

the extreme. According to Ovey, Barth's claim that "God is the one God in threefold repetition" (*CD I/1*, 350) "obliterates distinction both as between Father and Son, but also as between Son and Spirit" (226–27), to the point where it makes the Spirit "another Son" (227) and the Son "a repetition of the Father" (226). Although this is an odd reading of Barth, many have detected modalist tendencies in his trinitarian theology. Ovey's critique goes much further than most, however; in his view theologians must talk of "three divine subjects" (230).

Barth's refusal to engage in apologetics, using natural theology and metaphysics, is perceived as wrongheaded by Sebastian Rehnman, who writes that "in the traditional sense, 'right reason' is faith seeking understanding of revelation by means of metaphysics and logic" (82). To him, Barth "failed to profit from the thinking of the fathers and the scholastics in maintaining and defending the truth of Christianity" (82). Rehnman does not attempt to understand why Barth was not interested in metaphysics, apologetics, and in classical theism. Rather, he concludes "that Barth's sense of mystery is not only untraditional but also invalid. For the church claims that mysteries are comprehensible insofar as they are revealed, but incomprehensible insofar as they are not revealed" (83). Reading this strange either/or, Augustine's expression comes to mind: "Si comprehendis, non est Deus" (*Sermo* 52.16; PL 38.360). One would also expect greater clarity from Rehnman who is himself so taken with human logic. Instead, one reads: "God's knowing actualization of himself actualizes all that is divine as well as the actualization that the knowing actualization of himself is identical to himself" (74).

For the most part the book clearly practices a "courteous and critical engagement with Barth" (19) while also revealing a deep uneasiness with him. Where many in the Reformed tradition felt liberated by Barth's theology of (inclusive) grace, this volume is a reminder that some find in Scripture a very different representation of the "final things" and of God.

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SOPHIA: THE HIDDEN CHRIST OF THOMAS MERTON. By Christopher Pramuk. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2009. Pp. xxx + 322. \$29.95.

Pramuk has written an audacious, radical, and ultimately inspiring book. Audaciously, he takes on the complex and controversial task of translating Merton's richly literary and poetic writings into theology. In doing so, he calls Christians, and especially Christian theologians, radically to deepen or repossess the mystical sources for their life and work. The result is an inspiring invitation to find new and deeper meaning in both doctrine and practice.

P. focuses on the last years of Merton's life—from 1958 to 1968, the period of his "awakening to Sophia." Illuminating and deepening the unitive, nondualistic quality of Merton's spirituality, Sophia became for him "the eros of God become one with creation, . . . the vision of all things caught up

in the life story of God 'from the beginning'" (xxvii; unless otherwise indicated citations are Merton's words), "the kenosis of God, coming to birth in all things" (132). With abundant and convincing detail, P. identifies and interweaves the varied influences that stirred and guided Merton to identify Sophia as a focal symbol for his own spirituality, influences such as D. T. Suzuki, Maximus Confessor, Boris Pasternak, and especially the Russian Orthodox theologians, Valdimir Soloviev and Sergius Bulgakov. But it is *Hagia Sophia*, Merton's 1962 prose poem, that best depicts—with luscious poetic abandon—the pivotal place that Sophia assumed in Merton's later spirituality and theology. That poem is, in P.'s estimation, "Merton's most lyrical expression of 'Christ being born into the whole world'" (193), a lyric symbol of "God's anthropology" (133).

Throughout its six chapters, but especially in its first and last, the book invites theologians to embrace a more sophiological practice of their trade, that is, a theology that originates from and constantly returns to one's own and the community's mystical experience of Sophia, or God's birthing in one's self and in the world. With Merton, the theologian will recognize that "belief begins, not in the notion or concept, but in the image and symbol" that there must always be "a poetic dimension of theological thinking" (73), with the symbolic opening an awareness that can and must be engaged even by rational reflection. If it is the function of symbols "to manifest a union that *already exists but is not fully realized*" (67), the theologian's handmaiden role is to nurture that fuller realization, but a realization that, as P. repeats, can never move totally beyond the symbolic or analogical. Here he draws on John Henry Newman and Abraham Heschel to confirm Merton's insistence on the centrality of symbol and poetry for all theological endeavors: "all our language about Almighty God, so far as it is affirmative, is analogical and figurative" (Newman, 52); all theological language, like Biblical language, is "not less but *more than literally true*" (Heschel, 59).

Especially when P. explores the christological implications of a theology grounded in the experience of Sophia, his interpretation of Merton becomes exciting and perhaps disturbing. It is a Christology based much more on the ongoing experience of oneness with Christ than on the latest findings, or controversies, about the historical Jesus. The theologian speaks not only, and not primarily, of what s/he has studied, but of what s/he has experienced. The Christ witnessed in the New Testament becomes "the Reality within our own reality, the Being within our being, the life of our life"; "He is ourself" (179, 182). Such a knowing of Christ, then, provides the theologian with a lens enabling him/her to perceive the nonduality between God and all creation. In P.'s words, "Merton models a way of knowing, centered in Christ, that positively expects to find God's presence 'at play' in every corner of reality to which we humbly give ourselves over" (128). P. makes clear that Sophia, incarnated in the man Jesus, is for Merton "the hidden Christ" that stirs and seeks expression within the course of both natural and human history.

Such a Sophia-Christology freed Merton to both engage in and be shaped by his intense dialogue with other religions. What P. suggests of Merton's

interpretation of Vatican II's statements on Judaism (as expressed in his correspondence with Heschel) might apply to Merton's implicit theology of other religions: he was moving beyond a fulfillment model (112).

P. sometimes overwhelms the reader with piled-up quotations, from both Merton and secondary sources, and with multiple branching interpretations of one text or theme. But in the end, I agreed with what at first I thought was the hyperbolic blurb by Lawrence Cunningham on the book's jacket: "Pramuk's work is far and away the most sophisticated theological study ever done on the writings of Thomas Merton." Sophisticated but, even more, inspiring.

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EDUCATORS IN THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION. Edited by John L. Elias and Lucinda A. Nolan. Fairfield, Conn.: Sacred Heart University, 2009. Pp. viii + 336. \$29.95.

In separate chapters, the volume surveys Catholic contributors to the field of education, particularly American Catholic education. The contributors discussed are John Lancaster Spaulding, Edward Pace, Thomas E. Shields, George Johnson, Virgil Michel, M. Rosalia Walsh, Jacques Maritain, Neil McCluskey, and Mary Perkins Ryan. Its concluding biography spotlights Gerard Sloyan, the great American educator to whom so many contemporary Catholics owe so much, and to whom the collection is dedicated. The volume is both a fascinating survey of these educational leaders and a helpful, clear summary of American Catholic history as seen through their eyes.

Two themes running through these reflections on Catholic educators are especially notable. First, each leader embodies and reflects Catholicism's encounter with the wider American culture, ranging from the late 1800s down to the post-Vatican II and post-post-Vatican II eras. Particularly enlightening is John Elias's portrait of Thomas Edward Shields (1862–1921), a professor of philosophy and education at the Catholic University of America from 1902 to 1921. Removed as a "dullard" from school at the age of nine but then educated by his parish priest, he joined Saint Thomas Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and was ordained in 1891. Sent by Archbishop John Ireland to study psychology at Johns Hopkins, he spent his life introducing Catholics to the value of empirical research, even for those teaching religion. A truly remarkable man, in 1911 he founded *The Catholic Educational Review*, and in 1917 he published *Philosophy of Education*. The other nine essays similarly reflect the interaction between a particular educator and American culture, but also between the American Catholic community on the one hand and those wider movements in the Catholic world on the other, especially the liturgical, biblical, kerygmatic, and catechetical movements that emanated from Europe and that led to Vatican II. The essays both nicely trace the continuities and discontinuities that shook American educators and portray the painful reorientation