

examining the church in the modern world, each author does a highly credible job of probing the theological, social, and political implications of this groundbreaking document, which moved the Catholic Church from a defensive posture toward the world to embracing it as a partner for discerning the divine initiative through the signs of the times.

Most of these essays were completed just as Pope Francis was elected, which leads Lois Lorentzen in her essay on liberation theology to ask, “Has Francis replaced Benedict’s ‘big chill’ with a ‘big thaw’?” (201). By now the answer seems obvious, so that many of the creative suggestions of these authors could now be imagined to take root and flourish in the world church.

In the opening essay, “The Challenge and Hope of *Gaudium et spes*,” James Hanvey, S.J. shows how the document “represents a cultural and political realignment and underpins this with a theological method and hermeneutic” (3). This positive turn to the world has, of course, been the source of 50 years of dispute between what Bernard Lonergan identified as the difference between a classical/essentialist way of thinking” and a “historical/dynamic” understanding, characteristic of modernity” (8).

Two other essays flow directly out of *Gaudium et spes*: “Catholic Social Teaching in the Secular Public Sphere,” by Frank Turner, S.J., and “The Role of Conscience in Catholic Participation in Politics since Vatican II,” by Thomas Massaro, S.J.

Subsequent essays take Vatican II for granted, just as Pope Francis does. It’s time to move on. And they do. They treat contemporary social, ecclesial issues, such as immigration (Kristin Heyer), women’s voices (Erin Brigham), climate change (John Coleman, S.J.), human rights (Kelly McBride), promoting justice and the common good in the modern economy (Carol Graham and Todd Sayre), and the joys and sorrows of Africa (Peter Henriot, S.J.).

The final essay on liberation theology by Lois Lorentzen provides a strong closing overview of the developments since the council. These include the struggles faced from a papal hermeneutic of suspicion, and ways in which liberation theology itself needs to break loose of its European moorings and utilize the hermeneutics of gender/sexuality, feminist, *mujerista*, Hispanic, and Asian perspectives for a more inclusive church.

Despite the price of this volume, these accessible, scholarly articles could serve as good launching points for an adult education series.

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*Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach.* By John Cottingham. New York: Cambridge University, 2014. Pp. xiv + 192. \$27.99.

The subtitle says it all. For decades, philosophy in English-speaking countries has been dominated by various forms of scientism such as linguistic analysis and logical positivism. Cottingham is old enough to remember an earlier era, and he is suggesting

a return to it in the future. Instead of arguing with the shortcomings of the recent past, however, C. proposes what he hopes can provide an agenda for the present. Although addressing his professional colleagues to some extent, C. seems primarily to be directing his book to students taking a university course in the subject, for it is highly readable and it refuses to get into academic debates. It offers an overview of the field, and it assumes a familiarity with Christianity and its traditional concerns: the existence of God, knowledge of the transcendent, moral principles and precepts, the problem of evil, and the possibility of an afterlife. C. does not expand into issues that might be raised by other traditions—for example, the possibility of multiple deities, the function of myth and ritual, and competing truth claims.

One of the book's unique contributions is its proposal that the philosophy of religion needs to get past treating religion as a set of beliefs and to acknowledge that it discloses a way of life. To understand religion adequately, it must be practiced, lived and reflected upon, not only in community exercises such as formal worship but also in individual efforts such as meditation, the reading of sacred texts, personal prayer, and fasting. All religious traditions call for conversion, "a *radical moral change*, a reorientation of one's life toward a new set of values" (157). For it is only in a post-conversion situation that one can be said to understand a religion from within.

The possibility of conversion does not guarantee the objective truth of one's new-found faith, however, because one can convert to any number of religions, and one can be converted out of religion as well. As John Fowler has shown in *Stages of Faith*, conversion has more to do with personal growth than with the contents of belief systems.

If you are looking to choose a new philosophy of religion text, this one is worth considering.

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