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BOOK REVIEWS

**Justice, Jesus, and the Jews:
A Proposal for Jewish-Christian
Relations.** By Michael L. Cook, S.J.
Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003.
Pages, xii + 127. Paper, \$14.95.

Reviewed by **Anthony J. Tambasco**
Georgetown University

This study makes a helpful contribution to the growing literature on Jewish-Christian dialogue by focusing on the historical Jesus as the bridge between Jews and Christians, especially by his renewing fidelity to Israel's covenant through the exercise of justice. Cook does not address rabbinic Judaism and Gentile Christianity as they took shape after the "parting of the ways," but dwells rather on the earlier Jewish Jesus of history who both carries forward the traditions of Israel and lays the foundations for any future Christian theology.

The book has three chapters, the first on methodological issues in Jewish-Christian dialogue, the second on the origins and the promise of Israel's covenant and the response of fidelity and justice, the third on Jesus' preaching and effecting of the justice of the reign of God as covenant renewal and the reconstitution and restoration of Israel. This is essentially a biblical study. Cook, who is a systematic theologian at Gonzaga University, is very well read in the field and draws on recent biblical scholarship to present his thesis. Two traits in the work highlight his competence: ample footnotes that are often summaries of other studies or syntheses of present

issues or debates, and generous quotations from biblical scholars to make many of the points in the book.

The first chapter makes important qualifications to show that the New Testament need not be judged anti-Semitic and need not be read as superseding Judaism. The chapter is especially helpful in highlighting two points among other suggested conditions for dialogue. One is that concentration on the historical Jesus is not inconsequential to Christology, but reflects very Jewish concerns, and may avoid the pitfalls of dialogue from the developed and more polarized theologies of rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity. The second is that both parties must be conscious of that "other" in the dialogue who is poor and oppressed from the underside of history. Finally, this chapter is a strong reminder that Christian historical-critical biblical interpretation is quite different from rabbinic reading of Scripture and both need to be respected.

Chapter 2 roots the dialogue in the election of Abraham, highlighted by the binding of Isaac, and the structural and systemic liberation of Abraham's kin in the Exodus. This establishes a covenant with Israel in kinship and as a contrast society and calls for mutual obligations of fidelity and justice. Important in this chapter is the biblical definition of justice as more than a legal term. It is fidelity to covenant, more specifically God's revelation of what is right and God's saving activity to achieve it. Chapter 3 stresses that Jesus takes up this definition in his

proclamation of the Kingdom of God, speaking to Israel's yearning to return to the ideals of the early history and to achieve the hopes contained in Torah for a people who were still in a kind of continued exile under foreign powers. Cook maintains that this kingdom preaching is a deepening of the Torah and not its abrogation. It made radically inclusive the boundaries of God's saving justice, constituting a renewed vision of Israel and a restored people prepared to receive all the nations.

This study skirts the thornier issues of Jewish-Christian dialogue but provides material for substantial interaction. Because of the brevity of some of the syntheses, the implications of some points in the book may be lost on those not already acquainted with the topics. On the other hand, the book is a good presentation of a number of important biblical studies and, through its footnotes, offers opportunity for further exploration.

The Call to Holiness. By Richard Gula. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2003. Pages, v + 226. Paper, \$16.95

Reviewed by James Keating
Pontifical College Josephinum

Richard Gula has written another fine and accessible book in the field of moral-spiritual theology. With this work Gula moves forward the emerging literature on morality and spirituality by producing a seamless work rather than a book that looks toward integrating morals and spirituality. By seamless I mean that Gula is not looking at the possibility of integrating spirituality and morality in this book, he is achieving it. In his approach to moral-spiritual living Gula begins with foundational explorations around the unifying question, "What should we do [morals] be-

cause of who we are [spirituality]?" (35); or more theologically explicit, "Who should we be and how should we live if we believe that God loves us and that we love God?" (37). For the author, spirituality is not separate from moral living and the discernment of virtuous acts, it is "the well spring of moral life . . . morality arises from, rather than generates, spirituality" (37). Morality is the public face of spirituality; morality and spirituality function in a "critical-dialogical relationship" (39). What is refreshing about the move Gula and others are making is that all method, themes, and discernment of action are placed in a matrix of "the Word, . . . the great mysteries of faith, and . . . the experience of the people" (60). With these elements, especially the first two, moral theology as a meditative and academic discipline joins the roots of a community's love for God with the fruit of that love in holy action (62).

Since this work is considered a precursor to his *The Good Life*, Gula spends a significant amount of space in chapters 3 and 4 on Christian anthropology and the importance of how one imagines God. These two explorations become significant because both our understanding of who we are as human persons and who we believe God to be influence the "content, tone and quality of our spirituality and moral life" (107). In the section on the human person, he focuses his meditations upon such themes as spirit, soul, emotion, imagination and body. Under his section on emotion Gula places the reality of mysticism. He writes: "To retrieve the affective dimension of the moral life is to reclaim its mystical side. Mystical is a perfectly apt word, but it has acquired the unfortunate connotation of being a rare, strange experience. . . . The mystical refers to the affective dimension of our lives" (80). I do not disagree that the mystical in some quarters has been relegated to

the strange, but I am not sure that the use of the affective category alone can sustain the “normalizing” of the mystical in itself. Is the mystical equated with the affective? I would prefer to understand the mystical in the context of the moral as a *commitment* to live the Christian *mysteries and be transformed by them*. This saves us from narrowing the mystical to only the affective. The author’s comments on the nature of God and our image of God clearly articulate Gula’s concern that the Church not revert back to any notion of God as Law giver. Following Rahner, God is seen to be at the deepest dimensions of all experience.

The book concludes with a long section on formative practices that develop moral and spiritual character. These practices include prayer, eucharistic worship, and biblical meditation. He also includes very helpful shorter sections on conversion, discernment, and discipleship. As a revisionist theologian, Gula is careful not to isolate acts from circumstances and contexts in moral living, but instead, rightly emphasizes character development. The development of character, however, does depend upon the consistent choosing of morally right actions. Like morality and spirituality, acts and character cannot be separated. Gula obviously knows this or he would not spend the time he does on articulating and analyzing practices that form character. It would seem to me, however, that any fears about isolating moral acts from their contexts can be put to rest not by muting the importance of moral acts, but by simply underscoring that all freely chosen acts must conform to what is morally true. In a person’s love of the truth, which is proven by enacting the dictates of conscience, one will become the person of character so rightly prized by Gula. As with most of his recent books, this work is written in the popular/pastoral vein. Along with other

texts in fundamental moral theology, seminarians and graduate students in pastoral ministry can profitably read this book. It would make a nice addition to any seminar class in morals and spirituality, or a parish study text on moral formation.

A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art. By Alejandro García-Rivera. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003. Pages, xiii + 139. Paper, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Amanda Quantz
Catholic Theological Union

A Wounded Innocence by Alejandro García-Rivera offers a creative theological reflection on the question: “What would happen if we took the visual seriously in theology” (x)? The author explores the history, value and function of art as well as Christianity’s natural relationship with devotional images. Throughout the book he considers concrete examples from Scripture, literature, and visual art. In a chapter on atonement and the imitation of Christ, he writes: “The very invitation of the risen Jesus to touch his wounds, after all, is profoundly aesthetic” (93).

García-Rivera’s brief yet rich analysis operates on two distinct levels: it examines the communicative power of an array of religious objects and also offers some suggestions about the nature of religious art that leads believers to a vision of the holy. The book’s clear, illustrative language as well as the range of topics and perspectives offered makes it suitable for students, professional theologians, artists, ministers and the interested lay reader. The images discussed could even be adapted as source material for retreats, workshops or theological reflection groups. The author is fully aware that the text lacks a systematic organization, noting: “For it is not in preci-

sion where a wounded innocence is to be known but in the grace of a religious insight" (122).

The text bears some methodological similarities to Andrew Greeley's *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Greeley's dialogue partner is the enchanted world in which Catholics live. García-Rivera takes humanity's "wounded innocence" as his starting point for exploring the Christian's relationship to beauty. He sees the Church as a body of prayerful, undeniably weakened yet hopeful believers who seek authenticity before God. The author demonstrates that, in humanity's pursuit of the ultimate, beauty is an important gift in becoming open to reconciliation with God. Our awesome, noble challenge is to find the beauty we need in order to love (4). Salvation, he implies, is the fruit of love.

The book moves freely between discussions of the form and function of images and their significance as prayer objects. Each chapter focuses on an image, such as "The Wounded Hunter" at Lascaux, "The Dog, the Cat and the Mouse" from the hagiography of St. Martin de Porres, and The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C. In addition to these pieces, which García-Rivera considers to be devotional objects, he designates several authors and artists as his dialogue partners. Through his reflections on the images and the wisdom of his teachers García-Rivera concludes that religious art is fundamentally that which guides the faithful towards an encounter with God.

The book is full of unassuming questions, such as: "When does the stuff of our ordinary lives become something sacred" (37)? By leaving these questions open-ended García-Rivera creates a hospitable environment through which the reader can apply his or her own experience of faith, art and the created world. The author's

skillful use of the power of suggestion is one of the book's most appealing features. By offering his thoughts on humanity's relationship to beauty, García-Rivera has produced a courageous and timely theological experiment that takes Christian images seriously. It is a valuable resource for anyone working to integrate his or her spiritual theology with imaginative prayer and the pursuit of art.

**A Presence That Disturbs:
A Call to Radical Discipleship.**

By Anthony J. Gittins. Liguori, Mo.:
Liguori/Triumph, 2002. Pages, xx + 171.
Paper, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Kathleen H. Brown
Washington Theological Union

Anthony Gittins is a social and theological anthropologist who brings that perspective to bear in this moving, powerful and, indeed, "disturbing" call to a new and deeper understanding of who we are as disciples of Christ. The ruins of Tinturn Abbey depicted on the cover are a metaphor for the confusion and brokenness of our world, yet in the words of the poet Wordsworth, those very ruins hold a "presence that disturbs." Amidst those ruins, we must rediscover a reason for living and become who we are called to be. The book puts language on that disturbing presence, that restless longing. It also articulates our call as disciples to become a "presence that disturbs."

Early in the book, Gittins cites three aphorisms of Viktor Frankl: to live we must choose; to love we must encounter; to grow we must suffer. The book calls us to choose discipleship and, in so doing, to genuinely encounter the world. The encounter is dangerous because it will ask us to look for the presence of the Spirit in

unexpected places, to listen to voices we might otherwise ignore. The encounter might also involve suffering. The encounter is difficult because, as Gittins points out, “A characteristic human flaw is the inability to think one’s thinking is wrong.” The book calls us, as individuals and as a Church, to change our thinking. Gittins challenges us to hear the voice of the Spirit in the voices of women, children, the poor, and the other Christian churches, and to consider our failure to do so as resisting the Spirit. This is an invitation, Gittins says, to have our lives disturbed and rearranged, but also an invitation to find new meaning in them.

The book includes an intriguing discussion of leadership styles and forms of community. Anyone who is part of—or has a vested interest in—church leadership will find the scope of those discussions both challenging and helpful. Gittins’ treatment of social polarities and the cultural grid is perhaps a little belabored, but it is an effective way of presenting an integrated view of faith and culture.

Gittins challenges Christians to “stand up and be counted, to galvanize themselves, to take the missionary dimension of their lives seriously, and to live up to their common baptism.” The book is indeed disturbing, meant to move the comfortable out of their complacency, to challenge us to become a “presence that disturbs” in the world. That challenge is not for the faint of heart, and not for those whom Gittins describes as people who “seem only to scrape through childhood and adolescence with little or no sense of their own identity or potential.” All of us experience the disturbing presence of God; not everyone is ready to be a disturbing presence. The appeal of the images of “God as Sugar Daddy” and “God as Relentless Pursuer,” rightfully portrayed by Gittins as inadequate, is, I suspect, because of the needs of

people whose faith and/or personal identity is weak. To be sure, Gittins is correct in reminding us how easy it is to get stuck there, but for many those images of God are a necessary first step on the journey of discipleship. It is for the sake of those among us who still struggle with identity and worth that I wish Gittins had developed more fully a point that he makes in the introduction: the God who disturbs and sends us on mission “both stabilizes and destabilizes, comforts and discomforts.” The same God who disturbs us also loves us gently, generously, and unconditionally.

Gittins writes that “when a people no longer have the courage to undergo the pain required to choose the future over the past, then their institutions are compromised and their civilization is on its last legs.” Gittins challenges us as a Church to have the courage to choose the future over the past. The book is a call to those who search for greater meaning in life, who are strong enough in faith and personal identity to be “mentors and midwives” in the world. For those who sense a call to do more, to go deeper, who feel that vague restlessness that is part of the yearning for meaning, the book is well worth reading.

The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries. Compiled and edited by Peter C. Phan. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002. Pages, xvi + 352. Hardcover, \$60.00.

Reviewed by Paul L. Varuvel
Christ the King Seminary

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia, the Asian Synod for short, which met in Rome, April 19–May 14, 1998, to discuss the theme “Jesus Christ the Savior and his mission of love and service in Asia” was clearly a peak experience for

the Church in that vast continent. Peter C. Phan, a prominent Vietnamese-American theologian, who is also a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, has done a timely service by compiling and editing some of the texts and commentaries pertaining to the Asian Synod. The fascinating story of the Asian Synod has been narrated with great vigor by Thomas C. Fox of the *National Catholic Reporter*, the correspondents of *The Tablet* and several Asian theologians. In the book under review Phan advances this narrative by his perceptive comments and reflections. His book is best complemented by Thomas C. Fox's *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church*.

Phan's book is divided into three parts besides containing an Introduction and an Appendix. The Introduction situates the Asian Synod in its historical and ecclesial context. The Appendix contains John Paul II's post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*. Part I presents texts pertaining to the preparatory phase of the Synod. Part II contains some interventions by the participants, reports of some discussion groups, synodal propositions submitted to the Pope, and a message to the people of Asia. Part III consists of essays by seven theologians from Asia on the future of Asian Christianity.

Evidently, the story of the Asian Synod cannot be told adequately by a compilation of selected texts and commentaries alone. The Synod was first and foremost an "event" that energized the local churches of Asia from the moment the Christian communities began discussing the *Lineamenta* (Outline of the Synod topic). It surely was a "moment of special grace" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, #3) that enabled the participants from disparate regions such as the recently emerged Central Asian Republics, the Far East, South Asia and West Asia (Middle East) to share their life ex-

periences and pastoral concerns in formal or informal settings. Gradually, there emerged a common Asian perspective that had earlier been spelt out by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at its First Plenary Assembly held in Taipei in 1974. The Church in Asia is called to fulfill its mission through a "triple dialogue": a dialogue with the cultures of Asia, a dialogue with the religions of Asia, and a dialogue with the peoples of Asia, especially the poor. This surely is a liberation perspective enriched by the immediate context of Asia where the powerful presence of ancient cultures and religions is an immense challenge and unique opportunity to reshape and present anew a vision of Christianity deeply rooted in the Asian soil. The quest for a legitimate autonomy of the local churches became another important focus of the synod.

Asian languages are so varied and diverse that names of persons and places could easily be misspelled. This reviewer detected the following incorrect spellings of personal names: Bortolasso (vii, for Bortolaso), Mundaban (vi, for Mundadan), Remigius Peter (vii, for Peter Remigius), Gispert-Saucil (52, for Gispert-Sauch). Some of the misspelled place names are: Bijnur (110, for Bijnor), Kumabakonam (vii, for Kumbakonam), Rafanea (vii, for Ratanea), Bantoe-Lagawe (vi, for Bantoc-Lagawe). A future edition of the book will certainly correct these lapses.

Phan acknowledges that space did not allow a full publication of the synod's official documents, all the interventions of participants, and all the reports of group discussions (6). This omission is largely compensated for by the compiler's incisive introductions and comments. This book will prove immensely helpful to persons interested in world-theology to become acquainted with the depth and breadth of the theological and pastoral engagement of

the Church in Asia. Writing in the 1970s, Walbert Buehlmann spoke of “The Coming of the Third Church.” One can readily agree with Phan that the “Asian Synod marked the coming of age of the Asian Churches” (xi).

A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage. By Richard R. Gaillardetz. New York: Crossroad, 2002. Pages, 143. Paper, \$16.95.

Reviewed by **Timothy P. Muldoon**
Mount Aloysius College

Perhaps the best measure of my esteem for Richard Gaillardetz’s slim volume on the spirituality of Christian marriage is my regret that, near the end of a semester teaching a theology course on marriage, I do not have the time to add the book to my syllabus. I want my students to read this book.

The literature dealing with marriage from the perspectives of Christian theology and spirituality is copious. The particular strength of Gaillardetz’s volume, however, is its accessibility to a population which lacks a systematic religious vocabulary about not only marriage, but also of intimacy, love, and sexuality. As a married father of four young boys, Gaillardetz the theologian and Gaillardetz the dad come together to render a highly readable book.

Many theological treatments of marriage situate it within the broader tradition of the sacraments—all well and good for those who understand what sacraments are. For those who do not, however, it is necessary to speak of marriage in more fundamental terms, such as those arising out of the common experience of longing for interpersonal communion, with God and with one another.

Chapter 1 begins with this framework, articulating a spirituality of communion and how this fundamental theological anthropology shapes further discussion of human intimacy. What I find compelling about this chapter is Gaillardetz’s insistence on situating an authentic Christian spirituality of marriage on four fundamental doctrinal claims: the phenomenon of desire; the incarnation; the paschal mystery; and the divine trinity. This insistence grounds Gaillardetz’s writing firmly within a long history of Christian reflection, but perhaps more compellingly it offers a sound theological foundation for the practical, experiential exploration which follows. He walks a delicate balance between abstract theological concepts, on one hand, and *ad hoc* pop psychology, on the other.

This balance is especially difficult in writings on marriage. Historically, Christian (especially Catholic, and to some extent also Orthodox) reflections on marriage have tended toward the abstract and conceptual. More recently, there has been something of a “romantic” idealistic turn in spiritual reflections on marriage—the writings of Pope John Paul II are no exception—such that few could see in them concrete examples of wisdom drawn from everyday living. On the other extreme are the many works which draw liberally from anecdotal evidence on married life, but which fail to engage the theological tradition, and thus lack a sense of how marriage understood as a vocation arises out of the fundamental desire to respond, at the deepest level, to the ways divine grace enables us to respond to God’s own invitation to discipleship.

In his four ensuing chapters on communion, conversion, sexuality, and parenting (respectively), Gaillardetz explores the implications of the principles he outlines early in the book. I found his chapter on conversion particularly compelling, his

chapter on sexuality less so. The former illustrates the ascetical nature of marriage, responding to the “second class” status assigned to this Christian vocation by those who chose celibacy. Marriage, he rightly asserts, is a constant call to embrace the paschal mystery in our quotidian acts of sacrifice.

The chapter on sexuality is sound, drawing from biblical and magisterial sources, and points ultimately to the thesis that sexuality must be integrated into the life of a marriage. While I found the discussion to be well articulated, I would have appreciated more exploration of what that integration means in terms of the spiritual life. Instead, Gaillardetz spends a good part of the chapter responding (intelligently) to the post-*Humanae Vitae* debate on contraception. To be sure, this debate is important, but in my experience it is more important to offer those considering marriage (and those already married) a chance

to address questions of sexuality in the larger scope of sacramental performance—that is, as a privileged place wherein the married couple ritually enacts their particular, peculiar interpersonal dynamic through physical exchange. Young people desperately need a nuanced, thoughtful reflection on the spirituality of sex.

I strongly recommend this book for three audiences: college students taking courses on the theology or spirituality of Christian marriage; pastoral leaders in pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter programs, to make available to couples to whom they minister; and mentor couples who work with younger engaged or married couples. The questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each chapter will provide ample resources in group settings. Kudos to Richard Gaillardetz for producing a book that will make a positive impact on the way couples think about marriage in the economy of the Christian life.