

There is much to like in this volume and it is clear that D. has a fantastic grasp of a vast array of resources, which anyone coming to Augustine must master because of his dominant position in early Christian studies. There is certainly a wealth of information packed into a relatively compact monograph. The idea that there is continuity in Augustine's thinking about grace throughout his long career as a preacher is a welcome conclusion from this research. This volume will be a valuable addition to a burgeoning scholarly interest in Augustine's homilies and provides balance to an over-reliance only on his doctrinal output. This is not the last work on this topic, but it does lay solid groundwork for those who wish to delve into this fascinating question in a most important period of Christian theology.

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Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement. By Catherine Keller. New York: Columbia University, 2015. Pp. vi + 394. \$35.

Keller is a constructive theologian at Drew University. This volume is aptly named because by the end of the book the reader might not know what to make of her theological "apophaticism." Note: not agnosticism! "Apophatic" is the most frequently used term in the book. The inspiration for her theological angle of vision, if one chooses to consider it that, is Nicolas of Cusa, a 15th-century cardinal. His *docta ignorantia*, as K. puts it, "nicknamed" God as *posse ipsum*, Possibility Itself. Cusa supplies K. with the image of the Cloud with which she undertakes her theological construction.

One might gain a sense of the ethos of this book by learning that it is part of the Columbia University Press's series entitled *Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics and Culture*. That series, which now numbers more than 20 books, describes itself as "bringing the tools of philosophy and critical theory to the political implications of the religious turn . . . Without advocating any specific religious or theological stance, the series aims nonetheless to be faithful to the radical emancipatory potential of religion."

K.'s prose is alluring, even brilliant, but it keeps bordering on the obscure. Several times it seems that Jesus will come to the rescue and bring some clarity, but he doesn't. "If I speak so little and late of Jesus, it is the silence of solidarity" (292). Or another puzzler: "This book honors the Nazarene it largely unsays, that is, respects with silence" (315). So, neither Jesus nor the doctrinal tradition of the trinitarian God, as these have been understood and handed down in traditional Christian theologies, helps to alleviate the non-knowing of God which her text articulates.

Both Judith Butler and Alfred North Whitehead have helped her to move beyond what might seem the narrow doctrinal tradition of the past. They have replaced "the metaphysics of substance" and brought her into a "relational ontology" that understands identity in terms of who and what one is in relation to. Of the two, she especially appreciates Butler, whose field is feminist philosophical ethics. "I know of no other current thinker who so explicitly captures the relation between unknowing and

relationality itself” (219). So where does this unknowing leave one who wants to know more about God, if the Christian doctrinal tradition is not employed, notwithstanding the fact that it has often understood itself to be apophatic?

K.’s way of construing the Cloud makes much of *theopoiesis* (“God-making”). She understands this traditional term in a unique way, namely as “materializing in and beyond speech a love-relation to your widest world” (306). God-making for her is in sharp contrast to the long history of God-naming.

With one last gasp of theological authority, let me therefore say unto you—that for which God is a nickname cares not whether you believe in God. Doesn’t give a damn. Isn’t in the damning business. What matters is what we earth-dwellers now together embody. Not what we say *about* God but how we *do* God. (306)

For her, embodying is urgently needed now because of the imminent possibility of climate catastrophe. She contrasts this needed embodying with past Christian history where “we got empires puffed up with pride in their Christian supremacy. Always bending the knee modestly before the Lord” (307).

The Christology that emerges from her God-making is predictably quite unique. It “has not been erased but decentered, its self-implicating love turned against its own *constitutive exclusions*” (308, italics mine). Her *theopoiesis* goes “beyond christocentrism, androcentrism, anthropocentrism.” It is ever “opening into and never beyond a cosmos”; in other words, “the Incarnation becomes an interarnation” (308).

The last chapter commendably connects her God notions with the condition in which we are leaving the environment. “Across the threshold of (climate) catastrophe, the convivial cosmopolis can—*posse ipsum*—yet coalesce. There is no God-guarantee on the outcome; but there is the lure” (316). No God-guarantee because she smashes the icon that hopes that God will eradicate this looming catastrophe we humans keep creating. She would insist that we have to “uproot” (thank you Bruno Latour [370]) this kind of hope so that we become agents for the care of planet Earth within which our identities and this transmogrified God are inextricably entangled.

K. ends with these verses of an Emily Dickenson poem, presumably to clarify her thesis:

I dwell in Possibility—
A fairer House than Prose—
More numerous of Windows—
Superior—for Doors . . .

(Dickenson’s dashes are her own unique apophatics.)

The reader has to decide: is K. giving God the door or us a window?

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