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# Book reviews

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Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), pp. xvi + 314. £40.00.

Markus Bockmuehl has established a formidable reputation for his knowledge of primary sources in ancient Judaism, and for his deployment of these resources in interpretation of the NT. In this book he gathers seven essays published over the last decade, supplements these with two more on related themes, and weaves them together with judicious cross-referencing. Although this process creates some repetition, the collection is well cemented by its common concern to display the Jewish roots, and continuing Jewish character, of early Christian ethics.

The goal of these studies is 'to examine something of the moral logic of early Christian ethics' (p. vii) in the first two centuries of Christian history. The thesis is that 'the Jewish tradition of moral teaching for Gentiles, rooted ultimately in the Torah, consistently determined much of the substance of ethics in the mainstream of emerging Christian orthodoxy' (ibid.). This thesis is aligned to a broad consensus in recent NT scholarship on the 'Jewishness' of early Christianity, but Bockmuehl adds a special emphasis on the influence of 'halakhic' reasoning on Christian perceptions of the moral duties of Gentiles both inside and outside the Christian community. At the same time, he polemicises against 'antinomian' or 'quasi-Marcionite' readings of the NT (pp. 14, 33, 147) with his proposal that the Jewish law, and the legal tradition deriving from it, provided both moral rationale and specific moral content for the church, even when Christianity had become predominantly Gentile and propounded its ethics within a distinctively christological framework. It is the specificity of these claims that is the most provocative, and most vulnerable, aspect of this book. Few would deny that the general shape of many themes in early Christian ethics (for instance regarding idolatry, sex, property and charity) derives from a biblical foundation. But whether specifically 'halakhic' concerns (that is, the detailed practical application of *Jewish laws*) were of significance beyond the first, predominantly Jewish-Christian, generation is less clear.

In the first four essays, grouped under the title 'Christianity in the Land of Israel', Bockmuehl first surveys 'Halakhah and Ethics in the Jesus Tradition', before offering a close analysis of the Matthean divorce texts (illuminated by halakhah at Qumran) and the famous saying 'Let the dead bury their dead'



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(Matt 8:22; Luke 9.62). The fourth essay in this section contends that James intervened in the Antioch Dispute (Gal 2:11–14) because he considered the great Hellenistic–Roman city of Antioch to be technically part of the land of Israel (and thus subject to strict constraints on interaction between Jews and Gentiles). In all four essays, the NT texts are placed in the 'context' of halakhic discussions, so that even the most apparently radical of Jesus' sayings are argued to be at least 'analogous' to some position within the broad sweep of halakhic opinion. For instance, countering Hengel and others on Jesus' apparently shocking unconcern with the burial of parents, Bockmuehl tentatively suggests a parallel with Nazirite devotion to God (bolstered by slender 'Nazirite' motifs in the gospels). He concludes (p. 48):

> This paper has presented a moderate case for supposing that a broadly Nazirite symbolism may turn out to make acceptable sense of the saying's first-century Jewish setting. That setting may make it mean little more than, 'Come and follow me: those who are truly consecrated to God have more important things to do'.

Several features of this conclusion are puzzling. What does it mean to 'make acceptable sense of the saying's first-century Jewish setting'? If this means that the force of the saying may, in some early setting, have appeared to hearers to constitute a partial parallel to Nazirite commitments, it is striking that neither Matthew nor Luke makes any effort to place it in that comparative context. Thus putative Nazirite parallels played no detectable part in the transmission and moral weight of this saying in early Christianity (the topic of the book). The Gospels apparently disconnected this saying from the setting here proposed; it became influential in Christianity precisely in its removal from a halakhic context, not because of a continuing attachment to it. Thus the (possible original) 'setting' of the text cannot 'make it mean' anything: the question is what it meant in its present literary context, for readers of Matthew and Luke. Moreover, even if we were to grant the Nazirite echoes, the saying would be truly radical (and hardly captured by Bockmuehl's 'little more than . . . ' comment). One can scarcely imagine a more explosive claim than that following Jesus imposes demands as absolute as total consecration to God, and thus takes precedence over all other moral claims. Rabbinic parallels do not here lessen, but sharpen, the implied challenge to the authority of the law: on Bockmuehl's argument, Jesus' followers can claim as much exemption from the commandments of the law as Nazirites – but, since they are *not* truly Nazirites, their claim has no biblical or halakhic support!

Thus, if Jewish halakhic debate was *at the root* of some, even much, very early Christian moral reasoning, what distinguishes the developing Christian from rabbinic tradition is its *abandonment* of that legal framework, and its



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correlative reluctance to label itself 'Jewish' in the various senses (ethnic and cultural) owned by contemporary Jews. In this highly significant sense, the development of the Christian tree was not determined by the location of its roots. In the second section of this book ('Jewish and Christian Ethics for Gentiles') a long essay is devoted to showing that early Christian moral demands on its Gentile converts (e.g. in Paul's letters and in Acts 15) are related to what was later codified by the rabbis in various forms as 'Noachide commandments'. Bockmuehl is rightly careful here not to make sweeping claims: the Noachide commands were not explicitly codified until the second century CE at the earliest, and earlier Jewish material (for instance, Levitical laws for resident aliens, or *Jub.* 7) did not immediately coalesce into a coherent set of moral doctrines. Even so, Bockmuehl argues that Paul expected Gentile Christians to live by the Noachide laws, which provide 'an essential clue to the specific *rationale and content* of early Christian ethics, as well as its criteria of selection in the use of Old Testament laws' (p. 173, italics original). Once again this seems to push the evidence too far. Out of the mix of Jewish reflections on the 'basic morality' to be expected of Gentiles, the early Christians formulated some rules (without explicit reference to Noah or even to Leviticus), attuned to the problems of Christian communities whose members were of various cultures. Out of the same mix, at a later point in time, rabbis constructed legal rulings about contact with pagans in the land of Israel, which they supported, ingeniously, as primitive 'Noachide' commands. It is not clear that the parallel lines intersect even in the limited ways Bockmuehl suggests.

In fact, the main theme of this second section of the book is what Bockmuehl terms 'natural law'. This is, as Bockmuehl knows, a notoriously slippery concept, and his two long surveys of 'Natural Law in Second Temple Judaism' and 'Natural Law in the New Testament' are somewhat clouded by lack of clarity in the definition of the term; as a result they offer disappointingly loose collections of disparate material, snippets from a huge range of texts whose interests and moral logic are barely examined. Sometimes 'natural law' is here found in ethical material (not just laws) which contains an appeal to 'nature'. Sometimes it is related to Philo's highly specific claim that all the biblical laws match the structure of nature. And sometimes the label is applied to any moral rules that claim to be supported by 'universal consensus' or 'common sense'. With such conceptual instability – a problem evident also in the ancient discussions of this topic – the reader comes away less than clear about what, if anything, has been demonstrated.

In the final section of the book, two essays on 'The Development of Public Ethics', Bockmuehl explores the ways in which the early Christian movement stumbled towards the development of a 'public discourse' in which its moral



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claims could be defended and explained 'in terms relevant and accessible to outsiders' (p. 229). An interesting essay surveys Christian efforts in this direction, giving some attention to the NT (perhaps not enough to Luke and 1 Peter) before offering more detailed case studies of Aristides and *The Letter of Diognetus*. Bockmuehl's strengths are here well deployed, in close scrutiny of texts and in the use of a broad range of parallel material. The discussion invites many supplementary questions. How do the strategies of these texts compare with early Jewish apologetics, in which many of the same virtues are differently packaged in the categories of 'law' and 'constitution' (terms either absent in Christian apologetics or deployed with diluted meaning)? How do these Christian authors negotiate the complex and contested terrain of moral and religious discourse of the Greco-Roman world? And how did the sometimes pretentious claims of early Christian texts relate to the social practices of real Christian communities?

Bockmuehl touches on such questions, but hardly in sufficient depth to forward his larger project – to utilise the development of early Christian public morality in a contemporary context. In his introduction, Bockmuehl expresses his hope that these 'preliminary' studies might contribute to the formation of contemporary Christian approaches to 'public ethics'. Perhaps so, though the raw material here surveyed surely requires the application of analytical tools which have been developed in studies of cultural interactions, especially the strategic self-insertion of minority groups into the discourse of dominant cultures. Moreover, as Bockmuehl is no doubt aware, claims that Christian ethics are 'universal' or 'natural' are deeply problematic in our postmodern context, and the advancement of Christian public morality will surely have to proceed on terms very different to those deployed by the first Christians, even if some of their tactics can be imitated.

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*HymnQuest* 2.3 (CD ROM) (Stainer and Bell, 2003), £65.00.

*HymnQuest* was first launched at the Christian Resources exhibition in 2000 and immediately established itself as a very useful tool for worship leaders and others responsible for choosing hymns for services. Expanded and improved annually, this latest incarnation includes on a singe CD ROM the first lines of over 27,600 hymns and choruses, the full texts of more than 17,600 hymns and details of over 15,800 tunes.

Those using *HymnQuest* can quickly establish in which books a particular hymn can be found, the biblical passages to which it alludes and, in many



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cases, details about the author. A metrical index allows an appropriate tune to be selected and tunes can also be accessed by title and through their opening notes, allowing users to search for a melody by playing it on screen through a virtual keyboard feature. The standard version allows the printing and copying of all texts that are in the public domain and 7,000 that are in copyright but can be copied by following requirements set out on screen. Those holding a current Christian Copyright Licence can obtain a copyright users' edition for an annual subscription of £36 which allows virtually all the texts to be copied. All printing and copying is automatically logged so that users can look up which texts were used on a given occasion or over specific periods.

As well as proving enormously valuable to all concerned with choosing hymns for worship, this superb resource should assist the welcome trend towards more academic research in the field of hymnody. Students will find the indexes of biblical references and themes particularly useful, although the latter is not quite as comprehensive as it might be. I was surprised to find, for example, that John Henry Newman's classic 'Lead, kindly light', surely one of the greatest poetic expressions of doubt-filled faith (or faith-filled doubt), does not appear in the list of hymns associated with the theme of doubt. I suspect that this is because the word 'doubt' does not itself occur within its lines. The thematic index seems to depend heavily, although not exclusively, on a doubtless computer-assisted process of word identification. Thus, the themes extrapolated from 'Lead, kindly light' are angel, home, journey, lead, light and enlightenment, night, power, pride, repentance and years.

It is asking a lot, I know, but this is one area that the compilers of *HymnQuest*, led by the redoubtable Alan Luff, might look at when working on future editions. It would be good to have broader themes reflected beyond those that are explicitly mentioned in the texts of hymns. This is a small quibble, however. The compilers of *HymnQuest* have put liturgists and theologians enormously in their debt by their Herculean labours. Thanks to them, we can begin to give serious study and recognition to what has always been something of a Cinderella subject in the realm of practical theology.

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Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 286. £37.50.

This is a very good book, but it isn't an easy read – as one should expect in a book about that most difficult of geniuses, Benedict de Spinoza. As



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Richard Mason makes abundantly clear, the word 'genius' properly applies to Spinoza because he is so unclassifiable: not quite a rationalist, not quite a pantheist, not quite a deist, not quite a theist, not quite a loyal son of the Enlightenment. My first response to this book was eagerly to reread Spinoza's *Ethics* – not, alas, a course of action that offers rapid elucidation! A difficult genius.

Mason does not miss the essential point made by everyone who knows Spinoza well, and recently in the finest style by Jonathan Israel in his *Radical Enlightenment*, that in Spinoza we have a wholly radical and revolutionary way of seeing God and the world. 'Atheism' or 'pantheism' are inadequate terms to describe this radical theology.

Of course, as Mason indicates *passim*, Spinoza – as a Jew expelled from the synagogue for obscure reasons, and as one who subsequently found himself very loosely attached to fringe Christian groups – was less unconcerned to present himself as an orthodox theist: the desperate contortions of Leibniz in order not to offend state Lutheranism did not cross Spinoza's mind. His freethinking shows itself, for example, in scorn for any view of eternal life bound up with rewards or punishments experienced by an individual person in an afterlife. Similarly, the separation of God and necessary truths, and in particular consideration of their respective *chicken and egg* priority (so delicate a matter for Descartes and Leibniz), was not remotely interesting for Spinoza, for whom there was a near-identification between them. Indeed (although this is not *quite* a true representation of Spinoza), this identification of God and necessary propositions in the universe is a better statement of the nature of God than any identification of God with objects in the universe. Asking 'Does God exist?' is like asking 'Does what must exist exist?' and is not a productive question in religion or science.

Similarly too, Spinoza's basic and rudimentary biblical analysis and exegesis – superficially radical in his *Theological-Political Treatise* (not a work I was impelled to reread having read Mason!) – is almost boringly uncontroversial now. Everyone except the intellectually irresponsible accepts that Moses did not write all of the Pentateuch, and we readily accept that religion is an essentially particular anthropological phenomenon. Spinoza had no Robespierrist delusions about creating a universal Cult of the Supreme Being for the modern age. He accepted that religion was bound to be particular to culture, and as such his interest in it was non-critical – the only way of 'ranking' religions was according to their moral validations. This much is easy on the 21st-century ear. Where Spinoza is dissonant is in his theological method, which is wholly to identify mathematical and physical questions with divine questions.



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This idea takes a little absorbing. Let us see the whole of human epistemological experience as a layered angel cake – and this is possible as an exercise even if our instinct since Descartes to occupy ourselves with questions of knowledge and certainty is simply laid aside, as Spinoza certainly does. Our cake will have a substantial middle layer, that concerning true beliefs about and knowledge of the universe. We are correctly and usefully accustomed to seeing this thick layer as pertaining to science and its developing experimental methods. On top of this thick scientific layer rests a thinner but creamier topping. This layer will not add a jot to our epistemological quest because it concerns only our best religious and ethical practice. Unlike the *one size fits all* scientific middle layer, this top layer will come in a variety of religious flavours, depending on the particular background and culture of the individual baker. The entire business of the traditions of a religion falls within this layer.

For Spinoza, theological questions – if they are to be considered questions about truth rather than tradition – will not connect with the top layer but only with the thick middle layer. His unusual move (surely cleverer than Newton's, who transferred the recipe and vocabulary of the top layer into the middle) was to see the middle layer as theological *and* scientific at the same time and without confusion – perhaps analogously to the way that he cut the Gordian knot of Descartes's mind–body problem by taking them as the same substance seen under two complementary and simultaneous descriptions.

It is this move that confuses the modern atheist, who is used to the epistemological denigration of the top layer as unimportant matters of obedience to tradition, psychological comfort and the assertion of values: the *obedientia Dei*. It is Spinoza's insistence that the middle layer of fact will of itself and unmysteriously produce the *amor Dei intellectualis* that surprises. This isn't Newton speculating about the application of the prophecies of the book of Daniel to astronomy; it is Spinoza redefining the entire business of modern science as being the same as the entire business of theological knowledge and insight. This is an astonishing theological position: theology without mumbo-jumbo.

The usual religious response is to throw up hands in horror at the insult offered to God's ordained institutions by this relegation to mere cream topping status. The problem with this response is that it isn't clear that the cream topping can belong anywhere else epistemologically – Newton is at his utterly least convincing when importing God's providential miraculous intervention to correct the mathematical misalignment of planetary orbits. Science doesn't need theology *in that way*.



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A cleverer critique, though one outside the scope of Mason's book, is to insist that the cake that Spinoza has baked is missing a layer at the bottom, a foundational, metaphysical layer without which the solid, useful scientific material lies forlornly stranded. As things stand, Spinoza's middle layer of science-is-theology has to do all the explanatory work in a framework which excludes the assignation of intrinsic purpose to human life and history – Spinoza detested final causes. Without a foundational layer at the bottom of our epistemological cake, we are left having to *presume* that the world is properly intelligible to us and in certain rational ways. But we know that the murder took place because the victim's father hated him and stabbed him, and not because the gods wished it, nor because Caesar invaded Britain in 55 BC. And our explanation isn't true by chance, and it is decipherable. It took a Leibniz to explain better than Spinoza did how this foundational metaphysical layer arriving at optimal explicative 'fit' needed to function. But the necessary motive of creation is another story.

Even as it stands, Spinoza's conflation of the respective roles of religion and science should still exert a powerful nonsense-free pull on organised theism. Facts are ascertained by scientific enquiry; values are asserted by religious bodies and traditions. Above all, the process of knowledge formation is itself the business of theology, the achievement of the intellectual love of God more than of obedience to God through moral insight or ritual practice. This brave new theology still needs to be heard. Armed with a copy of the *Ethics* and Mason's book, we can begin to hear it effectively.

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John E. Costello, *John Macmurray: A Biography* (Edinburgh: Floris, 2002), pp. 436. £20.00.

John Costello has provided the first full-scale biography of John Macmurray (1891–1976), a philosopher who is described by the publishers as 'perhaps the last of the great Scottish humanists'. This well-written book will no doubt in the future be an essential starting point for students of Macmurray's philosophy, for it provides a general and authoritative introduction to Macmurray's philosophy and its development, set within a rich and sensitive account of Macmurray's life as a whole.

John Macmurray is known to theologians as a personalist philosopher who taught that men and women were constituted and flourish as persons in fellowship with others. In this guise Macmurray's work has found an affinity with those who wish to make 'community' a leading theme of



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their theology. Thus thinkers such as Gunton have drawn on Macmurray in their discussions of the social trinity, whilst Macmurray's epistemological approach played a formative role in T. F. Torrance's seminal work *Theological Science* and in the later work of John Baillie. But whilst Macmurray has long been a theological footnote, it is arguable that few theologians have fully appreciated that Macmurray was himself a religious philosopher, whose contributions to anthropology and epistemology were part of his larger project to articulate a radical religious metaphysics. Costello shows that one condition of this project was that Macmurray had a more capacious understanding of philosophy than was current in his day. Not for him the narrow constraints of linguistic analysis! He argued, in a way reminiscent of the Idealist philosophers of the 19th and early 20th centuries, that philosophy was concerned with constructing a metaphysical framework within which to understand human culture and knowledge as a whole. Macmurray encapsulated this understanding in his maxim that philosophy ought to be a kind of natural theology! Costello comments insightfully that Macmurray's philosophy was only 'specialist' in its 'anti-specialism'. And, indeed, it is, in part, the breadth of Macmurray's synthetic vision that makes him a thinker who will be of interest to theologians.

Costello makes clear that Macmurray's philosophy cannot be separated from his personal life history. Macmurray was brought up in a religiously conservative family. Whilst he started to depart from traditional Christianity as early as his student days in Glasgow, yet his work throughout can be characterised as an attempt to articulate the 'essential' message of Christ in a way that he deemed relevant to contemporary life. Towards the end of his life Macmurray, in a moving letter to his mother, summed up his life's work by saying that he had been guided throughout by 'loyalty . . . to the Lord Jesus'. There can be no doubt that Macmurray understood his work as religious from beginning to end! Costello suggests that the form that that work took was set by Macmurray's experience of the Great War and the profound impact on him of his friendships and loves.

Macmurray's encounter with death and chaos on the Western Front led him to conclude that Western society was morally and religiously bankrupt. It also suggested to him that the key problem that needed to be addressed was that of human fellowship. As time went on Macmurray elaborated this thought by arguing that the intellectual crisis facing Western society was that of how to think of the human self in such a way as to make sense of both human individuality *and* interdependence. Macmurray identified the particular form that this problem took in the West as having arisen from the cogito of Descartes and the organic thinking of the Romantics. His solution to the problem was to argue that it was only as people lived as persons in



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fellowship, motivated by selfless love or friendship, that they could flourish as human beings and discover true freedom. For Macmurray, this perspective was both a scientific fact and the essential insight of Jesus. Indeed, Macmurray argued that the function of Christianity – shades of Durkheim here – was precisely the cultivation of personal relationships characterised by self-giving love, forgiveness and freedom, which were, in principle, universal and inclusive. In analysing how religion might achieve this, Macmurray stressed the role of religious ritual. Religion, for Macmurray, fulfilled its function at those points where it actually brought people together and reinforced their sense that they 'belonged together'. This is not to say, of course, that religious belief was unimportant for Macmurray, only that its importance was relative to its role in the cultivation of fellowship. In this regard, Macmurray argued that the Hebrew belief in a personal God who was active in history to realise his purposes was an essential postulate of the existence of communities that were open and inclusive, having overcome fear with love.

It is a strength of Costello's work that he is able to skilfully show the relationship between Macmurray's personal life and his philosophical work. Drawing extensively on unpublished letters, Costello tentatively establishes that the themes that were elaborated in Macmurray's mature thought were rooted in his experience as far back as his school days in Aberdeen. Particularly important was the deep love that Macmurray came to share with Betty, whom he met in 1911 and married in 1916. As for many another, Macmurray's experience of love taught him the transforming and liberating effect of human fellowship. This lesson formed the thread that held together the whole of Macmurray's work and which was given its most memorable expression in the dictum, found in his Gifford Lectures in the 1950s, that 'All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship'. In a somewhat similar vein, Macmurray wrote in his old age that the lesson that he had learnt was that 'it is always people who matter, everything else matters comparatively little'. The open marriage that the Macmurrays shared also taught him about the struggles of living in a relationship marked by freedom and equality. It was through the struggle to live out his, somewhat Lawrencian, belief in emotional sincerity that Macmurray came to learn more of trust, humility, sensitivity and mutuality, which were for him the essential contours of a personal relationship and virtues that religion exists to explore and promote.

Costello's book is a rich resource for those interested in Macmurray. It provides the basis for at least a partial understanding of the provenance of Macmurray's work. It is particularly strong in exploring the influence of Marx and Karl Polanyi on Macmurray. It is not, however, without its limitations. It is somewhat weak on the early philosophical influences on Macmurray. This



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reviewer would have liked, for instance, to know more about the influence of A. D. Lindsay on Macmurray during his time at Balliol prior to the Great War. The convergence between Lindsay and Macmurray on a number of issues suggests a relation, but Costello does not explore this in any detail. What, moreover, were the connections between Macmurray and the Scottish Commonsense School, not to mention American Pragmaticism? The book is also relatively uncritical. Costello is too willing to acquiesce in Macmurray's apparently reductive view of religion and in his stereotyping of analytical philosophy as arid and narrow. Arguably, if Macmurray had adopted a less jaundiced view of the dominant 20th-century tradition in philosophy, his work might well have exhibited greater rigour and interesting links may well have surfaced between his own criticisms of the Cartesian self and those of Wittgenstein and others. Too often Costello perpetuates Macmurray's own prejudices without a second glance – his visceral condemnation of what he called his 'presbyterian incubus' is a case in point. Costello accepts at face value Macmurray's intuition that the emotional frigidity that he felt was a result of his upbringing in a notionally Calvinist setting. Costello also suggests that Macmurray's distrust of the mystical tradition was also the outcome of Scottish religion! The book could also have benefited from some forceful editing: at 445 pages it is overlong. Too often the reader gets mired in the mundane details of Macmurray's garden, illnesses and holidays! But overall a book worth reading and a writer worth reassessing!

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Nicholas Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. xviii + 234. £16.95.

Over the last quarter-entury, theologians have suggested a variety of ways in which the claim that God acts in the world might be defended on scientific grounds. Given the sheer number of accounts now on the table, as well as the technical difficulties faced by non-specialists in assessing the science involved, Nicholas Saunders's omprehensive review of the main proposals represents a valuable (and accessible) contribution to the debate.

Unlike many other contemporary treatments of divine action, Saunders's nalysis of various positions is not set against the background of his own constructive proposal. While this fact is in itself no guarantee of objectivity, it does reflect the degree to which a central concern in *Divine Action and Modern Science* is the highlighting of basic conceptual issues that are often elided in more openly partisan approaches. Saunders begins by claiming that special



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(i.e. spatio-temporally particularised) divine action (SDA) constitutes a non-negotiable feature of Christian theology, arguing that where such a belief is lacking (as in the thought of Maurice Wiles), the logic of Christian devotion is undercut. Just as importantly, he insists that claims for SDA must include a scientifically plausible account of its causal mechanism if divine acts are to be meaningfully distinguished from natural events.

Saunders goes on to note that a further feature of contemporary theological defences of SDA is the principle that divine action does not entail the violation or suspension of natural laws, on the grounds that such 'interventionism' would render God inconsistent and arbitrary. While noting that any assessment of whether a given account of SDA satisfies this non-interventionist criterion depends upon which particular interpretation of physical laws one adopts, Saunders leaves little doubt that the statistical character of scientific language leaves ample conceptual room for theological reflection. The challenge lies in making a case for SDA in terms of particular physical theories, and here Saunders suggests that theological developments to date are not especially promising.

The key to a non-interventionist account of SDA lies in identifying loci of ontological openness or indeterminism in the natural order. The three areas that have been regarded as most promising in this regard are quantum interactions, chaotic systems and emergent (or whole-part) models of causation. While Saunders examines all three, the bulk of his energies are devoted to the theories of divine action at the quantum level offered by writers like Nancey Murphy, Robert Russell and Thomas Tracy. Though the analysis is very detailed and constitutes the most technically demanding part of the book, the upshot of Saunders's analysis is twofold: first, making the case for genuine ontological (as opposed to merely epistemological) indeterminacy at the quantum level is far more complicated than many accounts suggest; second, none of the various accounts of non-interventionist SDA at the quantum level hold up, even if quantum indeterminacy is granted ontological status.

Saunders's treatment of chaos theory and whole-part causation are far briefer, but no less critical. While he defends John Polkinghorne's use of chaos theory as a support for SDA against certain lines of criticism, he also suggests that this approach may suffer from a fatal conceptual incoherence in its use of the deterministic mathematics of chaos as the basis for describing what Polkinghorne takes to be the essentially indeterministic character of reality. And while Saunders concedes that Arthure Peacocke's model of whole-part causation is free of the conceptual confusions plaguing quantum and chaos theories of SDA, he also notes that it remains highly speculative – as well as drifting close to the kind of subsumption of SDA under general providence that Saunders objects to in Wiles.



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Saunders's final assessment is mixed. While he views all the options reviewed as inadequate in their current form, in each case he holds out some hope that future scientific discoveries may improve matters. He clearly believes that *some* such account of divine causation must be developed if Christianity is to remain credible in the long run. Yet the weight given the criterion of divine intervention in assessing possible candidates betrays a competitive vision of the relationship between divine and creaturely activity as fundamental to the whole analysis. Though this kind of zero-sum perspective has dominated theology in the modern period, it is probably worth taking more notice than Saunders does of how little it corresponds to the views of Augustine, Thomas or the Reformers.

The whole idea of divine intervention only makes sense if action on God's part is understood to preclude or displace creaturely activity. As Kathryn Tanner (whose work is noticeably absent from Saunders's otherwise very comprehensive bibliography) has argued, such an assumption accords very poorly with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, according to which divine action is the source of all created reality – including all created causes. Taking up this perspective demands a far more robust understanding of divine transcendence than either Saunders or his various interlocutors appears willing to entertain, but it would render the hard-won conclusions of this book far less theologically worrisome.

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Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 40; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. xxxiv + 564. €99.00.

Margaret M. Mitchell's *The Heavenly Trumpet* is a welcome addition to scholarship, in the area of patristics as well as Pauline studies. The purpose of the study according to Mitchell is to 'collect abundant depictions of Paul found in Chrysostom's writings, and to analyze them both as rhetorical products of late fourth-century Christian oratory, and as hermeneutical tools for biblical interpretation in that context'. The book highlights how Chrysostom like his contemporaries modified and employed prevalent Greco-Roman conventions of verbal portraiture of a person through epithets, encomia and *ekphraseis*. Although the emphasis of this book is on appreciating Chrysostom's versatile eloquence and oratorical skills in bringing his favourite saint to life and how this can add to or influence contemporary Pauline scholarship, it tends to get bogged down in the dissection of his



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works through the employment of the tools of historical rhetorical analysis, thus diminishing his main focus: the Christian edification of his audience.

This book contains eight chapters with useful appendices. Chapter 1 highlights the historical significance of Chrysostom as an interpreter of Paul. Margaret Mitchell rightly notes that he deals 'with the same hermeneutical questions with which current Pauline scholars are preoccupied: the historical setting of each letter, the interpretative relationship between the particularity of the letters and their universal enshrinement in the canon, and the perennial question: is Paul consistent?' Chapter 2 looks at the hermeneutical framework of these verbal portraits. Chrysostom's author-centred hermeneutics are examined in the context of his overall view of scripture, Greco-Roman epistolary theory and in the ancient theory of *mimesis* (learning by imitation). Chapter 3 is a gallery of miniature Pauline portraits and deals with title portraits or epithets of Paul ('The teacher of the world' being the most frequently employed epithet for Paul by Chrysostom). Chapter 4 covers Chrysostom's full-scale *ekphraseis* (painting in words or an oral restaging) of Paul's body. Mitchell concludes that the *ekphraseis* was an imaginative way to 'reassemble and recompose a Paul for public viewing who both legitimates and explicates his own text, and exemplifies the virtues Chrysostom seeks his audience to emulate'. Chapter 5 is an analysis of Chrysostom's portraits of Paul's soul from his homilies in the series *De laudibus sancta Pauli* (In Praise of St Paul). Paul is viewed as an archetype of virtue and this is Chrysostom's predominant concern in these homilies as he sketches these encomia with catechetical purposes in mind. Whereas the previous two chapters are devoted to Chrysostom's encomiastic portraits of Paul's body and his soul, the focus of Chapter 6, the largest in the book, is biographical in nature. Mitchell garners Chrysostom's portraits of Paul's life circumstances from a vast array of his oeuvre that highlight Paul's ancestry, ethnicity, native land, parentage, rearing, education, profession, conversion, Christian life, etc. These 'external circumstances' as they were referred to in ancient rhetorical handbooks are thoroughly analysed in Chrysostom's panegyrics to Paul. Mitchell's analyses reveal that Chrysostom was much more versatile and ingenious in his inventiveness in regard to the prevalent epideictic and rhetorical conventions of his day than he was acknowledged to be in previous scholarship. Chapter 7 investigates the wider historiographical implications of Chrysostom's rhetorical depictions of Paul. Mitchell notes that Chrysostom's collection of writing does not contain a single *vita* of Paul. She maintains that he was first and foremost a preacher, and that the homily is not the right genre for a *vita*. Secondly, Chrysostom regarded the book of Acts and the Pauline letters as having filled that void. The author maintains that the 'reason John does not hunt down a "historical Paul" as



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moderns understand that quest is that he does not experience the same kind of historical distance from his subject they do'. The final chapter is a comparison of Chrysostom's verbal portraiture of the apostle with his Latin contemporary Augustine. The person of Paul also played an influential role in different stages of Augustine's life, from his Manichean period to his early Christian period, and therefore exerted a considerable influence on his theology. Mitchell then proceeds to review author-centred interpretations of Paul in current scholarship and argues that Chrysostom's 'love hermeneutics' (a hermeneutic based on admiration for the author, which Mitchell does maintain has its own disadvantages) addresses issues that have been neglected in contemporary Pauline scholarship. Mitchell claims that Chrysostom by his example underscores a crucial hermeneutical issue – the disposition of the reader for the author, Paul, which plays an influential role in the interpretative enterprise. As mentioned earlier, the appendices are practical and interesting: the first appendix is an English translation of Chrysostom's seven sermons *De laudibus sancta Pauli* and the second is a collection of plates (artistic images) of Chrysostom and his favourite saint, Paul. The legend of Paul inspiring Chrysostom with his exegetical suggestions in person, first recorded by Chrysostom's 7th-century biographer George of Alexandria, are well captured in some of the iconographical images.

In conclusion, *The Heavenly Trumpet* is a well-written book that seeks to build a hermeneutical bridge between patristics and Pauline studies. Mitchell rightly maintains that Chrysostom's engagement with Paul in his epideictic discourses is indeed a useful reminder to

> contemporary academic writers on Paul [that they] must first seek, no less than John did, to entice their audiences into listening to Paul and attending to his person and ideas, even before they proffer particular interpretations. And these audiences are lured by media and insistent voices every bit as tempting as the theatre and racetrack of the Antiochenes with which John aggressively competed.

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