

of the scriptural assertion of Christ's unique mediation; and Andrew Mbuvi explores scriptural references to Christ's priesthood in conversation with the African understanding of expiatory sacrifice. K. K. Yeo's final essay on Christology in China provides a fitting conclusion to the collection, emphasizing the need for new contextual Christologies that are in continuity with the tradition.

The volume, which emphasizes the continuity between biblical scholarship and systematic reflection, will serve as an excellent introduction to contemporary Christology, but also to the broader and ever-expanding field of contextual theology.

Thomas Cattoi
Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University

Theology after the Birth of God: Atheist Conceptions in Cognition and Culture. By F. LeRon Shults. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Pp. xiii + 238. \$95.

In this book Shults claims to know how humans came to believe that there is a God and how this belief endures. S. himself does not believe in God but rather in a theology that is the "biocultural study of religion" (6). Such an approach considers the idea of "God" to be "an infinite person with an eternal plan for human groups" (2), an idea that arose in "early ancestral environments where the survival advantage went to hominids who were able to quickly detect relevant agents (predators, protectors, and partners) in the natural milieu and who lived in groups" (3). The cohesion of these groups depended on accepting the accounts of these relevant agents that included one who was supernatural, intentional, and would be punitive to those who strayed from the group. Long after these "theogonies" began, theology came along. This reflective enterprise gave respectability to those hoary accounts and kept them going; and the cadre who did this S. calls "sacerdotal theologians" (54). S.'s "biocultural study of religion" is an empirically based, naturalistic explanation of religion that "explains the actual mechanisms that lead to the generation of religious conceptions in human cognition and to their reproduction in human cultures" (5).

Maybe the geographical location of the author helps explain his "radical atheist trajectory" (4). Scandinavia has "the least religious countries in the world and partly in the history of the world," according to sociologist Phil Zuckerman (187). For S., a growing number of people in the world find that naturalism and secularism "'work' in an expanding number of environments," and that fewer people need gods to make sense of the world or to hold their groups together (151). This proves to me that a *lex non orandi* will produce a *lex non credendi*. Second, for S., "empirically based, naturalistic" data are esteemed, while the data believers have testified to throughout history are dismissed.

John Haughey, S.J.
St. Claude La Colombiere Jesuit Community, Baltimore