

words, because only by doing so does he fully enter into the depths of our godlessness. Yet according to R., the manner of Jesus's death has as much to do with God's justice as it does with our sin. Crucifixion makes plain that rectifying the world is not a matter of forgiveness pure and simple, but one of judgment as well. On this point, in what is arguably the most intriguing contribution of the book, R. offers a convincing rereading of Anselm's model of atonement. What Anselm sees that so many modern readers cannot is the fact that forgiveness on God's part is never sufficient to deal with the gravity of sin. R. gives us, in short, a more apocalyptic Anselm: the crucifixion of Jesus is God's way of actively undoing the injustices wrought by sin, in a manner beyond what our own efforts could ever achieve.

Of greatest interest for theologians is R.'s harmonizing of soteriological motifs in part II. These chapters serve as a commendable introduction to biblical and patristic interpretations of the efficacy of the Cross. But R. goes further by proposing the motif of "apocalyptic battle" (or *Christus Victor*) as the motif that frames and informs all the others. Here the crucifixion becomes the apocalyptic event par excellence, and its particular force lies in its ability to take evil seriously. R. writes with passion on the problem of suffering and carefully marshals some sobering examples of demonic evil from the pages of history. Keeping the apocalyptic motif in mind when discussing sacrifice, substitution, redemption, recapitulation, and so on ensures that we see ourselves as "condemned to redemption" (571): the cross breaks into our condition and judges these forces of evil enslaving us. That God dies for us when we are godless is, for R., the final meaning of the crucifixion.

In this book, R. writes compellingly for both scholarly and educated lay audiences. Her writing exhibits a combination of skillful exegesis, engagement with scholarly sources, and the rhetorical clarity of a good sermon. All of this reinforces the impression that her words ring true for Christians of all kinds struggling to find meaning in a broken world. Her appeal to multiple audiences is not without its risks: the concern to speak to theologians and preachers alike often comes at the cost of sacrificing concision, and R.'s tendency to judge theological validity by the standards of the pulpit is not always convincing. Nevertheless, her ambition proves to be more than worth the risks. R. has produced a book that is both informative and spiritually nourishing. This volume will undoubtedly become a standard work guiding discussion on the cross and soteriology for years to come.

Patrick X. Gardner
Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN

Rethinking Christian Forgiveness: Theological, Philosophical, and Psychological Explorations.
By James K. Voiss, SJ. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2015. Pp. xx + 428. \$34.95.

The English poet Alexander Pope is credited with the oft-cited proverb, "To err is Human; To Forgive, Divine." Pope was right—making mistakes, large and small, comes all too easily to everyone. The sticking point is the capacity to forgive both the

wounds that we have suffered and those we have inflicted. How are we, therefore, to make sense of the dilemma that forgiveness presents us? What options are open or closed to us? Indeed, is human forgiveness really possible? And, if so, is there anything distinctive about Christian forgiveness?

Voiss explores these perennial questions, along with a host of attendant issues, in his excellent, almost encyclopedic, study. His goal is “to look at forgiveness with fresh eyes” in order to reframe the scholarly analysis of forgiveness and place it “in a new landscape” (1). That landscape or context is the love of God through which divine grace is mediated, and by which humanity can be reconciled to both God and neighbor.

The path that V. takes to arrive at that lofty end is quite detailed and makes for a rewarding, if challenging, read. Early on V. decides that prior to his discussion of Christian forgiveness, he must review and critique what a select group of philosophers and psychologists have written about forgiveness; particularly, regarding its enactment and interpersonal dynamics. This decision leads him, first, to a consideration of two major French-Continental philosophers—Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricoeur.

V. finds much in Derrida that appeals to him, such as Derrida’s consideration of forgiveness through the dual lens of hospitality and gift. However, V. cannot accept Derrida’s strict requirement that genuine forgiveness must be unconditional. That is, forgiveness that includes even the least expectation of return must be rejected. Derrida’s complete commitment to the purity of forgiveness, V. judges, makes it essentially an impossibility in human relations. Ricoeur, however, offers a more promising option. He emphasizes the generosity and love of the one who forgives rather than the purity of the motives. That generosity and love enables the forgiver to view the offender as more than the perpetrator of the harmful act that was done. Ricoeur sees authentic forgiveness as separating the wrongdoer from their acts, so that even a badly damaged relationship can, potentially, be restored. As with Derrida, forgiveness must be without conditions.

When V. turns to Anglo-American philosophers, the discussion focuses on the conditions under which forgiveness is morally appropriate. The list of philosophers included in V.’s analysis is fulsome: Jeffrie G. Murphy, Joram Graf Haber, Pamela Hiernoyemi, and Charles Griswold. What unites them is the central role that they give to resentment in the process of forgiveness. By resentment, V. means the antagonism someone feels when their dignity and sense of well-being have been shaken by another person’s actions.

The Anglo-American philosophers agree that the person who suffers harm must admit the injury. A desire for revenge is understandable and common. But, instead of choosing revenge and bitterness, the wounded party decides to extend forgiveness. This does not mean condoning the harmful act or accepting it meekly. Instead, the wrongdoer is differentiated from the deed which facilitates healing for all concerned. Promising as this approach sounds, it fails to account for why so many people find forgiveness so hard to do.

A real strength of V.’s work is that he does not move directly from the philosophers to a consideration of Christian forgiveness. Instead, he provides a second extended discussion of various psychological understandings of forgiveness that amounts to a

phenomenology of forgiveness. Along the way, he brings the role of unconscious mental processes to bear on the acts of offering and receiving forgiveness. His nuanced presentation, with abundant notes, includes Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and a host of psychologists with a variety of theoretical orientations in dialogue with such issues as moral agency and free will.

All of this philosophical and theological analysis precedes V.'s turn to a book-length exploration of Christian forgiveness. Perhaps, this is why V.'s work often reads like a reference volume. There are so many intriguing and detailed conversations woven into this monograph that considerable rereading becomes a necessity. V. does, very helpfully, regularly provide summaries at key points along the way.

The third major section of V.'s project is where many readers will probably concentrate their efforts. Here V. highlights and evaluates the work of Lewis B. Smedes, Miroslav Volf, and L. Gregory Jones. This section could easily suffice as a separate book. In sum, V. finds numerous shortcomings in Smedes's popular studies on forgiveness. V.'s preferred theological conversation partners are Volf and Jones. V. concludes that there is an identifiable Christian forgiveness, even in this postmodern world where many do not think of themselves as sinners.

How can this finely researched, thoughtfully executed, volume be used? Most likely as a resource for theologians, graduate students, and a few intrepid clergy. The bibliography and extensive notes alone are valuable. And pastoral theologians, in particular, will be drawn to V.'s "landscape of Christian forgiveness."

Gary S. Eller
Creighton University, Omaha

Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Critical Appropriation of Russian Religious Thought. By Jennifer Newsome Martin. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2015. Pp xi + 310. \$35.

Martin proposes an introduction to and an analysis of the theological method of Hans Urs von Balthasar built upon the premise that it is experimental rather than nostalgic (198). She demonstrates it through an "excavation" (1) that leads her readers through the way that "Vladimir Soloviev, Nikolay Berdyaev and Sergei Bulgakov, and also Balthasar, received the Schellingian Idealism to varying degrees as well as different degrees of critical distance" (15–16). M. shows that this interpretation of the Russian theologians and Balthasar can be demonstrated in two ways: through the thematic content, and a theological method based on a creative fidelity to the tradition and marked by originality (17). The thematic contents—aesthetics, myth, eschatology, and apocalyptic—correspond to the second, third, fourth, and fifth chapters of this book. M. justifies their choice affirming that these categories function "as synecdochic indices of the relation between infinite and finite" (17). The introduction of each chapter with parts of poems of Rainer Maria Rilke illustrates, in a subtle way, the understanding that M. has of the speculative theological method of Balthasar. The method is proposed as a hypothesis in the first chapter, and then is demonstrated in the following chapters by indicating