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BOOK REVIEWS

Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life. By Allen Verhey. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002. Pages, xii + 526. Cloth, \$35.00.

Reviewed by William C. Spohn
Santa Clara University

In an era of increasing academic specialization it often seems that it would require a committee of scholars to bring the wisdom of Scripture to bear on complex contemporary moral problems. In this excellent book Allen Verhey, professor of theology at Hope College, Michigan, ably demonstrates that it is still possible for a single person to accomplish this daunting task. He combines the textual knowledge of an exegete, the analytical skills of a moral philosopher, and the patient diplomacy of an engaged church member with detailed knowledge of policy issues. In his earlier work *The Great Reversal*, he explored the ethics within the New Testament texts. Here he shows how New Testament and some Old Testament material can guide faithful reflection on health care and sickness, chastity and gender issues, justice and economics, and finally, the world of politics.

Verhey sets up a mutually illuminating interplay between the biblical narratives and these issues, but always as a person of faith and member of a believing community. Although he is careful to set the contemporary questions clearly, his reflection

is anchored in the stories of Scripture and a deeply christological faith. He does ethics “by way of reminder” of who Jesus was and how the early communities remembered him in their contexts. Remembering Jesus is a practice of loyalty on the part of today’s Body of Christ because the story of Jesus is constitutive of their identity and determinative for their discernment. The only way to discover how to be practically committed to Jesus’ cause, the reign of God, is by returning in prayerful memory to his story while having a firm grasp of the facts. He lets familiar passages speak with a freshness and urgency that must have come from prayerful reading as much as from careful exegesis. For instance, he considers the problem of access to health care from a distinctive angle: Is it possible for Americans to be Good Samaritans today? Not without getting involved in public policy. Acting with neighborly love means talking justly through institutional reforms, not just acting in private generosity.

Since ethics is about remembering who we are in Christ, the greatest danger is forgetfulness. Verhey focuses on areas where Christian communities are tempted to forget who they are and let other stories guide their discernment. As we struggle to be liberated from patriarchal control, is there any room for chastity and sexual fidelity? In a prosperous culture dominated by the market place, is accumulation of property or generosity the way to secure a future that fits with “God’s good future”? What do sickness and dying mean to those

who follow Christ crucified and risen when we have increasing technological control over life and death?

Scripture does not provide rules to answer these issues but it can form a community in attitudes of generosity, hope, and compassion that are faithful to the story and stories of Jesus. Verhey stops short of specific plans of action in the conviction that only specific communities of faith can do that. He calls for communities of serious moral discourse who will deliberate openly in order to discern what actions and policies will fit with who they are called to be as disciples of Jesus. There is much for those communities to learn from nonreligious sources, but not a civic “moral Esperanto” that will obscure who they are and whose cause they serve.

A Catholic reader will be struck by the congregational focus of Verhey’s recommended practices of moral discourse and discernment, as well as their American flavor. Although a mainstream theologian, Verhey belongs to a Dutch Reformed polity that incorporates some democratic elements into its structure. What a contrast to the current Catholic *magisterium*, where an aging and defensive Vatican dictates that many moral questions simply cannot be discussed. When moral dialogue does occur, it usually happens among the hierarchy and seems to be controlled by past magisterial statements rather than by reference to the story of Jesus. A worldwide Church polity with an active magisterium can speak for the world’s poor more forcefully than might occur in Verhey’s relatively prosperous midwestern location.

We must ask, however, whether any Catholic parish or diocese today can be a community of genuinely open discourse and serious moral discernment. Are parishes too large and too diverse to manage such conversations? Local churches as well as scholars and seminarians have

much to learn from the model of moral reflection presented so well in this work. The teaching role of the American Catholic bishops is likely to shrink now that their credibility has been greatly diminished by the ongoing scandals in the Church. It may be time for the rest of us to remember Jesus and discern what to do as the local Body of Christ.

**Surviving in a Material World:
The Lived Experience of People in
Poverty.** By Ronald Paul Hill. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001. Pages, 184. Cloth, \$22.95.

*Reviewed by Patricia Lamoureux
St. Mary’s Seminary and University,
Baltimore*

The biblical insight that the poor will always be with us is an all too evident reality. For many Americans, however, the face of impoverished people remains hidden. They are often seen as an enigma, a problem to be solved. Whether it is welfare reform, global poverty, or “not in my backyard” zoning policies, decisions about what to do with the poor in our midst tend to be made without considering their lived experience.

While there is a profusion of resources on the topic of poverty as well as some experiential studies on the segment of the population that lives below the poverty line, little attention has been given to their consumption patterns and behaviors. A wide variety of social scientists has investigated the topic of consumption over several generations, but consumer researchers tend to focus on the question of abundance and too much material possessions. Ronald Hill makes an important contribution to the discussion by examining the issue of consumption through the lens

of the poor. He is concerned with the “too little” that defines their existence.

Hill is the Dean of the Dr. Robert B. Pamplin, Jr., School of Business Administration and the Rev. John B. Delaunay, C.S.C., Professor of Social Responsibility at the University of Portland. He is the author of several books on consumer research and marketing as well as numerous articles on consumption patterns and behaviors of people in poverty. In this book Hill focuses on the question of how various sub-populations among the poor survive in a material world. He draws from the experiences of many different people and a wide spectrum of research to compile portraits of six subgroups among the poor. These include the “hidden homeless” who live outside the social welfare system, homeless families living in shelters, poor children, the rural poor, welfare mothers, and aboriginal people of the Australian outback.

Each of the six chapters opens with a brief description of Hill’s empirical research conducted with a particular group. This is followed by a short story which provides a vivid portrait of the lived experience, including the consumption habits and behaviors of the focal character. The Catholic Church is mentioned in several stories in some capacity of assistance to the poor. A short final chapter discusses similarities across all impoverished sub-populations treated in the book. The author agrees that common restrictions of social deprivation and exclusion from decision-making processes suggest potential violations of certain economic and social rights.

Hill proposes some solutions to the problems of poverty in light of the specific needs of each community, but there is insufficient analysis of the experiences he describes and scanty attention given to the causes of poverty. However, the suggested

readings at the conclusion of each chapter along with the extensive bibliography provide ample resources for delving more deeply into the topic.

The strength of the book is the portraits that create a vivid picture allowing readers to vicariously enter the lived experience of the poor and to imagine what it would be like to be faced with similar circumstances and limited options. Since it is free of technical language or social science specific jargon, this book is accessible for a wide audience. The stories can be used by preachers, teachers, pastoral ministers, or for personal enrichment to help break down some of the barriers that shield us from seeing rightly the poor in our midst.

Newman and the Word. Edited by Terrence Merrigan and Ian T. Ker. Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, 27. Louvain-Paris-Sterling, Va.: Peeters Press; Grand Rapid, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000. Pages, 260. Paper, \$30.00.

Reviewed by John T. Ford
The Catholic University of America

This volume contains the nine major presentations delivered at the Second Oxford International Newman Conference at Oriel College, Oxford, 10–13 August 1998. Although some of the papers seem more indicative of their authors’ interests and only tangential to the stated theme of “Newman and the Word,” nonetheless this collection of essays will be of considerable interest to Newmanists.

Three of these presentations have a predominantly historical orientation. Gabriel Daly explores the problematic relationship of Newman and the so-called “Catholic Modernists” in their respective treatments of the topic of divine revelation and finds a commonality in “their emphasis on

experience.” Alister McGrath’s critical examination of Newman’s *Lectures on Justification* indicates that Newman’s knowledge of Luther was decidedly inaccurate but probably second-hand. Sheridan Gilley provides a historical vignette of Newman’s attitude toward Unitarianism and his interaction with Richard Holt Hutton (1826–97), a Unitarian who was co-editor of the *Spectator* and author of one of the first favorable biographies of Newman.

Another trio of essays is philosophical in focus. Louis Dupré examines Newman’s relationship to the Neoplatonic Tradition in England and finds that “much as Newman was influenced by the Alexandrian Fathers and Augustine, he was not a ‘Platonist’.” Fergus Kerr chides twentieth-century Oxford philosophers for their collective neglect of Newman as a believer deeply committed to Christian faith yet simultaneously an intellectual inclined to skeptical inquiry; however, Newman was so ready to consider objections to belief that his *Grammar of Ascent*, which was both an examination of the dimensions of faith and an *apologia* for faith, was described by Huxley as “a primer of infidelity.”

Another triad of papers is devoted to selected topics in religious studies. Terrence Merrigan’s comparison of Newman’s views about faith and religious imagination with those of John Hicks concludes with the not unexpected verdict that “the pluralist understanding of Christian faith . . . represents a complete rupture with the whole tradition of Christian self-understanding.” Ian Ker then compares Newman’s view of *consensus fidelium* with that of the Second Vatican Council. Last but not least, T. R. Wright carefully examines Newman’s changing views of the Bible: on the one hand, Newman’s sermons often presented a very dramatic interpretation of biblical events; on the other hand, he was one of the first Roman Catholics to come to grips

with the world of biblical criticism that was just beginning to emerge in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Yet as Wright perceptively observes: “One of the reasons that Newman continues to appeal to both sides of the constant and necessary debate within the Church between ‘progressives’ and ‘traditionalists’ . . . is that he sees (and in the *Via Media* expresses) both sides of the question.”

There is one caveat for prospective readers of this collection: it presupposes a basic familiarity with Newman’s life and writings; for Newman scholars, however, these essays—especially those of McGrath, Myers, and Wright—provide gist for further research and discussion.

Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims. By Jon Sobrino. Translated by Paul Burns. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001. Pages, vii + 376. Paper, \$28.00.

Reviewed by Anthony J. Tambasco
Georgetown University

Jon Sobrino, one of the leading Latin American theologians, came to international attention through his landmark 1978 book, *Christology at the Crossroads*, a major work on Christology from a liberation perspective. Now, in the post-cold war era, to reinforce the continued relevancy of liberation theology, he enlarges on his earlier work. The book under review is the second of two volumes, a veritable *magnum opus* drawing on Sobrino’s life-long work in Christology within the context of war-torn and poverty-stricken El Salvador. The first volume dealt with the Jesus of history, this second with the risen Christ. This latter work is especially valuable because it centers on post-resurrection theological developments, countering a criticism often

raised against liberation theology that it focuses too much on the historical Jesus and not enough on the systematic Christology that grew after the resurrection. Nevertheless, Sobrino is rightly determined even in this analysis to keep the Christ of faith rooted in the Jesus of history, so the second volume harks back to the first.

The book is divided into three parts, the first dealing with the nature of the resurrection itself, the second with New Testament Christology as seen in the titles given to Christ, and the third with definitions of faith produced by the early councils of the Church. In every section Sobrino's distinctive contribution is the view from the victims of poverty, injustice, and violence—a clear illustration of Latin American liberation theology's method: it starts from the "signs of the times" in Latin America and recognizes that one's situation in life influences how one sees God, Jesus, and creation. Because of this approach, the book emphasizes the paradox of Christology, that Jesus ultimately reveals divinity, yet within the realities of a very human history, including especially the cross. The book is dense with thought (certainly not for beginners in theology) and beyond the ability to summarize in a review of this size. What follows are highlights that struck this reader.

Sobrino's first section considers how Jesus' resurrection shows the eschatological (the totality of what it means to be human) as already unfolding in the present and the transcendent (God) as bringing about this reality by living within it. However, victims will remind us especially that this is an ongoing process and remains very much united to the cross that continues in history. Still, they derive both hope and commitment to working toward the ultimate reality that Jesus shows and promises. In his section on New Testament titles, Sobrino, from the view of victims,

stresses the humanity of Christ, even when titles intimate divinity: the "High Priest" mediates salvation through his humanity in solidarity with others; the "Messiah" brings the kingdom of God as hope for victims, but through the cross and not through oppressive power; the "Lord" rules not by domination but by emptying himself on the cross and by the allegiance of Christians doing the same in history; the "Son" is a servant who shares in humanity's suffering and shows God there; the "Word" is sacramental, showing that the human can make God accessible. Sobrino in the last section on the early councils shows how Christology reversed its perspective ("Jesus is the Son of God" became "the Son of God is Jesus"), lost the sense of Jesus' actions related to the kingdom of God by dwelling so heavily only on the *person* of Christ, and ironically had to reaffirm the humanity of Christ after moving toward emphasis on his divinity. A view from the victims confirms that God is always revealed in a human Jesus who suffered and that Jesus reveals a God who suffers.

On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives. By Miguel H. Diaz. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001. Pages, vii + 156. Paper, \$25.00.

*Reviewed by José I. Lavastida
Notre Dame Seminary and
Graduate School of Theology, New Orleans*

Religion's voice has been deeply affected in recent times by different cultural expressions. There are great concerns and challenges today about how to recognize and deal with the incredible diversity present in the United States. This diversity has certainly made its way to the field of theology and is beginning to affect the discussion within specific theological disciplines.

Miguel H. Diaz's *On Being Human* is a good example of how there can be a very beneficial dialogue between a prominent systematic theologian in the Church and the Hispanic perspectives that come from a substantial sector of the above-mentioned diversity in the United States. Diaz takes a particular field of expertise within systematic theology, namely, theological anthropology, and develops the most prominent notions about it in the writings of U.S. Hispanic theologians. At the same time he uses those "Hispanic" categories to enter into dialogue with Karl Rahner, S.J., one of the most famous systematic theologians of our time. The end result is a fascinating exchange between the main characteristics connected to a Hispanic identity in this country and Rahner's Christian anthropology. The dialogue ends up enlightening and challenging the Hispanic identity while at the same time presenting a challenge to the theologian by utilizing the actual experiences of faith within the Hispanic community in the United States.

There is much to commend in this book. There is an ample bibliography that is very up-to-date and relevant, especially in regard to the writings of Hispanic theologians in the country. There are also good summaries of their positions related to what the author terms "*a Hispanic way of being*." The book is also very open to accommodate different theological traditions and thereby makes the dialogue between Hispanic approaches and Rahnerian perspectives not only possible but also useful. In doing this Diaz opens the door to see the possibilities of similar dialogues with other authors that espouse different theological anthropologies.

The book unfolds in five chapters. The first summarizes some of the fundamental issues and concerns related to what is specifically "Hispanic" that affect the way theology is developed from this perspec-

tive. The narrative follows standard secondary sources.

Chapter two reviews the different Hispanic authors who have contributed to the area of theological anthropology and brings out some of the terminology that has been developed by these authors in order to explain what is *Latinamente* human. Here the author discusses terms such as *mestizo*, *acompanado*, *la lucha*, *lo cotidiano*, and others that give the reader the tools for a better understanding of the Hispanic experience.

The third chapter deals with the sacramental life of the Church and how it relates to the Hispanic experience. Popular religiosity is understood in terms that denote not the reality of widespread practices among Hispanics but practices that come from the people. Diaz discusses in this chapter the role of Marian devotions in the Hispanic experience, especially the devotions to Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Charity, patroness of Cuba.

Chapter four is dedicated to the theology of Karl Rahner. The author sees Rahner as a good candidate for this conversation with Hispanic theologians because of his appreciation of the people's faith and for the way his theological perspectives have developed, always sensitive to historical and practical dimensions. These dimensions are very much a part of the themes that are important to his Hispanic colleagues. In this chapter Diaz expounds on Rahner's theology of grace and his theology of person and community.

The fifth and final chapter is meant to be a dialogue between the perspectives uncovered in the first three chapters and Rahner's theology. This chapter is developed as a true conversation in which both sides offer and receive from their different yet compatible perspectives.

This book has much to offer the reader and may offer a model for a conversation

between other cultures and theological perspectives. However, at times it reads as a slightly revised dissertation, repetitive of some basic points the author is trying to get across. It also appears to give a very deterministic understanding of the Hispanic culture as if it were basically homogeneous. At the same time, and to his credit, the author makes a strong effort to remain open to other interpretations and approaches that understand the socio-cultural experiences not so much as a given but as an option that Hispanics embrace in their struggle for self-identity and survival. Some of Diaz's assumptions may be questioned by other Hispanic theologians, especially the importance he ascribes to gender issues. Also to be questioned is his emphasis at times of a lack of depth in Hispanic theological notions. For those who enter the conversation through the reading of this book, it is evident that this rich dialogue is far from over.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment. By T. Richard Snyder. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000. Pages, iv + 159. Paper, \$18.00.

Reviewed by
Andrew Skotnicki, O.Carm.
St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park

The dramatic rise over the last twenty years in both the number of penal facilities and those housed within them has not gone unnoticed by critics of the criminal justice system. Increasingly, those critics are coming from the religious community, particularly the Christian churches. From the beginning, Christians have been drawn to minister to those in prison, and the Church has been instrumental in providing the shape and meaning of the use of confinement as punishment for crime. To criticize

the system of criminal justice is always, to some degree, to critique the social history and theology of the Church. T. Richard Snyder, a professor at New York Theological Seminary, has done just that.

The book seeks to show how Christian theology, especially the Protestant theology of grace, has been instrumental in justifying and sustaining the concept of "essential difference" between the regenerate and the degenerate. It is this distortion of both scriptural and natural evidence that has led to a host of oppressive mechanisms against those judged as "other," not the least of which is the penal system.

Snyder uses his experience as a professor in a master's program offered to the inmates of the Sing Sing State Penitentiary in New York, "an oasis in the midst of a hellish place of punishment," to galvanize his attack on the retributive spirit in this country and provide the inspiration for a theological and cultural critique. He surveys key theological sources to demonstrate how violence, racism, sexism, consumerism, and environmental decay are given sanction by an individualistic and parochial concept of grace.

He explores theological alternatives, some from non-Christian sources, which focus on the grace inherent in all of creation and on an organic understanding of the social world. Using the concepts of covenant, incarnation, and Trinity, he presents a theology in which "all life is sacred, interconnected, and interdependent." The upshot of such a theology would be the elimination of the concept of "essential difference" that has proven so divisive and played into the hands of those who seek to separate, and then destroy, that which is "other."

Snyder then provides evidence of what such a renewed theology does to the practice of criminal justice. He analyzes restorative justice programs operative in a number of

nations and, to some degree, in the United States. The analysis reveals that the process of communal sentencing and the reconciliation of offender and victim is not only theologically necessary; it works to heal and break the spirit of punishment.

The book is accessible to the non-professional and exhorts the reader to emulate the practices among many church communities of welcoming offenders and their families, advocating for justice reform, and working for conversion of the culture and the economy.

The book's weakness is that it is largely based on anecdotal evidence. While Snyder gives a fine critique of neo-orthodox and fundamentalist theology, he builds his argument on an understanding of the justice system, and its "virus" of punishment, proceeding from experience in one area of one penal facility. He provided neither historical perspective nor appreciation of the evolution of criminological theory. His principal source of data on the justice system was the *New York Times*. There are certainly "hellish" things happening in criminal justice, but the system is far more complex and ambiguous than the author suspects. More careful research on the system he attacked would have made this a better book.

God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God. By Patricia A. Fox. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001. Pages, x + 265. Paper, \$24.95.

Reviewed by
Donald W. Buggert, O.Carm.
Washington Theological Union

The past fifty years have witnessed exciting developments in trinitarian theology. Relating in one way or the other to

"Rahner's rule" that the economic trinity (God-for-us) is the immanent trinity (God in God's Self) and the immanent trinity is the economic trinity, contemporary trinitarian theologies are characterized by a shift from a focus upon the immanent trinity to a concern for the economic trinity and its importance for Christian identity and life (praxis). Echoing Rahner's view that the doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine of salvation (another way to state Rahner's rule), these theologies claim that the doctrine of the triune God is not concerned with divine mathematics (how one can be three and three be one), the issue which has dominated trinitarian theology in the West with the consequence of its being inscrutable to many (Lonergan's "zero comprehension") and irrelevant to most. The question for most contemporary trinitarian theologies is not how is one three and three one, but does God, precisely because "he" is Father, Son, and Spirit, make a difference? Hence contemporary trinitarian theologies tend to be "correlational," i.e., they see the necessity of correlating the ancient trinitarian symbol of God with contemporary issues and concerns so that the symbol can speak anew in an effective and meaningful way.

Patricia Fox, president of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia, is fully aware "that symbols of God exercise enormous power within the lives of human beings and that they are significant for the well-being of creation" (vii). Thus she undertakes a retrieval of the ancient symbol of the triune God "whose power has remained dormant for so many centuries" (viii). Fox sets out to undertake this retrieval by first studying in parts one and two of her work two contemporaries, both of whom reflect the recent shift in trinitarian theology and whose trinitarian theologies she finds complementary. One Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas of the Metropolitan of

Pergamon, represents the sensitivities of Eastern Christianity. The other, Elizabeth Johnson, professor of theology at Fordham University, represents more the sensitivities of the West. Methodologically, Fox wishes to present a “mutually critical correlation” of these two somewhat distinct theologies (East-West, deductive-inductive) “set within the context of a feminist liberation theology,” represented by Johnson. In part three of the work, Fox offers her own contribution toward a constructive trinitarian theology by comparing and contrasting Zizioulas and Johnson on a variety of issues such as their methodologies or starting points, the role of pneumatology and Christology in retrieving the triune symbol, the meaning of person, the naming of God, the processional structure or “order” of the triune symbol (how are the three related to each other), and the significance of the triune symbol for suffering and the ecological crisis. She concludes by indicating six strands of thought requisite for “reweaving” the symbol of the triune God today.

Fox writes clearly and makes available in summary form for the serious student of theology the thought of two distinguished theologians who are significant voices in the contemporary retrieval of trinitarian theology. The chapters dealing with Zizioulas are especially appreciated, since his thought is spread out over many sources and hence not as easily accessible as that of Johnson. She likewise clearly brings out the “practical” significance of each of these retrievals of trinitarian theology and of the two put in dialogue with each other.

This book will be valuable for those who have not read Zizioulas and/or Johnson. The positions represented are important in the contemporary development of trinitarian theology. However, I do wish Fox were a bit more interrogative. In my opinion she too uncritically embraces the *communio*

model of trinity found in Zizioulas. God is “three persons in communion.” While *communio* trinitarians, such as Zizioulas, generally invoke the Cappadocians as their source, it can at least be questioned whether they are “reading into” the Cappadocians a later understanding of person. It is hard to see how the *communio* understanding of person (being in relation) does not turn the one divine nature into a generic nature replicated or instantiated three times rather than a numerically one nature. Thus the *communio* model seems to skirt dangerously close to tritheism. I also wish Fox would have at least questioned the hypostatic or personal understanding of preexistence which underlies classical immanent trinitarianism, found in both Zizioulas and Johnson. It is at least questionable whether this understanding of preexistence is found in the New Testament (e.g., J.D.G. Dunn’s writings on this topic post-1980), and it can be argued that it is actually the result of the imposition of the Hellenistic metaphysics of eternity and immutability upon the God of the Scriptures, who has a history of becoming not more God but God-for-us, as John 1:14 presupposes and demands. Origen seems to be the first clear case of this imposition. Finally, while I fully agree that we must make the ancient symbols, in this case the triune God, speak again in a new key by addressing new experiences and issues, such as sexism and patriarchy, we must also be most cautious about allowing our own agenda to become the controlling hermeneutic in retrieving the past, lest we end up creating a God who responds (and looks very similar) to our agenda, as valid and important as that agenda may be. At times I think this book and the three authors represented in it (Zizioulas, Johnson, and Fox herself) speak too much about God. At the end of the day, we must always remind ourselves that God is ineffable mystery.

The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth-Century Awakening. By Amanda Porterfield. Oxford: University Press, 2001. Pages, x + 262. Paper, \$27.50.

*Reviewed by Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M.,
Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley*

Attempting to provide a historical context for the contemporary experiential decoupling of religion from spirituality, Amanda Porterfield argues for the wide-scale transformation of the American religious landscape since the 1960s. The author's first three chapters examine in some detail the social and cultural forces that led to this current emergence of a religious culture dominated by social activism and a pluralism of spiritual expressions. In synthetic fashion Porterfield describes the movement away from creed, institution, and dogma by charting the post-World War II decline of the liberal Protestant consensus and the "liberation of missionary evangelism" into the mainstream. She opines that the resurgence of American Catholic spirituality (e.g., centering prayer, renewed interest in the Ignatian exercises, the popularity of Thomas Merton) combined with the absorption of Asian influences and the lowering of denominational boundaries to encourage the eclipse of the historic Protestant hegemony. In addition, forged in the social protest cauldron of the Vietnam War, the internationalization of religious values in terms of an ethical analysis, and a "diffused sacramentalism," well expressed in both Abbie Hoffman's "exorcism of the Pentagon" and the mutated Catholic symbols of *The Godfather*, provided two primary sources for a new and more openly inclusive religious consensus.

In the second half of the book, Porterfield builds on her analysis by presenting

several more expansive examples. Propelled by the new immigration, Buddhism's focus on personality and its "deconstruction of the self" served both as a traditional buttress and as a transformative support for a religion of social engagement and protest. Sanctity itself came to be pragmatically redefined in terms of human decency, compassion, and self-understanding (ch. 4). The emerging gender consciousness and body awareness movements, following the decline of Cold War "Victory culture" and the social critique of religion's traditional attitudes toward nature and the body of the woman, spawned a host of new-age thought patterns, practices, and spiritualities (ch. 5). Lastly, on an academic and institutional level, the discipline of religious studies, by divorcing scholarly understanding from practice and training people to think objectively about religion and how it functions, contributed to the formation of a new and eclectic religiosity (ch. 6). The work concludes with a summary chapter on the "Great Awakening of the Late Twentieth Century," sixteen pages of extensive footnotes, and a helpful index.

Transformation is to be commended for its obvious breadth of scholarship and recognition of an extensive array of studies covering almost every major religious denomination in the United States. This reviewer found the author's treatment of movements to "re-enchant the world" and the "sacramentalization" of Native American religion in the context of the Vietnam War to be very insightful. The entire work demonstrates in an exemplary way cross-denominational reading, the importance of the feminist critique of traditional religious thought patterns, and the use of anthropological and social categories in analysis. The central argument, however, seems slightly overdrawn if not overly subjective. While treating the emergence of the new religious consciousness very well,

there is no attempt to show the expressions of creed, ritual, and institution which also cut through these developments, no recognition of the revitalization of traditional forms in the same period, no attempt socially to locate and critique with the same analytic methodology the examples described. The description of the cultural hegemony of liberal Protestantism and the constant attempt to root contemporary developments in the Puritan and transcendental movements, thus splitting these intellectual and religious expressions from their own embodiment, remains very unconvincing if not entirely fictitious. Written in an accessible fashion, *The Transformation of American Religion* mirrors perhaps the strengths and weaknesses of the religious studies discipline it describes so well.

Church Unity and the Papal Office: An Ecumenical Dialogue on John Paul II's 'Ut Unum Sint.' Edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001. Pages, vii + 166. Paper, \$20.00.

Reviewed by Robert P. Imbelli
Boston College

Braaten and Jenson, well-known ecumenists and theologians in the Lutheran tradition, have edited this impressive collection of essays. Its origins lie in an ecumenical conference they organized at the University of St. Thomas in June 1999 to celebrate and enter into dialogue with the historic papal encyclical. The volume is substantive beyond its size and ample beyond its explicit focus. It will be of interest not only to ecumenists but to all concerned with fundamental issues of ecclesiology.

Among the contributors are Cardinal Edward Cassidy who gave the keynote ad-

dress and Joseph DiNoia, O.P., who spoke at the closing banquet. The other essayists are the patristic scholar Brian Daley, S.J., the Anglican theologian Stephen Sykes, the Methodist liturgist and ecumenist Geoffrey Wainwright, the Lutheran theologian David Yeago, the Evangelical theologian Richard Mouw, and Pope John Paul II's biographer George Weigel. All the essays are respectful and refreshingly direct, whether in approbation or critique, both of the encyclical and their respective traditions. In this strong company the essays of Daley, Sykes, Yeago, and Mouw hold particular theological interest.

Daley's essay "The Ministry of Primacy and the Communion of Churches" provides a masterful exploration of the development and exercise of the Petrine ministry of the Church of Rome and its Bishop in the patristic era. But Daley goes beyond historical investigation to present insightful reflections on the contemporary promise and implications of communion ecclesiology and to situate the ministry of primacy within it. Nonetheless, he concludes on a note that is as realistic as it is challenging: "Having fallen into disunion, each of our churches now has a vested interest in maintaining our differences, and probably very few of us have the generosity of heart really to desire the costly transformation that the restoration of communion among our churches will require."

Sykes writes on "Papacy and Power: An Anglican Perspective." He criticizes the tendency in theology and ecumenical dialogue to reduce issues of "power" to those of "authority." While understandable in light of so much abuse of power, such a strategy risks evading hard questions concerning the actual or covert exercise of power and can even countenance a flight from accountability. Sykes associates this reluctance to engage issues of power with

a neglect of the doctrine of creation in much contemporary theology. One notes an evident embarrassment to speak even of the power of God. Too often it seems only kenosis counts.

Yeago's "The Papal Office and the Burdens of History: A Lutheran View" offers a salutary reminder that, in ecumenical discussions, not only abstract theological concepts are in play but concrete histories, with their painful memories. However, he goes on forthrightly to lament the loss of *magisterium* in many Lutheran circles and he stresses the need to recover a sense of common ecumenical mission in face of a culture that frequently stands in contrast, if not opposition, to the Gospel.

Finally, Mouw's "The Problem of Authority in Evangelical Christianity" offers an illuminating introduction to evangelical perspectives and concerns. He presses the point that too often questions of ecclesiology trump the more fundamental issue of soteriology. And he parries the charge that evangelicals suffer from an underdeveloped ecclesiology by wondering whether other churches may not themselves suffer from an inflated ecclesiology in which a view of church serves as "an instrument of control."

All in all this is a provocative and rewarding collection that I highly recommend.

The Word of the Lord: Liturgy's Use of Scripture. By David N. Power, O.M.I. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001. Pages, vii + 161. Paper, \$22.00.

Reviewed by

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This concise, pastorally oriented work confronts real questions that faith commu-

nities ask themselves as they seek to interpret Scripture and proclaim that it is Word of God. Its author, a systematic theologian at the forefront of liturgical research, has presented numerous works on liturgical texts, sacramental theology, and modern and postmodern theories of interpretation. This book is in a new key. Without jargon or abstract speculative language, it asks what it means today to say that Scripture is Word of God. Power develops his understanding through concrete examples drawn from the actual experience of people who hear the Word and strive to embody it in their prayer, liturgical action, and ethical commitments. On one level, *The Word of the Lord* functions as a guide to congregations as they seek more profound understandings of the relations of the readings to one another and to their own authentic questions. On another, it demonstrates how theology may truly root itself in lived experience, in this case that of hearers of the Word in their diverse realities. Less explicitly, Power demonstrates here the fruitfulness for liturgical practice and theology of theoretical hermeneutical studies.

The structure of the work, with helpful introductions and masterful summaries, allows the author to examine issues in their complexity while addressing an audience of believers who are diverse in geographical, gender, and denominational background. The first section considers the reading of Scripture in liturgical settings and some real questions that arise for today's congregations, study groups, and homilists. What happens when readings are taken from their biblical context and placed in relation to other texts? What does it mean to proclaim that they are Word of God when they are understood differently in different times and settings? In what sense can we say that they are sacred and how do we determine the truth and validity of interpretations? These and other questions allow

Power to provide moving commentaries of a variety of texts. Succinct descriptions, such as that of the life of a text in chapter II, sum up in lay terms significant literary theory.

Power draws upon the oral dimension of the production of texts, their passage into writing, and their communal reception to argue convincingly that texts have no meaning fixed in time but are always open to new and more profound interpretations. He is respectful of the integrity of texts, affirming the need for historical and literary criticism. At the same time, he argues for the ethical validation of readings, confronting the problem of readings and interpretations that contradict gospel values of mutuality and justice. For Power, language matters. Congregations and homilists will find helpful suggestions on how to deal with texts that appear to intensify attitudes such as sexism, triumphalism, and anti-semitism.

Although this work respects the experience of the faith community, it also insists that the Word raises questions to its hearers. Without specifically alluding to the rich postmodern theories of Marion and others, he demonstrates from his critical examination of them that the Word of the Lord is a gift that transcends everyday exchange, even while articulated within it. Thus, Part II examines memorial and metaphor in liturgy, showing how the Word becomes embodied in different eras in liturgical prayer, ritual, and ethical commitment. The test of the truth of an interpretation, as he sees it, is the passage it effects from proclamation to action. The great root metaphors of the tradition, biblical but also affected by subsequent interpretations, have made this passage possible in the past. Power examines the metaphors of sacrifice, of Pasch favored by Vatican II, of justification in Lutheran liturgy, respecting their fruitfulness but

arguing also the need for a new metaphor to describe salvation in Christ inclusively and meaningfully for a broken world. His interpretation of *kenosis* offers such a possibility, rethinking the notion of self-emptying for times marked with such terror as AIDS and war that challenge confidence in a divine order.

Power's distinctive style is most effective when he is describing complex realities in their global context. His commentaries on the readings are most compelling when he deals with ultimate situations of suffering and loss. At times that same style, in the complexity of its phrasing and use of passive voice, may seem somewhat daunting. Yet the frequent summaries make the work accessible and engaging.

This work, though grounded in Roman Catholic liturgical life and practice, is ecumenical in outreach and use of liturgical texts. Different denominations should find helpful insights here into the scriptural readings and ritual actions of everyday liturgies and great celebrations. Inevitably, such a work raises questions beyond its scope, such as the relation of scriptural interpretation in an ecclesial setting to a growing interest in Scripture within the secular community and even in other world religions. The work should give rise to further thought, even as it answers questions too often evaded.

The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition. By James W. Coleman.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pages, 265. Hardcover, \$25.00.

*Reviewed by Francis X. Clooney, S.J.
Boston College*

The opening of the twenty-first century is an epochal moment for the numerous

Buddhist traditions of Asia. Never before have they all at once entered and undergone transformation in a cultural setting such as North America, where Thai, Vietnamese, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, and other Buddhisms are becoming interconnected, changing individually, changing one another, and interacting creatively with American cultural and religious sensitivities. A growing number of scholars are studying this new Buddhism. For example, Duncan Ryuken Williams and Christopher S. Queen have edited a comprehensive study, *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship* (London: Curzon Books, 1999). Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka offer a similarly broad review in *The Faces of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998). Diana Eck devotes a chapter to it in her *A New Religious America* (HarperSan Francisco, 2001). Coleman, professor of sociology at California Polytechnic State University and a practicing Buddhist, contributes a book distinguished by a more limited focus on North Americans who have chosen to become Buddhist and the individual and social ramifications of their choices.

After an introductory overview of Buddhism in Asia and an account of its arrival in the West, Coleman describes American Buddhism. He draws on interviews with practitioners and surveys completed at seven centers nationally to explore initial contacts with Buddhism and reasons for taking it seriously, patterns of meditation practice, the growth of new Buddhist social groups, the balancing of new Buddhist identities with older Jewish and Christian ones, and contextual factors such as education, employment, and political views. In light of the overall religious makeup of the United States, more Jews than expected become Buddhist, and fewer Protestants; Catholics choosing Buddhism mirror their

overall number in America. Most American Buddhists seem to be white, middle class or affluent, and progressive on social and political issues.

Coleman also reflects on why people are attracted to Buddhism. In his view, Buddhism is fundamentally subversive of consumerism and materialism, and its growing importance in American culture promises greater changes in America in the years to come. But in the short run it can be accepted easily and without undue stress. Its egalitarian structure, emphasis on practice and spiritual advancement, therapeutic well-being, and irenic and congenial worldview combine to offer an attractive lifestyle for those seeking integral spiritual development. It also suits a world of postmodern uncertainties where formalized doctrinal commitments and settled self-identities are problematic.

One can still wonder, though, how this American Buddhism will develop in the future: Is its attractive fluidity likely to endure, or will it become yet another “religious institution” with settled doctrines, insiders and outsiders, etc., just as earlier Buddhisms have taken on fixed forms and strong doctrinal profiles in the various Asian settings?

Especially if supplemented by other books such as those mentioned above, Coleman’s work makes an important contribution to our understanding of American religion today. It challenges readers to ponder the attractiveness of Buddhism, its evident benefit for many Americans who used to be (or remain) Christian. The flourishing of Buddhism may also highlight a stagnation in Christian churches too solidly identified with modernity’s fixed certainties, and too self-assured (or fearful) to really engage seekers resistant to doctrinal fixity and impatient with merely cursory spiritual guidance. By extension, though, one can also ponder “the new

Christianity” which will spring to life in an America where Buddhism is a living alternative to both Christianity and secularism.

Faith in the Living God: A Dialogue.

By John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker.
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
Pages, viii + 151. Paper, \$16.00.

Reviewed by J. Matthew Ashley
University of Notre Dame

Perhaps consciously echoing Friedrich Schleiermacher some two hundred years earlier, John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker describe this book on its back cover as “a dialogue for troubled friends and cultured despisers of Christianity.” Both men have been involved in the conversation between science and religion, and thus it is no surprise that for them the principal (although not exclusive) source of contempt and doubt is modern science (including, for Welker, the social sciences). Unlike Schleiermacher, however, who argued that Christian faith and theology do not primarily have to do with describing the world (thus insulating them from conflicts with science), this book’s authors contend that Christian faith and science offer complementary “windows” on reality (18, 101) that offer a richer knowledge of the world together than either on its own.

Instead of the monist God that is often brought to science-religion dialogue, Polkinghorne and Welker refreshingly choose to cast their dialogue in a trinitarian framework. Thus, in the first part of the book each author presents a short essay on faith in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, which endeavor to show how each can be elaborated in terms of common human experience (sometimes, although not always, as that experience is articulated by modern science). Each also

responds to the other’s essays, although the authors agree on so much and the responses and counter-responses are so brief that the result falls rather short of being a “dialogue.” In the second part of the book each writes a longer essay on what he takes to be the principal task facing contemporary theology (without response). The book concludes with a jointly written essay on “the search for truth and understanding.”

The authors advocate a position that Polkinghorne has called “bottom up thinking,” which, they argue, characterizes both the methodology of modern science and (at least *potentially*) that of modern theology. They present this as a kind of generalized empiricism, according to which truth claims have to be derived and legitimated in terms of human experience, recognizing that these processes will never be purely empirical, but will necessarily take place in terms of broader *a priori* philosophical, cultural, and faith-based frameworks (such as the doctrine of the Trinity). These frameworks notwithstanding, they insist on (without really arguing) a “critical realism” for both science and theology which concedes the historical, cultural, and linguistic conditioning of all our knowledge but nonetheless asserts that human knowledge can and should aspire to be “conformed to the way that things actually are” (133).

This book is difficult to summarize because it is so ambitious. Having two authors independently cover Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in less than ninety pages results in a prose that offers provocative insights at times but is often difficult to follow unless one is familiar with the background debates that each author has in mind in, say, Christology or pneumatology (generally debates in European Protestant theology, so that U.S. Catholics may find the book particularly hard to enter). Moreover, the text is at times frustratingly

elementary, for example, in considering some of the philosophical (especially post-modern) objections to any kind of realism, including “critical” realism. At other times it is dauntingly complex, as in Welker’s fascinating but difficult exploration of the relationship of a triune God to created temporality (temporalities, as it turns out). Thus, while the book might be a good companion to other longer texts by these authors, it is difficult to imagine how one might profitably read the book on its own or use it in a class.

Spiritual Questions for the Twenty-First Century. Essays in Honor of Joan D. Chittister. Edited by Mary Hembrow Snyder. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001. Pages, 192. Paper, \$18.00.

Reviewed by **Brid Long, S.S.L.**
Washington Theological Union

Presented as a *Festschrift* in honor of Joan D. Chittister, O.S.B., this slim volume engages twenty-five authors around the question, “What do you think is the most important spiritual question of our time?” The editor, Mary H. Snyder, does not identify the occasion for the *Festschrift* except to say that she wishes to “pay homage to a woman who has been a prophetic voice in the Catholic church for over three decades.” While the contributions are quite uneven in quality and, except for a few, are too brief to address the question in any depth, the ensemble permits the reader to appreciate the scope of Chittister’s interest in and contribution to contemporary reflection on spirituality and peace and justice issues, both local and global.

The contributing authors include theologians and artists, poets and bishops, psychologists, freelance writers, and columnists. Their responses to the question

posed by the editor are grouped around three themes: (1) nurturing consciousness: the personal challenge; (2) building community: the ecclesial challenge; (3) transforming structures: the global challenge. The introduction gives an appreciative overview of Chittister’s life and work while an engaging apologia by Chittister as well as a listing of her published books round out the *Festschrift*.

The first section explores the personal challenge of nurturing consciousness suited to a new time with new needs. C. Vladimiroff traces the development of spirituality in the twentieth century and, in the face of new questions, advocates with Chittister “developing the courage, the determination, to commit ourselves to living all the dimensions of life with awareness and strength, with depth and quality” (61). This means equilibrium in all save love (D. Berrigan); reflective attention to the everyday in all its diversity (T. Bezanson, J. Soskice); being in relationship with Christ and others (R. Weakland); building communities in which all are welcome (D. Hayes); taking seriously the gospel call to sell all and follow Christ (G. Freyne); incarnating Christ anew in order to address and heal the illnesses of hunger, war, and wasting disease in the culture and in the human soul (M. Marty, E. Gately).

The second section explores the ecclesial challenge of building community. While the ecclesial dimension is, overall, rather thin in its development, some helpful dimensions of the complexity of building a global community are highlighted. In the face of multiple destructive tendencies evident in today’s society, S. Schneiders offers a thoughtful analysis of the major challenge of self-transcendence. Thus she poses a basic question of “whether there is anything, any value, finally, Anyone, who can claim our whole heart and thus wrest us free of ourselves so that we can be and

live for one another” (73). D. O’Murchú stretches the reader to reach for “enlarged horizons of meaning” which challenge us to take into account a long evolutionary tradition with both planetary and cosmic dimensions. R. McBrien summarizes a number of dimensions of Catholic spirituality in familiar theological categories while others enrich the meaning of communion by stressing incarnation (R. Rohr), the prophetic and visionary (M. L. Kownacki, K. Briggs), nonviolence (R. Keeler), and dialogue with other religions, local cultures, and the poor (T. Fox).

The final section of the book addresses current global issues such as failure to see others and their needs (I. Gebara), nuclear weapons (T. Gumbleton), various forms of oppression (E. Wainwright), a lack of reverence for creation (M. Fox), the imbalance of land to population (T. Balasuriya). Three particularly insightful and challenging essays make this, perhaps, the richest section of the book. E. Johnson probes the emerging spiritual question of our right relation with Earth as the all-encompassing spiritual question of our time, and challenges us to relearn to be “kin” in the one creation loved by God, saved by Christ, and destined for eternal life in the new creation. P. Mische presents the spiritual challenge of matching economic, political, and cultural globalization with a commensurate discovery of a God of interdependence and global community, while M. J. Mananzan offers a critique of globalization, particularly as it affects the Philippines where it continues to widen the gap between rich and poor. In the face of what she calls economic imperialism, she reemphasizes the values of “sharing, service, compassion, equity, interdependence, and solidarity” (159).

The weakness of the book comes, on one hand, from personal tributes to Chittister placed side by side with more scholarly essays; on another, from the inclusion of so

many authors, not all of whom can develop a thoughtful response to the question posed in the space allowed. Nevertheless, this tribute to Joan Chittister may well be of interest to a wide audience, especially to those who are indeed seeking a “deeper consciousness of the sacred” in view of “action on behalf of justice,” two passions of Chittister’s life and writings.

Conscience and Prayer: The Spirit of Catholic Moral Theology. By Dennis

J. Billy, C.Ss.R., and James F. Keating. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001. Pages, xiv + 110. Paper, \$14.95.

Reviewed by

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Current writings in moral theology continue to retrieve the strengths of the past. In pre-enlightenment thought, moral theology and spirituality were integrated disciplines that authors Billy and Keating hope to reclaim. They “propose a middle way between a Christian ethics reduced to rationalism and one that is simply sentimental devotionism” (106). As professors of moral theology and spiritual theology, their study demonstrates how conscience and spirituality interrelate.

A passage from the Eastern Orthodox text of the *Philokalia* serves as a leitmotif for each chapter. By drawing on the wisdom of the East, the authors expose the Western tendency to dichotomize reason and spirit. The analogy of walking with two legs describes the authors’ goal of finding the vital connection between prayer and a mature conscience.

The first half of the text follows a numbered schema. This ordering allows the reader to trace the history of the Church’s

teachings on conscience and prayer. The prevalence of rational theory ruptures connections between spirit and reason which are further aggravated by ecclesiastical institutions. By yielding to rational discourse they separate reason from the intuitive dimension of human existence that supports a relationship with the Spirit. Today there are moves toward reintegration of the reason/spirit relationship. More emphasis is placed on the role of a person's *spirit* in deciphering the moral call to wholeness through the experiential, sapiential, and analytical dimensions of life.

The "spiritual turn" moves Catholic moral theology from problem-solving to a relational paradigm. Listening is required in any relationship, especially in the relationship between the Spirit and one's own spirit. As listener, the believer must also attend to the believing community through whom God's love and truth are revealed. Listening with the eyes of faith leads to truly moral actions and to the virtue of prudence. The meeting of morality and prayer occurs in the operations of conscience, for it is in the heart one prays and discerns the good.

The authors propose trinitarian spirituality as the "lodestar for any ethic which holds spirituality to be relevant in the discernment of good and moral evil" (64). Trinitarian spirituality moves out to the world and away from self-centeredness.

Conscience is to obey the commands of God. By simply obeying authority, some think they have obeyed God. This stance is corrected when one obeys conscience as the voice of God. Through prayer one is disposed to hear and discern the voice guiding one to moral judgment.

Pastoral considerations that place Jesus as the norm of the spiritual/moral life conclude the book. "At the depth of conscience is not autonomous reason but reason's completion in truth, the truth which is a *person*, Christ" (97). Prayer is not simply to get right moral answers but orders one's world to the meaning of life in the presence of God.

This is a reflective text rather than a textbook or a spiritual reading book. It does not plow new furrows in moral theology or in spiritual theology, but it does something perhaps more valuable. It highlights points of convergence and integration between spirituality and moral theology in the area of conscience. This it does through careful analysis. Although the writing tends to be repetitious and the material somewhat obvious, the book's value lies in the middle ground of reintegration. Aside from personal reading for theologians, this book would be an excellent resource for students near the end of study when the goal is integration of personal beliefs and spirituality with the intellectual work of theology.