

conveyed. The chapters on women's pastoral ministry are a helpful continuation of such studies as Ute E. Eisen's *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (2000); Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek's *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (2005); and Gary Macy's *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (2008).

A disappointing aspect of this expensive book is the poor quality of most of the images. This shortcoming is most apparent, for instance, with the absence of a reproduction or even transcription of the dedication plaque of about 1450, not readily available elsewhere, and now on a column near the modern entrance. This plaque is a valuable source for medieval understanding of the traditions surrounding the church, thereby all the more accentuating its omission.

Sadly, Mary Schaefer died as this book was in final proofs. Completed by editorial collaboration, it is a worthy tribute to a life spent in pursuit of richer appreciation of Christian history.

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The Quest for the Absolute: Birth and Decline of European Romanticism. By Louis Dupré. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2013. Pp. x+387. \$36.

The volume offers the historical complement to Dupré's previous studies, *Passage to Modernity* (1993) and *The Enlightenment and the Foundations of Modern Culture* (2005). More than a historian of ideas, D. endeavors to find new ontological insights of perduring value in the diverse and passing movements of Western culture. He grounds his project in the claim that modernity, emerging in the 14th-century Italian humanists, asserts the mind's spiritual dominance over its mere reception of the finite world's material forms. This dominance leads in turn to an ever-increasing imposition of the will on reality. In Romanticism (1789–1848), art, social theory, and philosophy embody a drive to overcome the fixed limitations of the human condition. Existential unrest, stemming from a loss of an ideal, primitive state of being, replaces Enlightenment harmony, even as this erodes the Baroque's mediated synthesis of nature and grace.

The first of the volume's three parts offers a typology of English, German, and French poetry. Included are analyses of selected works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Hölderlin, Lamartine, de Vigny, and Hugo. Throughout, D. underscores insights about life and death that direct modern thought to previously unexplored existential depths. Keats approaches the Romantic ideal as few others do. *Hyperion* and his five great odes place symbolization at reality's core. In the greatest ode, "On a Grecian Urn," the poet reminds us that at no point does the spiritual ever leave sensation completely behind. Readers of D.'s first volume will thus find a common link between Romanticism and the Baroque.

Part II undertakes four "systematic discussions." In aesthetics, the tension between any finite image and its spiritual significance emphasizes that creativity decisively

abandons mere *mimesis*. This tension, found in Ruskin, Stendahl, and the tradition from Goethe to Schopenhauer, explains why irony hallmarks Romantic art. In psychology, D. examines selected novels of Goethe, Hölderlin, Jean Paul, de Nerval, Jane Austen, Chateaubriand, and others, where he diagnoses a growing subjectivism. It results from an incipient sense of the unconscious to determine human action. Undermining trust in the conscious self as a source of meaning, it strongly contributes to Romantic anxiety. In ethics, Balzac's fiction charts in France a middle course between rationalism and utilitarianism, whereas in Germany and England Kant's categorical imperative exerts influence. Nonetheless, Carlyle tempers its individualism with social concern for liberation from industrial oppression. In social theory, reactions to the French Revolution first hold sway, either admiringly, as in Joseph de Maistre, Kant, Fichte, Schiller, and Thomas Paine, or alarmingly, as in Edmund Burke. Later theories dominate, however, such as Hegel's final aggrandizement of the state and Saint-Simon's founding of sociology as a seminally normative science.

Part III examines three foundational "syntheses." In history, Romantics postulate an impulse toward a future exceeding any previous goal. More than their predecessors, they ask whether this progressive movement possesses any coherence. Carlyle finds it in emergent heroes, Ranke in discovering "what really happened," Walter Scott in rendering the past into fiction. In philosophy, they react forcefully against any mechanism, positing nature as intrinsically oriented to the freedom of spirit. *The Romantic philosopher*, Schelling, like Fichte and Hegel, grounds this claim in an indubitable intuition of mind. Mind's freedom must resolve nature's inherent tensions into an intelligent system in order to recapture something of the organic balance of its original whole. In France, Main de Biran, harkening to Malebranche's Augustinian Platonism, unites sense and reason to pave the way for the dynamism of Bergson and Blondel. In religion, Romanticism's revival departs from Enlightenment secularism, even as it eschews dogmatic Christianity. Lamennais finds an alternate foundation in nature, Blake in a Gnostic revival, Schelling in mythology as the precondition for all metaphysics. Schleiermacher looks to feeling, Ferdinand Christian Baur to the subjective quality of faith, and Johann Adam Möhler to the dynamism of an organically developing church. Throughout, the age seeks to harmonize the Absolute's immanence and transcendence, even if the tension between pantheism and panentheism remains unresolved.

D. delivers a lifetime of mature erudition attentive at once to a dizzying array of specific thinkers and a general theme that coalesces them. Reminiscent of Hegel, Heidegger, and Cassirer, D. refreshingly affirms against contemporary reductive models of reason that historically developing culture bears permanent intelligence. Here the methodologically sensitive reader may feel some frustration, as the border between exposing the sources and disclosing their perduring insights blurs not infrequently. More specialized studies of many sources exist, notably the literary ones, but the commentary on aesthetics, ethics, and philosophy emerges as nonpareil.

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