

they were writing about political tempests here and there, they were unaware that a historical tsunami was just beyond the horizon.

Joseph Martos  
*Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, MO*

*Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ.*  
By Gerald O'Collins, SJ. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 229. \$40.

It is always exciting to welcome a new book by Gerald O'Collins SJ, the eminent and prolific Australian Jesuit theologian. This book on divine revelation is slightly outside his usual home ground of Christology, Resurrection, Trinity, and Fundamental theology. But, as the author points out, a coherent notion of revelation can serve as a lynchpin for the rest of theology, a glue that holds it all together. And despite the word "toward" in the subtitle, this book is a quite thorough and extraordinarily helpful review of very many aspects of its topic.

In the book, O'C. exhibits his usual erudition. He knows and uses the Scriptures to great effect. He shows detailed knowledge about classical, modern, and contemporary discussions of revelation, especially including the Church Fathers and *Dei Verbum* from Vatican II. An added bonus is his occasional reference to Christian art, which is perhaps not surprising from a man who lived and taught in Rome for years.

Traditionally, revelation has been understood as the revealing of propositional truths. O'C. affirms that truth is crucially involved in revelation but he thinks God's revealing of *himself* is primary. He says, "... revelation is *primarily* a personal encounter with God (who is Truth) rather than the communication of a body of truths" (138). Revelation not only shows us God—O'C. points out that it also shows us the truth about ourselves. And he is clear that divine revelation is not revelation unless there is a recipient who receives it in faith (9, 11).

Without wishing to outline the whole book, I will point out that there are twelve chapters. Picking out a few, there are fascinating and illuminating discussions of how revelation engages and transforms the people who receive it (chapter 3), of the difference between revelation and biblical inspiration, which are sometimes mistakenly identified (chapter 10), and of the canon of Scripture (chapter 11). There is also, notably, a sensitive and helpful discussion of divine revelation and non-Christians (chapter 12).

Let me raise two questions about the book. The first has to do with the ongoing character of revelation, which O'C. insists upon. He criticizes the statement in *Dei Verbum* to the effect that revelation reached "its full and definitive climax through the self-manifestation of Christ" (108). He denies that the revelation in Christ is absolute and unconditionally complete, that revelation is now simply over and done with. This is because O'C. holds that revelation is past, present, *and future*. God's final revelation will occur in the eschaton.

I cannot disagree with that point, but I do not want to open the door to the kind of continuing revelation that we find in Mormonism and elsewhere. O’C. says, “To deny revelation in the present is to doubt the active power here and now of the Holy Spirit . . .”. (114). And that is exactly the point that Mormon and some other apologists make. Now in O’C.’s defense, he does emphasize that the biblical canon is closed, which forestalls attempts to add later revelations to the status of Scripture. And he does make it clear that “the ongoing revelation *does not add to* the essential ‘content’ of what was fully disclosed through Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and the sending of the Holy Spirit” (115).

Second, as a Protestant I find most of what O’C. says about Scripture and tradition to be sensible and helpful, but not quite all of it. Of course, Scripture needs to be interpreted, and of course tradition, including what the Fathers called “the rule of faith,” shows us how to do that (144). I even agree that some sort of magisterium that recognizes, interprets, preserves, and formulates the message of Scripture is called for. But in my view the magisterium is not anything like a person or a committee of some sort sitting around a table. The Christian magisterium is the voice of the entirety of the people of God, past and present. My most serious worry is this: can we hold as *de fide* items from tradition that are not part of Scripture (e.g. the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary)?

Throughout the book, O’C. personalizes the issues in attractive ways by speaking of how revelation has affected the lives of various Christians. An Appendix to the book is dedicated particularly to St. Antony of Egypt (the founder of the monastic movement), Augustine of Hippo (the early church’s greatest theologian and churchman), and Girolamo Savonarola (the pre-Reformation Florentine reformer and martyr). The lives of all three were powerfully influenced by God’s revelation in the Scriptures.

*Revelation* is a wonderful book. It is orthodox, incisive, and well written. It deserves a wide reading by scholars and laypeople alike.

Stephen T. Davis  
Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA

*Jesus and Salvation: Soundings in the Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology.* By Robin Ryan. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2015. Pp. xxiv + 248. \$24.95

The theologian Karl Rahner famously noted that human beings do not apprehend God’s mystery but rather God’s mystery “apprehends” human beings. This insight can likewise be applied to illustrate Christian salvation, since humans do not apprehend salvation but salvation apprehends them. In this widely accessible book, the Passionist priest and theologian, Robin Ryan, introduces us to the mystery of Christ’s gratuitous saving work, which permeates Christian existence and grounds its hope. R. engages the Christian Catholic soteriological tradition with admirable expertise and traces its historical development in order to examine “the ways in which the saving work of Jesus Christ has been conceived and articulated” (xiv).