

Das Gewissen, Edited by Stephan Schaede and Thorsten Moos. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 2015. Pp. xxv + 579. €109.

This is a collection of 20 essays on “conscience” (*Gewissen*) and while some treat of philosophical, political, and social concerns, most of them are focused on theological issues. While the term “conscience” is not found in the Old Testament, the concept is there. Its Jewish roots are present in Paul’s conception of conscience; however, he moves it in a more individualistic direction. It plays an important role in Catholicism and especially in Aquinas, but it is found more frequently in Protestantism. Thus, the six theological essays here focus on various Protestant theologians, including Friedrich Schleiermacher, Richard Rothe, Karl Hase, Daniel Schenkel, and Karl Holl. Although it was Holl who wrote that Luther’s religion is the “religion of conscience” (*Gewissensreligion*) (165, 171, 180, 237), Schenkel had suggested this seventy years earlier. So, it is understandable that Luther’s spirit is present in most of these essays. Many contributors point out that conscience is closely connected to faith, and that it is a type of freedom but within bounds. Conscience is one’s own authority which guards against all kinds of external authorities. Luther’s reputed “Here I stand, I can do no other” is an appeal to one’s conscience and that is why it is repeated in non-religious confrontations.

Perhaps because the dominant areas treated here are theological and political, and not philosophical, some problems arise. Most of the essays deal with the individual’s conscience but there are several which treat a national or collective conscience. Yet, how can something so personal become so general, and how can something which is oriented toward the present and the future be held responsible for the past? One can have a bad or guilty conscience regarding something that one did, but how can one have such a conscience regarding what others have done? This appears to equate conscience with responsibility, and while there may be some overlap, some of the contributors seem to conflate them. Nonetheless, this book offers a major contribution to our understanding of conscience—in theology and politics, if not in philosophy.

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Gewissen und Kirche. Zum Protestantismusverständnis von Daniel Schenkel. By Dorothea Noordveld-Lorenz. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 2014. Pp. x + 320. €89.

There is a long list of highly influential nineteenth-century German Protestant theologians. At the top of the list are Schleiermacher and Hegel, followed by Baur, Ritschl, and Harnack, and then by de Wette, Rothe, Hase, Hundeshagen, and Schneckenburger. It also includes Daniel Schenkel, but unlike the others, Schenkel is almost totally forgotten today. With this book, Dorothea Noordveld-Lorenz intends to rescue Schenkel from oblivion.

The book has three divisions: the first is devoted to Schenkel’s life and works while the other two are devoted to specific theological topics; namely, the essence of

Protestantism and the essence of the church. The essence of Protestantism is the individual “conscience” (*Gewissen*) which is not a negative type of “guilty conscience,” but is positive in that it helps unify us with God. *Gewissen* is a type of freedom, one which is neither unlimited nor arbitrary, but constrained by the faith in God’s truth and wisdom. The essence of the church (*Kirche*) is the type of faith shared by all members of the “invisible church,” which contrasts with the dogma, hierarchy, and symbols of the visible Roman Catholic Church. Schenkel fought against all Catholics as well as against some Protestants, but he occasionally fought for an idea. He fought against too many scholars to list here, but he fought for the union between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches. Schenkel believed it was imperative that the two Protestant movements unite both to counteract the growing political influence of the Catholic Church and to demonstrate that the Protestant Church was the only true church.

N-L. shows that Schenkel was one of the most influential German Protestant theologians. Schenkel not only built upon the ideas of Schleiermacher and de Wette, but his conceptions regarding the essence of Protestantism and the church helped set the stage for Ritschl and Harnack. This book is highly recommended for anyone wanting to gain a better understanding of nineteenth-century German theology as well as to comprehend the importance of conscience in Protestant thought. N-L. has convincingly demonstrated that Schenkel played an enormous role in both and deserves to be studied further.

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Handbook of Roman Catholic Moral Terms. By James T. Bretzke. Washington: Georgetown University, 2013. Pp. ix + 260. \$24.95.

In 1985, Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler published a remarkable and useful book, *Dictionary of Theology*. It covers a wide range of topics such as creation, grace, mediator, poverty, and Thomism. In a similarly stellar fashion, Bretzke has accomplished for Catholic morality what Rahner and Vorgrimler did for systematic and historical theology, covering more than 800 terms. The title of B.’s book does not do justice to its rich content, which offers for all entries a concise definition, historical context, illustrations of how these terms are used, the tradition in which the terms are employed, including church teaching, church documents, and a comprehensive bibliography for each entry.

B. demonstrates a breadth of knowledge on the continuities and discontinuities in moral teaching as well as key directions of Catholic thought. He also provides an extensive cross-referencing which serves as an invaluable tool for comprehending how various topics in moral theology interface. This unique guide lays out in understandable and lucid language the premises, principles, and conclusions of the church’s moral tradition. B. also displays a useful knowledge of the moral manuals, a working knowledge of languages, and a keen ecumenical sense.