

it is written in a lively and engaging style. But the instructor who would choose it for the classroom should be aware that Steinberger subscribes to the view that meaning is reference, that is, the meaning of a word is what it refers to. Thus, if it can be shown that “God” refers to a conceptual impossibility, then talking about God is meaningless, whether one is a theist, an atheist, or an agnostic.

Along the way, S. gives us clues that he is not very conversant with things outside the analytic tradition, as when he reduces the causal argument for God to an argument from efficient causality (6–14), when he asserts that existing necessarily implies having been caused (57), and when he claims that Christianity according to Paul is a matter of “pure, blind, irrational faith” (15). Thus he does not consider the possibility that in speaking about God, people might be referring to beliefs that are internally consistent, to images and symbols found in a religious tradition, or to a reality encountered in spiritual experience.

From an Aristotelian-Thomistic perspective, one could say that S. succeeds in demonstrating that God is not to be found in the realm of contingent or proportionate being. In the end he admits that if the universe exists, “There *must* be an explanation” (163), but the explanation cannot be anything that can be conceptualized—which is what theistic philosophers have always contended, and what mystics take for granted.

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The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence. By Thomas Jay Oord. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015. Pp. 228. \$17.60.

This book proposes an open model of God’s providence that is centered around a theology of God’s love and denies God’s direct “control” over creation. O.’s primary contribution is to say that the love of God *essentially* “limits” God, thereby acquitting God of responsibility for evil in the world, since God is unable to coerce created beings in any way.

The author writes for a Christian audience, although he has atheists in mind. At the heart of the work is O.’s attempt to “solve” the problem of evil. He argues that both cosmic regularity and randomness are real. Science and self-observation indicate that God grants self-organization and agency to simpler entities, and genuine free will to humans.

O.’s writing style is lucid and accessible. His overview and critique of common models of God’s providence is helpful, yet he contentiously describes Aquinas’s primary/secondary causation schema as “an elaborate appeal to mystery” (104). O. opts for a model that embraces three ideas: God as relational being, the future as undetermined, and love as God’s chief attribute. O.’s proposed model, “essential kenosis,” maintains that the “self-giving” love of God revealed in Christ is “logically primary in God’s eternal essence” (159–60). God’s love makes it impossible for God to coerce human freedom or cosmic agency. Therefore, “God *cannot* unilaterally prevent genuine evil” (167).

But are we to assume, for instance, that God is more concerned with upholding the free will of the perpetrators of genocide than with the very lives of those massacred? One wonders if, according to O.'s model, God values more the ideal of cosmic and human autonomy than the flourishing of life. And what about Pharaoh's hardened heart? While O. still maintains the possibility of miracles, describing a miracle as a call from God to which creation must respond, it is hard to imagine why inorganic matter cooperates with God on only certain occasions. These criticisms notwithstanding, this book could function as a provocative introduction to the doctrine of God's providence for graduate students—one that will test traditional conceptions of God and raise a host of important related issues.

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Selon l'esprit de sainteté: Genèse d'une théologie systématique. By Christoph Theobald. Paris: Cerf, 2015. Pp. 539. €29.

Theobald is one of the most important living theologians in the French-speaking world. His latest book consists of 18 essays in systematic theology written over the previous years, most of which have been published in journals or edited volumes. The topics of this insightful book range from hermeneutics to ecclesiology, displaying the breadth of the theological output of the author. T. pursues in them the research he set forth in his acclaimed two-volume *Le Christianisme comme style* (2007), by exploring further ramifications of his leading theme of reading the Christian faith as a style—more than as content. T.'s notion of style has aesthetical roots, but unfolds in the fabric of life. This attention to style leads him to refer frequently to Vatican II, since that council epitomizes a radical change in theological style (we can think here of John W. O'Malley's analysis) and Christian living. T. is also a noted specialist of the history of the reception of Vatican II.

Despite the disparate quality of the various chapters, with their own focus, T. brings some cohesion by arranging these building blocks in an organic order. The first part, "fruitful ground," deals with the history of theology in the twentieth century, especially through Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and the exegete Alfred Loisy—a French favorite. The second part, "new paths," pertains to style, identity, tradition, and Christology. The final part, "compositions," is more particularly rooted in an interpretation of Scripture and touches upon such themes as the messiahship of Jesus, the Kingdom of God, and ecclesiology.

T.'s style is dense, replete with a strong philosophical apparatus in the German speculative tradition. The author displays deep knowledge of continental theological scholarship. This book allows the scholar to access in a single volume the most recent development of T.'s scholarship, but it could also constitute a challenging entry point into the theological universe of this original theologian.

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