Chris Budden’s and Jenny Te Paa’s essays in part 2 of the volume explore contextual theology from an Australian or Oceanian perspective, giving North American readers a glimpse of a theological world with which few of them are likely to be familiar. Budden’s call for a “second peoples’ theology” in Australia (56–57) and Te Paa’s powerful appeal for a more inclusive approach to theological education in New Zealand that also addresses the needs of the indigenous population (70–71) are echoed by Carmelo Alvarez’s essay on the future of Latin American liberation theology—a movement whose demise has been repeatedly announced, but that perhaps has yet to be fully understood and embraced by the universal church (94–96). B.’s and Jooseop Keum’s essays in part 3, as well as the concluding reflections by the editors, build on the reflection of the earlier essays to present contextual theology as a form of dialogue with local cultures that will be crucial to the church’s mission in the 21st century (124–25).

This collection will appeal to academic theologians and scholars with an interest in missiology, practical theology, and the interface between theological reflection and sociocultural analysis. While the scope of the collection is somewhat limited—all papers, with the exception of Alvarez’s, deal

with the question emerging from the context of Australia or other Oceanian nations—it is balanced by B.'s call for a fundamental reorientation of 21st-century theology toward an acceptance and embrace of the reality and challenges of local ecclesial communities. The volume is an important contribution to the field of contextual theology, whose growing importance is set to reshape systematic theological reflection for decades to come.

Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University

THOMAS CATTOI

THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE: WHY AN ANCIENT BIBLICAL VISION IS KEY TO THE WORLD'S FUTURE. By David P. Gushee. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. xvi + 461. \$35.

Gushee brings expertise, lucid thinking, and scriptural-historical depth to the idea that human life is sacred, a notion frequently contested in the crosscurrents of debates in Christian ethics. His valuable study succeeds in challenging the narrow framing that has dominated the American cultural-political landscape over the past 40 years: "If 'the sacredness of human life' is just a political slogan trotted out on convenient occasions but ignored the rest of the time—when lives other than those of embryos, unborn infants, and the elderly are at stake—then the concept has been corrupted beyond repair" (3). Seeking to combat reductionist interpretations of life's sacredness by conservatives and to ward off its abandonment by progressives, G. argues for the deep-rooted centrality of this conviction in the Christian tradition and its relevance across a wide range of ethical issues. His text uniquely enlarges the scope and accessibility of resources for articulating what it means to hold that "if any human life is sacred, every human life is sacred" (3).

G. is adamant that while the sacredness of human life does not appear as a specific phrase in the Bible, the concept has a strong basis in both Old and New Testaments (chaps. 2–3). He traces relevant themes with a sure theological hand, including creation, *imago Dei*, liberation, justice, covenant, and law, as well as the doctrine of the Incarnation and *imago Christi* motifs. Throughout the book, G. endeavors to be honest about difficulties and counterarguments; thus, he advocates the interpretative need for "scripture-sifting" and communal discernment in the face of biblical texts that, for example, privilege the sacredness of certain lives over others.

Chapters 4–6 "explore . . . whether God's revealed will that every human life be treated as sacred survived the emergence of a religion called Christianity" (120). G. begins with a strong claim in favor of the Christian community's distinctive moral vision and practice in its first two centuries. Some quotations from writers in the early church, although arresting in