

of matter, change, and confusion. Christianity would paradoxically complete this movement by affirming the utter transcendence of God from the world in the doctrine of the Incarnation. God became a human being precisely in order to bridge the yawning chasm between heaven and earth, yet the Messiah was rejected and left to die a lonely and miserable death. It was only as the invisible Spirit within the private bounds of individual conscience that God would continue to be present to persons and to offer them eternal life in a paradise separate from an increasingly secular world.

For this reason, G. calls Christianity the "religion for departing from religion" (101). G. proposes that Christianity ultimately frees people from all mediating structures of organized religion even as it encourages human curiosity to subdue and possess a disenchanting world. He describes this latter process as the rise of politics. Prehistorical religious ritual gave birth to social organization in the form of cultic priesthood tied to tribal leadership; with the distancing of God, this office evolved over time into the political state. Just as science is the outgrowth of disenchanting reverence, so politics is the secularized modern variant of cultic life.

There is a Gallic *nostalgie* in G.'s account of this story. Rather than proclaim God's death, G. relates an even sadder report: humanity has driven God into exile. At the outset, G. announces his atheism, yet by the end, amidst evident reverence for the Incarnation of the God-man Jesus Christ, one suspects that G. is actually a French intellectual agnostic. He bemoans the sacral emptiness of modernity, and he seems to hope for the eschatological victory of God. Between these two poles he would have us stand, unwilling to go back, unable to go forward, humans after all, promised wholeness by an unrecognized divinity, hanging on a tree, suspended between a distant heaven and a disenchanting earth.

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PAUL J. FITZGERALD, S.J.

## SHORTER NOTICES

CANONS IN CONFLICT: NEGOTIATING TEXTS IN TRUE AND FALSE PROPHECY. By James E. Brenneman. New York: Oxford University, 1997. Pp. xvii + 228. \$45.

The "plowshare" oracles of Isa 2:2-4/Mic 4:1-4 ("beat your swords into plowshares") and Joel 4:9-12 ("beat your plowshares into swords") provide the foil for this study of both literary and canonical questions of canon, canon formation, and canon authority. The seminal work of James Sanders provides the context of the discussion, but Brenneman draws on

a wide range of other scholars in literary and hermeneutic theory.

Part 1 deals with the broad questions of contradiction and intertextuality, reader response and communities of interpretation, and the complexity of the meaning of canon itself. Part 2 surveys traditional approaches to the biblical question of true and false prophecy, the "swords into plowshares into swords" texts (including a tradition history of these texts), and a final summary which argues that, for us today, the Joel passage is false prophecy.

For B., the locus of canonical meaning lies not in the text but in the interpretative community with its hermeneutics and reading strategies: "Scripture cut away from its source of authority, the canonical community of faith, simply loses its meaning. . . . The people of God as living texts are inspired by God to create and sustain their own canon of Scripture as their guide for faith and practice. . . the sequence of authority: God to (Spirit-led) human communities to text" (50). Questions of ecclesiology are certainly involved here: "the implications of emphasizing reader-in-community. . . undermine a certain classic Protestant view regarding the a priori role and authority of sacred scripture over its readers" (90). B. argues for an important shift from canon as object (text) to canon as function (process) in which ethos (behavior) has a certain priority over mythos (story).

The book's argument is complex but clearly developed. As we live within the pluralities of postmodernism, this work seeks to move the biblical community of faith to respectful and more sophisticated forms of persuasive discourse. (A final note: throughout, theologian David Tracy's name is spelled Tracey).

MICHAEL D. GUINAN, O.F.M.  
*Franciscan School, Berkeley*

RUTH: A COMMENTARY, By Kirsten Nielsen. Translated from the Danish by Edward Broadbridge. The Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1997. Pp. xiv + 106. \$20.

This brief commentary matches the high quality of others in The Old Testament Library series. Nielsen devotes one-third of the book to an introduction which discusses the contents and structure, genre, intertextual reading, literary context, historical context, theological themes and text of Ruth. She treats the book as a work of art with multiple layers of meaning. "Like all works of art it is not a book with a single message for a limited time and circumstance but belongs in a network of texts that each

underline particular themes in the narrative" (29).

The network of texts or intertextuality provides the methodology for the commentary. N.'s purpose is "to present the interpretations that appear most likely if we attempt to read the book within a network of texts out of which it came into being" (12). This method recognizes that no text is an independent entity but each consists of strands in a network of texts.

The method of intertextuality offers some wonderful new insights. N. considers Ruth a part of women's stories that deal with infertility and the triumph over it. The ending genealogy, which is set aside as a later addition by some scholars, becomes a basic premise and starting point through intertextuality. N. unveils the background known to the original audience and reader as well as the social and political situations that asserted the story of Ruth as a legitimization of the claims of David's family to the kingship. This commentary is highly recommended for its contribution of new insights as well as its careful application of a methodology.

CAMILLA BURNS, S.N.D.DEN.  
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SACRED MARRIAGE: THE WISDOM OF THE SONG OF SONGS. By Nicholas Ayo and Meinrad Craighead. New York: Continuum, 1997. Pp. 272. \$21.95.

Such is the ongoing fascination with The Song of Songs that virtually each of the last ten years has seen the publication of at least one more translation into English of these erotic poems. This edition features a rendition by Ayo of each line of the text accompanied by an extensive commentary, illustrated with some half dozen impressionistic paintings by Craighead.

Ayo is not a Hebraist, but he has consulted virtually every available commentary, with the result that his version is not only remarkably faithful to the original, but often exhibits a greater feel for the subtleties of the Hebrew than that found in many translations by Semitists. The En-

glish captures the lushness of the Hebrew throughout, and the charged eroticism of such passages as 5:1 ff. is conveyed with the same poetic sense of playful ambiguity as the original. For sheer readability, A.'s translation is probably even superior to the superb treatment of Roland Murphy in his *Hermeneia* commentary (*The Song of Songs*, 1990).

But the special beauty of A.'s contribution lies in his commentary. He always provides enough exegesis and historical and anthropological background to make the text intelligible and, where possible, explores other passages in Scripture where similar themes are pursued. He then discusses, sometimes with exquisite sensitivity and never with embarrassment, the erotic significance of each passage, drawing conclusions for modern couples to contemplate. Invariably, since he emphasizes the beauty and God-giveness of human love and sexuality, he is able to place the whole treatment in a profoundly spiritual context.

This is an exceptional book, both profound and provocative. It challenges the reader to find, in a new and more significant way, the numinous in the human.

WILLIAM J. FULCO, S.J.  
*Loyola Marymount Univ., L.A.*

READING ROMANS: A LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY. By Luke Timothy Johnson. New York: Crossroad, 1997. Pp. xii + 224. \$24.95.

Johnson states that his "commentary will help present-day readers construct the meaning of Romans *through the process of reading*, coming as close as we can to the way the first readers experienced it. . . . Romans will be read *in sequence* as a developing argument" (3). Unfortunately, the book is not entirely successful in accomplishing these worthy goals. Although it generally follows the text of Paul's letter in sequence, in a section-by-section rather than verse-by-verse manner, it often mentions later verses the reader has not

yet heard. J. seems to presuppose that the first readers knew the rest of the New Testament, as the commentary makes constant reference to it. It is most doubtful that this is the way the first readers experienced Romans.

Although this commentary comes up short as a "literary" commentary, it is more successful as a "theological" commentary, placing Romans within the context of Pauline theology. In this regard, it is very clearly and insightfully written. Especially to be recommended is the section on the difficulties of interpreting Paul's thinking on "submission to civil authorities" in Rom 13:1-7.

Key to J.'s commentary is that the controversial expression *pistis Christou* means "the faith of Christ in God" rather than "faith that believers have in Christ" (15). This reviewer disagrees with that interpretation and prefers the understanding of "faith in Christ" recently proposed by J. D. G. Dunn (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Eerdmans, 1998] 379-85). The commentary lacks notes and indices, but includes some bibliography within the text. This is more an intermediate discussion of Paul's letter to the Romans than an introduction for beginners.

JOHN HEIL  
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PHILO AND PAUL AMONG THE SOPHISTS. By Bruce W. Winter. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series. New York: Cambridge University, 1997. Pp. xvi + 289. \$59.95.

Winter's revised doctoral dissertation, written under the direction of E. A. Judge at Macquarie University, examines Philo and Paul as critics of the first-century sophistic movement. Novel is the suggestion that both are important for our knowledge of first century sophists. The Second Sophistic is usually dated to the second century C.E., and in the East Dio Chrysostom of Prusa is its first representative.

The book is organized in two major parts, which deal with sophists in Alexandria and Corinth respectively.

The interest in Alexandria and Corinth as centers of first-century sophists, is, in part, determined by the book's thesis about the common struggle against sophists shared by Philo and Paul.

The import of this book for New Testament scholarship lies in W.'s attempt to resurrect and confirm an earlier thesis of J. Munck regarding 1 Corinthians 1-4, i.e., that the divisions in the Corinthian church had more to do with sophists than theology. Controversial will be the identification of Paul's opponents in 1 Corinthians with those in 2 Corinthians, whom W. identifies as Jews trained in Greek rhetoric. W. likens the situation in Corinth to the one he sees addressed by Philo in Alexandria, so that both Philo and Paul end up as antisophistic religionists of the first century.

Students of the Second Sophistic are likely to question the interpretation of the evidence provided for the first-century-C.E. witnesses of the movement in Alexandria and Corinth. The creative solution W. offers to resolve the conflict between the report of Neilus in *P. Oxy.* 2190 and those of Philo and Dio of Prusa on the respective lack or abundance of sophists in the city rings of special pleading. Therefore, one wonders whether the book's claim about Philo and Paul among the sophists is indeed well founded.

ALAN C. MITCHELL  
Georgetown University, D.C.

ONE RIGHT READING? A GUIDE TO IRENAEUS. By Mary Ann Donovan, S.C. Collegeville. Glazier/Liturgical, 1997. Pp. x + 197. \$18.95.

Donovan provides an accessible and well-written introduction to the *Adversus haereses* of Irenaeus, attentive to issues of structure, argument, and historical context. While the chief benefit offered by her book-by-book analysis is the illumination of the design and content of this complex work, along the way D. makes some important contributions to the study of Irenaean exegesis.

At the heart of Irenaeus's disagree-

ment with his Valentinian opponents is his insistence that any reading of Scriptures confirm and be confirmed by the Church's "Rule of Faith." D. suggests that this dialogical relationship is the basis of two compositional strategies that provide the key to the organization of *Adversus haereses*. First, in Books 1 and 2 Irenaeus contrasts the faith of the Church with that of the Valentinians, with an emphasis on unity as over against multiplicity. Second, D. finds that Irenaeus's exegetical method of citing and commenting upon prophetic or dominical words, which was isolated by Philippe Bacq in his study of *Adv. haer.* 4, is an organizing principle in Books 3 and 5 as well. In addition, D. makes an important advance in the observation of chiasmic structure in large sections of *Adversus haereses*: this offers, as in the case of *Adv. haer.* 3.18.2-7, for instance, indispensable insight into the shape and direction of the argument.

D.'s close and methodical reading of Irenaeus offers fresh understanding of his characteristic emphases on the Incarnation, the unity of God's action in the economy of salvation, and the present dignity and future hope of the human person. One would have hoped for more reference to the other extant work of Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, but perhaps that should remain material for a companion volume.

DANIEL A. SMITH  
Wycliffe College, Toronto

TERTULLIAN, FIRST THEOLOGIAN OF THE WEST. By Eric Osborn. New York: Cambridge University, 1997. Pp. xxi + 285. \$59.55.

Osborn has written what is quite simply the best introduction to the thought of Tertullian in any language. Over a long and prolific scholarly career he has accumulated a large fund of wisdom, learning, and good sense, all of which he brings to bear on this notoriously difficult, deliberately provocative, and frequently irritating author. O. cuts through the surface rhetoric and personal mannerisms to concentrate on Tertul-

lian's "final vocabulary, the words and meanings which continually recur in his arguments" (xiii), which he elucidates with a hermeneutic approach that owes as much to Wittgenstein, Gadamer, and Quentin Skinner as to traditional patristic scholarship. This analysis of the underlying structures of his thought produces a Tertullian who is a rational, systematic, and creative theologian and thinker, "an intellectual Genghis Khan, who explores the Bible and classical culture, yet manages to present antiquarian, scientific, medical, and philosophical material in an original way" (255).

The only weaknesses I have detected concern minor historical matters of peripheral relevance to the central theme of the book. The first Christian martyrs of Africa were not tried "near Carthage" (1), but *Karthagine in secretario*, i.e., in the proconsul's official residence on the Byrsa. And, although O. has read, understood, and absorbed what I have written about Tertullian's relation to his historical milieu, none of his repeated discussions of the treatise *De Pallio* ever considers the implications of Georg Schöllgen's proof that its conclusion (6.2) is comprehensible only on the hypothesis that the author possessed the legal status of an *equus Romanus*—a fact which gives greater precision to my presentation of Tertullian as a Christian Apuleius and a man whose social connections protected him from persecution.

T. D. BARNES  
University of Toronto

THE BIBLE IN CHRISTIAN NORTH AFRICA: THE DONATIST WORLD. By Maureen A. Tilley, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997. Pp. vi + 232. \$32.

From its inception until the Vandal conquest of Roman Africa, Donatism was able successively to reconstruct its world, and thus ensure its survival, as it moved from the status of persecuted minority to structured separatist movement, then to an internally divided community. It achieved this in large part by modifying its ways of interpreting Scripture.

So argues Tilley in a volume which, though repetitive at times, is lucidly written and logically developed.

T. examines how Donatists employed the exegesis of Tertullian and Cyprian, and of pre-Donatist martyr stories, for their own purposes. Further evidence for Donatism's self-identity lies in the biblical exegesis of its own martyr accounts and "literature of pastoral care" (77). As long as the movement viewed itself as the antithesis to both a hostile government and wayward Catholicism, its biblical interpretation could emphasize faithful Israel as its model; but dissension within the Donatist community itself called for new ecclesiologies to account for the presence of sinners within the Church. Finally, a shift in imperial policy and a change in ecclesiastical leadership, at the end of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth, further redirected the choices by Donatist exegetes of the biblical passages to employ if Donatism's continued existence was to be validated.

Despite the occasional citation in Latin, T.'s book can be profitably read by most, since there is no presumption of a broad background knowledge. A projected wider readership may explain why, though a helpful summary or conclusion follows each chapter segment, the concluding chapter is little more than a brief review of the book's method, contents, and earlier summations. Yet the volume will also profit scholars, for it takes a new and promising path by focusing on Donatists' own exegesis to help clarify the movement's identity.

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St. Paul University, Ottawa

PSALTERIUM AFFECTUUM PALAESTRA: PROLEGOMENA ZU EINER THEOLOGIE DES PSALTERS. By Günter Bader. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1996. Pp. ix + 266. DM 178.

Bader argues that the Psalter is fundamentally mute and silent without the music that once was an integral part of it. Even in its present condition, it retains a memory and expectation of its former sound. The Psalter

is the singable book of song, not a text to be read; the Psalms are the Psalter minus song. Today the Psalms without music are only a mute Psalter, and they are studied only for a "theology of the Psalms," which B. alleges to be unbiblical. On the other hand, the sung Psalter is no longer a biblical Word, but only the object of hymnology.

To develop the theology of the Psalter, B. undertakes a historical survey of the Prefaces to the Psalter, which began to be written in the fourth century and conclude with Luther's, the last important example of this genre. The fourth century stands out as the epoch of the theology of the Psalter of David. The outstanding characteristic of the Psalter is the medium (song), not the message. Psalms were viewed by the Church Fathers as hymnic theology. There is a need for future study in this area: the prefaces to the Psalter have not been the object of comprehensive monographs.

B.'s work is very important, difficult though it may be to appreciate fully. The Psalms are an instrument of worship from the past; the Psalter is a special kind of theology. In the Psalter the complete inner dialectic of music emerges into the "theodynamic" world of divine praise. This reviewer is more confident that the hymnic understanding of theology, not as a scientific discipline, but as a kind of heartfelt expression, will never disappear. Witness the popularity of the music of Hildegard of Bingen and Gregorian Chant, and the unending vitality of Protestant hymns. "Theology of the Psalter" will live as long as Psalmody and the Greek (patristic) tradition of "speech and song" remain with us.

MARGARET A. SCHATKIN  
*Boston College*

THE TRINITY AND THE PASCHAL MYSTERY: A DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY. By Anne Hunt. *New Theology Studies*. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1997. Pp. ix + 198. \$19.95.

Surveying the biblical theology of François Durrwell, the Thomistic systematics of Ghislain Lafont, Hans

Urs von Balthasar's theological esthetics, and Sebastian Moore's psychological appropriation of the story of Jesus, Hunt finds emerging a revolution in trinitarian theology. The traditional Augustinian-Thomist synthesis is ceding place or at least finding a complement in theologies which recognize the revelatory as well as redemptive character of the paschal mystery. From this perspective the single event of the cross and Resurrection becomes the enactment in time of the eternal perichoresis in which each of the divine persons exhibits concretely distinct characteristics and plays a vitally distinct role, so that relationality takes precedence over substance, and being and traditional divine attributes like immutability require reinterpretation in view of a fresh grasp of the divine reality as *Ipsium Amare Subsistens*. Thus grounded in its economic roots, trinitarian theology regains a soteriological context of cosmic scope.

For an explanation of the emergence of this trend H. turns to Robert Doran's expansion on Bernard Lonergan's articulation of theological foundations to suggest that each of the authors exhibits psychic conversion, while the movement as a whole heads toward a transposition of theology from the second stage of meaning, in which objective theory dominates, to a third stage in which human interiority provides the context for mediating the meaning of Christian revelation. While not the place where beginners in trinitarian theology ought to start, this book offers an interesting and valuable addition to the literature on the subject.

WILLIAM P. LOEWEN

*Catholic University of America*

CHRIST: THE SELF-EMPTYING OF GOD. By Lucien Richard, O.M.I. New York: Paulist, 1997. Pp. iv + 236. \$18.95.

Using the hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 as his primary biblical warrant, Richard makes a persuasive case for a kenotic Christology. He begins with a cogent analysis of contemporary culture in North America and concludes with hortatory reflections on the Church as a communion of compas-

sionate love. In between, he offers readable and reasonable coverage of a range of topics such as the doctrines of Trinity and creation, the authentic humanity of Jesus Christ, and the mystery of suffering. Throughout, R. is utterly consistent in applying the hermeneutics of kenosis, i.e., God's gracious self-emptying and voluntary self-limiting in Christ. Kenosis is the all-purpose lens through which he examines biblical testimony, patristic teaching, and select contemporary issues.

Two of R.'s long-standing interests in research are woven within the fabric of this book: the universal scope of salvation, and the theology of suffering. R. advocates an understanding of God "not as the cosmic clockmaker, not as the absolute monarch, but as the husbandman in the vineyard of the world" (150), attractively portraying God as the self-communicating agent of salvation in a created universe characterized by chance and evolution. With respect to the theology of suffering, R. sides with Moltmann and others who challenge traditional understandings of divine immutability and impassibility and predicate suffering as intrinsic to the being of God.

From his kenotic Christology, R. spawns a kenotic anthropology which affirms the interdependence and (what Marcel calls) the heterocentricity of human personhood. He also entices the reader with an outline of a kenotic pneumatology in which the Spirit is named as the "continuous self-emptying of God in creation and history" (113). Well researched and lucidly written, this book whets one's appetite by demonstrating the theological versatility of kenosis, though the Christologist might hunger for a more sustained analysis of the particulars of God's self-emptying in Christ.

PAUL E. RITT

*St. John's Sem., Brighton, Mass.*

ENERGIES OF THE SPIRIT: TRINITARIAN MODELS IN EASTERN ORTHODOX AND WESTERN THEOLOGY. By Duncan Reid.

Atlanta: Scholars, 1997. Pp. xiv + 149. \$49.95; \$19.95.

The teaching on "uncreated divine energies," with roots in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers and Pseudo-Dionysius, and systematically articulated by Gregory Palamas, is an attempt to safeguard the distinctions between creator and creature, between the inner life of the Trinity and the work of divinization, and between the ineffability of the divine and the reality of human mystical experience. In this edited version of his dissertation, Reid presents the theory of "uncreated energies" as articulated by two 20th-century Orthodox theologians, Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky. In an attempt to create an ecumenical dialogue, he also presents the views of two representatives of Western Christian thought, Karl Barth and Karl Rahner.

While claiming that the Western approach regarding the Trinity and sanctification can make a contribution to the discussion, R. stresses mainly its inadequacies. He interprets Rahner's teaching on the "economic" and "immanent" Trinity as in effect identifying the two concepts, and views Barth's position as similar to Rahner's. This "identity principle" regarding the Trinity "understands the divine modes of being primarily on the basis of their economic functions." In contrast, R. claims that the Orthodox doctrine of energies "postulates a *superessential* doctrine of the Trinity, where the Trinitarian hypostases are regarded as fundamentally independent of economic functions or motifs" (67). R. considers the Rahner/Barth position as a step backward to the "economic, functional triadology" of the early Church, left behind long ago by Athanasius and the Cappadocians. He fails to take note, however, of the core Rahnerian teaching that the divine will always remain elusive mystery even in the Beatific Vision.

On the other hand, R. seems to be an apologist for the Orthodox position in providing what is a good introduction to contemporary Orthodox thought. However, there are no new

insights in response to the perennial question of how the doctrine of "un-created energies" can be used at the same time to express both the unmediated presence of the divine to humans, and the ontological separateness of the divine essence.

SEELY BEGGIANI

*Catholic University of America*

EVELYN UNDERHILL: *SPIRITUALITY FOR DAILY LIVING*. By Annice Callahan. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1997. Pp. xv + 248. \$47.50.

The past decade has seen a rebirth of interest in the writings of Underhill, early-20th-century Anglican spiritual writer, retreat director, speaker, and spiritual mentor. For those just discovering this "spiritual guide to her generation," Callahan offers a detailed introduction to her life and spiritual journey, a synthesis of her extensive study of mysticism, and a retrieval of themes appropriate for contemporary spirituality.

C. incorporates a wide range of works by and about Underhill among the sources, extensive notes, and suggested readings supplementing each chapter. Stylistically this occasionally makes the text weighty with references, but overall there is a clear development of each theme. Each chapter concludes with "suggestions for prayerful reflection" from Underhill's works, as well as questions related to the text and chapter. These suggest a well-read audience who might use this book for personal growth as well as more academically oriented readers.

C. presents Underhill as offering significant spiritual direction for the next millennium, without avoiding her Edwardian-era shortcomings. In spite of her class background and the limitations of her social-analytical interests, Underhill believed that a connectedness with the poor was an essential element of authentic Christian spirituality. At the heart of her vision was a "practical spirituality," one rooted in the Incarnation and ordinary life. Her valuing of human experience as the starting point of the

spiritual quest clearly identifies her with 20th-century theological directions. Her love of nature connects her with contemporary ecospirituality. While some of her personal practices related to her own spiritual guidance today raise feminist concerns, her mentoring of others offered a holistic approach that is worth recovering. Overall, C. offers a convincing introduction to a woman whose life and works deserve continuing contemporary study.

JOY MILOS, C.S.J.

*Gonzaga University, Spokane*

THOMAS MERTON'S *AMERICAN PROPHECY*. By Robert Inchausti. Albany: State University of New York, 1998. Pp. ix + 210. \$19.95.

Inchausti situates Merton within the stream of American intellectual history and attempts to assess his unique contribution to it. The opening chapters trace Merton's own spiritual development, pointing out that he came to his mature vision in 1958 in his mid-forties (Merton had entered the Trappist monastery of Gethsemane in 1941 at the age of 27). His vision, emerging from his contemplative experience and resulting in the unitive consciousness of Being typical of mystics, occasioned his critique of American culture. To quote Merton, "The task of the solitary person and the hermit is to realize within himself . . . a universal consciousness and to contribute this . . . into the communal consciousness which is necessarily more involved in localized consciousness, and in such a way that there is a dialectical development toward a more universal consciousness" (90).

From 1958 to his untimely death in 1968, Merton's prophetic voice emerged as he evaluated American cultural attitudes in light of his contemplative vision. I. laments the fact that Merton's voice was silenced just at the time that many Americans, prompted by the assassinations, of Martin Luther, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, came to the realization that American civil religion with its democratic individualism was an inadequate foundation for our society be-

cause of its lack of ontological (religious) roots. I. sees Merton in 1968 as standing at the high point of American democratic individualism and prophetically challenging it from his unique religious perspective.

Among books about Merton, this is distinctive in presenting an introduction to Merton's life and writings against the background of American intellectual history. I. thoroughly grasps the religious and contemplative dimensions of Merton and accurately presents this as Merton's distinctive contribution. Though he may overgeneralize regarding American intellectual history, he offers not only a fresh perspective for understanding Merton but also a stimulating approach to American intellectual history. I believe Merton himself would be pleased with I.'s assessment of his contribution.

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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF INCULTURATION. By Mariasusai Dhavamony, S.J. *Documenta Missionalia*. Rome: Gregorian University, 1997. Pp. 215. \$17.

Dhavamony's contribution brings inculturation to the center of theological discourse. In two introductory chapters on culture, enculturation, and acculturation, he constructs a solid anthropological base, making ample use of Geertz. He then moves on to a theology of culture, symbol, and language.

The centerpiece of the effort is the chapter "Theology of Inculturation," previously published in *Studia Missionalia* in 1995. "Just as the Son of God assumed human nature in order to redeem it, so also the gospel has to become incarnate in culture in a vital and intimate way in order to transform it and save it" (94). Revelation, Christology, the paschal mystery, and eschatology are tightly but carefully interwoven with the inculturation process. "Inculturation is founded on the mystery of the redemptive incarnation" (96). That redemptive incarnation is continued through the presence of the Holy Spirit, "the agent of inculturation" (105). These themes

are applied in chapters on the laity and inculturation and on missionary spirituality. The final essays present reflections on the Indian faith experience, dialogue with Asia's cultures and religions, and a brief discussion of Asian Christian theology. While culturally insightful, the chapters betray an overly cautious ecclesiology and make no mention of current scholarship in comparative theology.

A few criticisms on presentation are necessary. Some of the material is dated. The gender-exclusive language and the number of editing lapses are glaring. Nonetheless, this is a significant contribution neatly summarized in a quote from the Asian Bishops: "True inculturation, far from being a tactic for the propagation of the faith, belongs to the very core of evangelization, for it is the continuation in time and space of the dialogue of salvation initiated by God and brought to a culmination when he uttered his Word in a very concrete historical situation" (176).

JOHN P. HOGAN  
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A CAUTIOUS PATRIOTISM: THE AMERICAN CHURCHES AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR. By Gerald L. Sittser. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 1997. Pp. x + 317. \$39.95.

In his fine introductory study of this important subject, Sittser observes that it has been customary for students of 20th-century culture to study American religion in the 1940s and overlook World War II, or to study the war and overlook religion. The thesis of his book is that American religion played a crucial if complex role in World War II, contributing in important ways to the war effort while being itself profoundly shaped by that conflict.

S. argues that, by and large, the American churches were neither blindly and fanatically patriotic nor aloof and pacifistic during the "last good war." Rather, with the embarrassing memory of the role of American religion during the First World War (when many "preachers presented arms") clearly in mind, most

American religious institutions opted for a "cautious patriotism"—a stance that enabled organized religion in the U.S. to rally its resources to support the Allied cause while maintaining biblical fidelity and spiritual integrity to loyalties that transcended tribal and nationalistic bonds. This cautious patriotism sought to "strike a balance between nationalism and internationalism, political realism and religious idealism, priestly concern and prophetic criticism. [It] wanted to walk the thin line between labeling totalitarianism as the absolute enemy and viewing war as the ultimate evil" (12–13).

S. offers a richly textured study of U.S. religion during the war, starting with the ideological debate between "neutralists," pacifists, and interventionists at the end of the 1930s, through the much-debated role of military chaplains in the American armed forces, to the fervent but frustrated interdenominational efforts to build a more secure and just postwar social order. He likewise offers compelling glimpses of the "domestic war" fought by the churches between 1941 and 1945, focusing on the nascent civil-rights, ecumenical, evangelical movements that would emerge with full force in the decades after the war.

S. has deftly adumbrated a crucial but largely ignored field of study. As a ground-breaking study, it offers tantalizing but necessarily brief glimpses of a host of issues, figures, and movements that need further study. A must-read for students of American religious and cultural history.

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*Fordham University, New York*

THE ECUMENICAL GIFT EXCHANGE. By Margaret O'Gara. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998. Pp. xii + 180. \$14.95.

The chapters of this book read like letters from a journey reporting and reflecting on the peoples and events encountered on the road. The journey in this case is, of course, that of the Christian churches toward unity—an enterprise in which O'Gara has been involved ever since her graduate studies at Yale. The first chapter, "On

the Road toward Unity," sets the tone: cultivating new habits of the heart and the mind is the indispensable condition for progress. The last chapter, "A Guide for the Perplexed," speaks about the ongoing tasks of the "pilgrims" concerning their Tradition: the tasks of recovery and transposition. Recovery is the repossession of those elements of the revelation which may have been less attended to or neglected yet helpful toward unity; transposition is the "playing" of the well-known themes in a new key. Biblical and historical research has done much for recovery; fresh hermeneutics inspired by the goal, unity, can lead to a deeper understanding of the long received truth.

In the body of the book two topics command attention. One is the stumbling block of infallibility: it is ultimately a manifestation of God's fidelity to his people, who *as a community* are entrusted with keeping the evangelical doctrine intact. Another is "a certain, but imperfect communion"; it leads O. to reflect on how dissensions in the Church of Christ could give place to unity and how, through the conversion of all concerned, a community could emerge in which diversity is honored and promoted as essential for the health of the whole body.

This is a book on ecumenism from the inside of the movement. It is not technical, but it is well informed. Its content is a balanced blend of personal experience, historical knowledge (especially of the Vatican Councils), and sound doctrine—all marked by the conviction that God, who has called his people to undertake the journey, is powerful enough to bring them to the promised land, that is, to the Church of Christ, one, undivided, and rich in diversity.

LADISLAS ORSY, S.J.  
*Georgetown University, D.C.*

THE DUAL NATURE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM. By Johannes J. G. Jansen. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1997. Pp. xvii + 198. \$29.95.

Fundamentalism in Islam, along

with female circumcision, have caught the imagination of readers in the West. Fundamentalism is a widely discussed topic in the media because the statements of some of its spokesmen and the dramatic acts of some of its adherents are stark and unambiguous. But apart from its made-for-television scenarios, it is still an elusive force that has become hard to capture and analyze from a distance. It is difficult to separate its reported actions from its overall thrust, whether religious, political, or both. Nor are there statistics on its adherents in different populations. Jansen tries to trace some of its historical roots by going back to the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and al-Afghāni of the 13th and 19th centuries, respectively. There are, for sure, other important figures in between and subsequent to these two, like Hasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s who played an important part in the movement. J.'s treatment is selective and brief, not a sustained historical analysis from the 13th century up to the present.

The major part of the study is devoted to the more current events of the 20th-century Middle East, and to the darkest aspects of this movement. It is to be pointed out, however, that this study quotes more original Arabic sources than studies that depend on secondary sources. One finds quotes from fatwas, but also from letters to editors and similar things. There are chapters in the book that are only marginally related to the theme of the book. Unless one were to grant that any mention of fundamentalism makes that document or doctrine such, then chapters 5 through 7 are not particularly focused on fundamentalism, but have to do with Islam as a system of beliefs and practices.

This is a book with an attitude. It refers to religious leaders as "functionaries." It concentrates on the negative aspect of one religion and on a specific movement within that religion. In addition, J. claims that he conducted oral interviews which he decided not to use, but actually he

quotes his oral sources without attribution. The quotes are extremely strident, e.g., that "Islam has always been a violent, half-fascist theocracy" (xiv). So, in effect, J. uses them unfairly, and their use early in the book sets the tone of the study and tarnishes its objectivity.

SOLOMON I. SARA, S.J.  
*Georgetown University, D.C.*

UNHOLY ALLIANCE: RELIGION AND ATROCITY IN OUR TIME. By Marc H. Ellis. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997. Pp. xviii + 214. \$18.

In this searching and provocative inquiry, Ellis reflects upon the role of religious tradition in perpetuating the litany of suffering that so marks our time. His first chapter is devoted to an assessment of reformist Jewish theology that, in his perceptive extension of George Steiner's phrase, comes after both Auschwitz and the establishment of the state of Israel. In view of the differing perspectives of post-Holocaust theology espoused by Steiner, Elie Wiesel, Richard Rubenstein, Martin Buber, and others, E. questions whether a Jewish covenantal theology can be redeemed and whether such a renewed theology can redress the Palestinian suffering inflicted by the Israeli state.

The second chapter poses a similar question for Christians who must confront not only their complicity in the Shoah, but the religious warrants invoked in a legacy of intolerance, colonial conquest, and persecution of the "disconfirming other." Even the liberationist critiques of James Cone and Gustavo Gutiérrez finally fail to surmount the imperial tenor of the "universalist symbolism of the Christian message." In succeeding chapters, E. explores Walter Benjamin's dictum that the very foundational texts of our Judeo-Christian civilization are tainted with barbarism.

E.'s ethical deconstruction of hegemonic readings of our religious texts is richly documented and persuasively argued. If at times he paints with broad strokes in his depiction of Christianity, his questions nonetheless belie the bad conscience of any

theology that would drown the cries of victims in ceremonies of innocence. And here, perhaps, we face the limits of theological inquiry which, as Gutiérrez reminds us, is always a second act. In response to the question of whether one can pray in the wake of the Shoah, Johann Baptist Metz affirms, "We can pray after Auschwitz because people prayed in Auschwitz." In the midst of enduring atrocity and genocide, they still do.

WILLIAM O'NEILL, S.J.  
*Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley*

WHAT IS A PERSON? AN ETHICAL EXPLORATION. By James W. Walters. Chicago: University of Illinois, 1977. Pp. xiv + 187. \$23.95.

The most pressing issues facing bioethics today, from abortion to xenotransplantation, frequently hinge on the answer to the question raised by this title. For that reason alone, this volume should be required reading for students of bioethics. After a brief and somewhat hurried discussion of physicalism and personalism as the two prevailing answers, Walters offers his own view which he calls proximate personhood. The substance of W.'s position is that self-consciousness is a necessary and sufficient condition of personhood and that only beings with a personal life have intrinsic value. Unlike the personalist view, however, proximate personhood recognizes and values potential for, development toward, and bonding with personal life. Although similar to other views in the literature, the distinction W. draws among intellectual, developmental and social proximity to persons is an important contribution. For example, the National Institute of Health panel that made recommendations about federal funding for human-embryo research would have found valuable support for its position here.

Proximate personhood is a compromise between extreme positions, a compromise W. hopes will be consistent with commonsense views. This mediating spirit is evident in the chapters where W. applies proximate personhood to questions about animal

rights and anencephalic infants. The comparison between organ donations from animals and donations from anencephalic infants is instructive because it highlights the fact that, although proximate personhood lies between physicalism and personalism, it is closer to the latter. Indeed, proximate personhood is clearly designed to correct the defects in a personalism that defines moral status solely in terms of self-consciousness and is thus incapable of objecting to practices like infanticide that almost everyone finds reprehensible. Whether a view that treats adult primates as more fully persons than anencephalic human infants is any less counterintuitive is debatable. But, as W. makes clear, this is a debate worth having.

PAUL LAURITZEN  
*John Carroll Univ., Cleveland*

A PASSION FOR GOD: THE MYSTICAL-POLITICAL DIMENSION OF CHRISTIANITY. By Johann Baptist Metz. Edited and translated from the German by J. Matthew Ashley. New York: Paulist, 1998. Pp. iv + 212. \$19.95.

This carefully translated and edited collection of essays published by Metz over the past dozen years makes available to English readers material that further develops the concepts and themes in *Faith in History and Society* and his other writings. While these essays retain the decisively critical, provocatively suggestive, and often fragmentary qualities that led J. Colombo to characterize M.'s work as "a sort of theological guerrilla warfare," they all together provide greater depth to his "new political theology" by means of prose that is often homiletic in its passionate apology for the biblical tradition and pathos for the suffering of others.

Time remains of the essence for M. The apocalyptic question of time, "What is God waiting for?" (58), is the focal point from which radiate the sharp, double-edged trajectories of his thought, cutting through the social and religious myths of late modernity and carving the finer details of the positive praxis engendered by a post-idealist "negative theology" (28).

Against a new "proreligious godlessness" excessively enamored with depth-psychology and seeking consolation in "myths and fables" (102), M. insists with greater vigor upon the theological imperative of faith's dangerous memory, the historically mediated narratives of suffering and salvation that Christian theology too early abandoned for Platonism's timeless, ahistorical version of anamnesis. He argues more rigorously for the "anamnesic rationality" available to theology in Israelite-biblical traditions, modeled in Jewish practices of prayer (including those of Jesus), and irreversibly demanded by the crisis of Auschwitz. In the process he critiques recent trinitarian theologies that locate suffering "in" God, finding in them too speculative and tidy a solution, worked out "behind the back of the human history of suffering" (69). M. thus continues to press apocalyptic "conjectures" (47) that strip theology of its hermeneutical comforts and interrupt the monotony, apathy, and individualism engendered by technology's instrumental reason and the market's principle of exchange. New to M.'s analysis of this evolutionary worldview is his greater attention to Nietzsche.

Of special interest to English readers will be the numerous places where M. discusses the relationship and discontinuities between the Continental, Anglo-Saxon, and North American contexts for doing political theology.

BRUCE T. MORRILL, S.J.  
*Boston College*

**ECONOMICS AND ETHICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THEORY, INSTITUTIONS, AND POLICY**, By Douglas Vickers. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997. Pp. ix + 173. \$59.95; \$19.95.

Vickers here makes a worthy contribution to a small but growing scholarly conversation about the connections between economics and philosophical ethics. Impressively, he surveys a good deal of historical development concerning the unfortunate split between economics and moral theory; he outlines a moral method emphasizing "five dichoto-

mies"; and finally he moves toward an application of theory to specific economic questions with moral import.

The five dichotomies (individuality and solidarity, deontology and consequentialism, entitlement and contribution, static and iterative ethical criteria, and immanentistic and transcendentalist perspectives) help to provide a framework by which to address ethical issues. This framework is brought into critical conversation with orthodox economic theory in as much as it focuses myopically on efficiency and relies on a metaphysics of autonomy, individualism, and self-interest, and presents a "tidily logical, quasi-mathematical, and self-contained system of thought, positivistic and sanitized from ethical encumbrances" (32). The application of the theoretical findings to specific economic questions of moral import centers around the need for income redistribution. The Rawlsian spirit of redistributionism is celebrated, while his strict egalitarianism is rejected in favor of a more moderate policy of minimum economic rights.

In my view, V. might have extended his conversation to include discussion of theological perspectives and contributions to the topic. This would have been warranted, given his interdisciplinary intentions and the many historical and contemporary contributions of religious theory and practice to the topic. The short book also surveys so much territory that one is frequently left wanting more explanation or support for various claims. However, it would be an excellent text for a course in ethics for participants who already have some acquaintance with economics.

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**DYING WITH DIGNITY: A PLEA FOR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**. By Hans Küng and Walter Jens. Translated from the German by John Bowden. New York: Continuum, 1998. Pp. x + 132. \$17.95; \$14.95.

Four essays of this uneven translation articulately campaign to legalize assisted suicide (Küng, literary

scholar Jens, and lawyer Eser) or qualifiably support German decriminalization (pediatrician Niethammer). An "open discussion" among the four focuses on the justifiability of direct, active help in dying for intolerable terminal suffering. "[I]s it . . . part of a dignified dying for people to be able to decide as far as possible the time and manner of their deaths?" (23). This English edition concludes with a postscript in which K. faults *Evangelium vitae* for succumbing to "the trap of the ideology of infallibility"; hence K.'s constructive claims are presented as a responsible middle way between papal rigorism and laxist autonomism for a post-Christian audience of educated Germans, who recognize K.'s interpretations of Kant, Heidegger, and experiences of dying but have only an embryonic hospice movement, and who are surrounded by countries which tolerate assisted suicide (Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, and Sweden).

Merely dismissing K.'s gospel of probabilism for consensus building (about limited assisted suicide) in a liberal polity risks overlooking how he astutely engages classic Catholic claims that are theological (images of God, Jesus and suffering), anthropological (responsible decision making for the "whole" of life includes its final phase and belief in eternal life), and social (fears about inhumane dying are widespread). Yet K.'s inductive method with universalist appeals to (European) experience, theonomous autonomy, and Tübingen rights discourse will strike churlish communitarians as accommodationist and physicians as bereft of clinical data about better pain management. Focusing only on assisted suicide rather than the art of dying well (as in K.'s 1982 *Eternal Life*) could suicidally polarize forthcoming state-by-state debates in the U.S.—which currently has more animal shelters (5000) than hospices (3200), though we have less than half as many dogs and cats as people.

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THE IRONY OF VIRTUE: ETHICS AND AMERICAN POWER. Ernest W. Lefever. Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1998. Pp. xi + 254. \$26.

Lefever describes public policies developed from good intentions that end with dire consequences, for, as Michael Novak puts it, "One of the best ways to create an immoral foreign policy is to try too hard for a moral one" (194). L. does not target just any proponent of virtue; William Bennet is hardly a villain in this anthology of 40 essays. Rather, L. takes aim at those who lack the moral courage to face tough decisions and tolerate totalitarian adversaries. Likewise, he attacks nonalignment as evidently morally and politically hypocritical.

While acknowledging that his theological views are implicit, he evidently shares the theological assumptions that grounded Reinhold Niebuhr's worldview. He defines himself as passing through three stages "from a pietist pacifism to an active liberal political pacifist stance and then on to a humane realist understanding of political accountability. To put it another way, I moved from a rational idealist to a historical realist position or from liberalism to neoconservatism" (19). These are crisp, no-holds-barred writings of an intelligent man with considerable experience and conviction.

What L. lacks is what one expects from contemporary proponents of theological viewpoints: a critical understanding of oneself and a belief that inclusive discourse is the appropriate method of theological and political development. Instead he is one tough bully preacher who sees the world as a white-and-black Manichean universe of good and evil, who never asks why one should equate historical realism with neoconservatism, and who insists on identifying himself as a centrist without giving the listener any idea of what the "right" would look like with such political/theological geography. A work for those comfortable with such viewpoints.

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**WELFARE IN AMERICA: HOW SOCIAL SCIENCE FAILS THE POOR.** By William M. Epstein. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1997. Pp. ix + 267. \$45; \$19.95.

Epstein offers an insightful description of a pernicious dynamic that plagues contemporary U.S. civic culture. The rationality of our public discourse is compromised by poorly designed and conducted social-science research on poverty and related social problems. Because of the absence of rational proofs of the causes of poverty and authoritative evidence about the efficacy of proposed remedies, the public-policy community is reduced either to silence or interminable dispute. All too often, the lack of adequate empirical support for any particular program of interventions allows partisan agendas and dominant cultural prejudices to dominate policy-making circles. Observers of recent rounds of welfare reform, immigration restrictions, and social-service cuts justified by spurious claims of the need to reassert the work ethic will appreciate E.'s description of how social science so easily becomes a tool abused in the interest of providing the cloak of rationality to misguided policies.

E.'s analysis will be most helpful to readers with extensive previous

knowledge of the relevant policy debates, such as disputes over the effects upon welfare recipients' behavior of job training programs, work requirements, and other social-service policies. However, E.'s observations are not restricted to narrow technical matters. The originality of this volume lies in its clear articulation of the ways in which the contentiousness of debates over poverty research points beyond itself to such larger issues as the deep ambiguities latent in our shared political culture. Why do we as a people so consistently bracket our most dearly held values (social inclusiveness, neighborliness, egalitarianism) when we insist that social policy be determined solely by criteria of efficiency and rational-choice theory? Why do we shun more creative and generous approaches in the struggle to define the "good outcomes" targeted by policy? This book is critical of both liberals and conservatives for interpreting flawed social-science research in ways convenient in their partisan positions, which generally seek to avoid true structural reforms to benefit the poor. Religious social ethicists will find this a refreshing rejoinder to conventional wisdom about social policy.

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J.

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