BOOK REVIEWS

Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature. By Leo G. Perdue. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1994. 420 pp. Paper.

Leo G. Perdue has produced a comprehensive study of the five major books of the Wisdom tradition of biblical Israel: Proverbs, Job, Qoheleth, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon. Claiming that the major Old Testament theologies that have been written in the last four decades have been developed around the themes of salvation history and covenant, he undertakes the task of providing a thorough investigation of the neglected Wisdom tradition.

He begins with an overview of some of the leading contributors to the biblical theology movement and their treatment of the Wisdom material. He first compares the works of Wright, von Rad, Westermann, Childs, and Trible. Then, dividing the examinations of Wisdom theology according to the four organizing principles of anthropology, cosmology, theodicy, and the dialectic of anthropology and cosmology, he briefly critiques the work of several scholars who fit into each category. These include his mentor Walther Zimmerli, Rankin, Priest, and Brueggemann; Gese, Schmid, Preuss, and Hermisson; Crenshaw and Mack; von Rad, Westermann, Albertz, Doll, Murphy, and Clements. Perdue's own approach to the material is from the perspective of the interaction between the two creation metaphors of cosmology and anthropology.

At the outset, Perdue explains the operative presuppositions that are fundamental to his investigation: (1) the conviction that sapiential imagination is both linguistically and historically world-shaping; (2) the belief that root metaphors played an important role in the process of world-shaping; (3) the opinion that these metaphors were central to the rhetoric of sapiential language; (4) an appreciation for the importance of various social locations that gave rise to this creative imagination and metaphorical language. Having situated his work within that of other scholars and identified his own methodological considerations, Perdue then painstakingly addresses the biblical material.

Perdue's approach is the same in each chapter. He first outlines the literary structure of the respective biblical book and then follows this outline as he proceeds through the contents of the book. He relates the material intertextually with other biblical material as well as with ex-

trabiblical writings that might throw light on the meaning of the text. The chapter ends with a concluding summary of the findings of his research. His analysis is rigorous and his insights are astute. His comprehensive grasp of pertinent and supporting material, evidenced in the extensive footnotes and comprehensive bibliography, serves to make this book a resource to which the reader can return again and again. Faithful to his stated intent, Perdue uncovers the cosmological and anthropological issues present in each biblical book. Doing this, he provides the reader with a unique vantage point from which to view the Wisdom writings' theological tradition of creation.

In addition to what has already been said, there are several other features of this study that make it a fine textbook for a graduate level course in Wisdom literature. Perdue's treatment of creative imagination and the nature and function of metaphor are superb treatises in their own right. They will provide students with a fine introduction to literary analysis as well as the dynamic involved in theological development. Also, the fact that he has not limited his examination only to those books found within the Protestant canon, but has included the Deutero-canonical/Apocryphal books of Wisdom and Ben Sira, broadens the author's reading audience. Finally, while the biblical texts are carefully examined and the author's findings are precisely explained, the book itself is well written and easily understandable.

This study will not only address the biblical theological lacuna mentioned by the author, it will also afford a solid scholarly basis for the development of creation theology. Its scope and its distinction will establish it as a foundational work in the area, one from which scholar and student alike will turn to and benefit.

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They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer. By Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994. x + 464 pp. $24.

Amid the plethora of recent books about the psalms and biblical prayer, Patrick Miller's latest work is noteworthy for its reverent and scholarly point of view as well as its careful consideration of a variety of topics about ancient Israel's prayer. Miller builds on his earlier book, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Fortress Press, 1986), by situating Israel's worship within the context of God's promises and the people's response.

Miller begins with a discussion of the prayer of ancient Mesopotamia, showing the strong similarities between the prayer of Israel and that of its neighbors; he then explains the structure and meaning of the forms of prayer (petition, thanksgiving, praise, and contrition). He includes chapters entitled "Prayers Women Prayed" and "The Further Witness of the New Testament."

Throughout the book Miller enriches his discussion with specific details about word meanings and textual difficulties. He includes many examples from the psalms and prose prayers. The latter add insights about the circumstances of prayer because they are situated within a specific narrative and religious context, and they frequently mention the outcome of the prayer.

Miller synthesizes his findings and situates them within the framework of Israel's covenantal relationship with God. For example, prayers of petition, the most common form of biblical prayer, often include lengthy descriptions of human problems. Their great detail is often difficult for the modern reader to appreciate. But the complaint serves a larger purpose: to reinforce the cry for help by describing as graphically as possible precisely what precipitates the petition.

The book is clearly organized, with helpful section headings throughout. These also serve as useful lists; for example, in the chapter on petition, he enumerates and explains the kinds of petitions in narrative prayers, then the requests in the psalms.

Two detailed appendices and an index of scriptural references complete the book. The first lists forty-eight prose prayers for help with outlines of the structural elements of each, the occasion for the prayer and the divine response that followed. The second offers a technical discussion of the hymnic form, paying particular attention to its grammatical structure.

The author broaches two timely and problematic topics. The chapter on prayers offered by women calls attention to the paucity of women's voices in the Bible. The chapter also illustrates the difficulty in identifying prayers that are uniquely female. For example, in the case of both Hannah and Hagar, the speaker is identified as a woman and the concerns expressed are those of women. But while the topics might be considered "female," such as a woman's desire for a child and her concerns about the life and safety of a child, the point of view might not necessarily be female. For example, current feminist scholars ask, "Would a woman have prayed in earnest for a child, without any petition for divine protection throughout her pregnancy and delivery?"

Another timely and problematic aspect of the book is its discussion of New Testament prayer. While the New Testament records very few

actual prayers, it teaches about and exhorts to prayer, usually in the spirit and words of ancient Israel. But Miller identifies two significant exceptions: the Trinitarian character of Christian prayer and prayer for, rather than against, one's enemies. With regard to the very problematic second difference, he suggests that prayer against one's enemies was actually prayer against the enemies of God. Such prayer leaves to God the issue of justice for the oppressor. However, the ability to pray for one's enemies seems to depend on Christ's death for its resolution, and thus to subordinate Israelite prayer to Christian, an important area of concern in current ecumenical dialogue. Hopefully Miller will develop this insight further.

Aside from these minor complexities the book has much to offer the pastor and nonspecialist, as well as the scholar of biblical prayer.

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Turning Point: The Inside Story of the Papal Birth Control Commission, and How *Humanae Vitae* Changed the Life of Patty Crowley and the Future of the Church. By Robert McClory. New York: Crossroad, 1995.

Catholic (like most other) thinking about sexuality is in muddled shape these days and Robert McClory, professor of journalism at Northwestern University, has not written a book that will be much direct help in making sense of the muddle. Like journalist Robert Blair Kaiser's book of ten years ago—whose argument, synopsized and repackaged here, comprises over half of McClory's text—this book on birth control is neither carefully documented nor theologically nuanced.

To be fair, McClory says he is not interested in the theology of *Humanae Vitae* itself, hoping instead to show "why the great experiment in consultation (that happened in the *Pontifical Commission for the Study of Population, Family, and Births* from 1963 until 1966) failed" (7). But, like Kaiser's book before it, this work is more interested in fingering the "reactionar(ies)" and "villains" who convinced Pope Paul VI to hold the Catholic line against contraception than it is in helping move along the discussion (x, 130).

If there is no *direct* help here for the depressingly stalled out discussion in contemporary sexual morality, McClory does make an indirect

contribution by helping us admire papal birth control commission member Patty Crowley, who founded the Christian Family Movement in 1949 with her husband Pat. Crowley, now in her early eighties and still active volunteering in the women's shelter she founded and hosting monthly "conscience-raising" discussions on faith and action, is too busy to spend much time reminiscing about past accomplishments and setbacks (165–6).

But McClory has read through the "Crowley collection" at the University of Notre Dame and gives us lengthy citations of Patty Crowley's addresses to the birth control commission. We first get her interpretation of the 1965–66 CFM worldwide survey on birth control of 3,000 Catholic married couples active in Church life: "Almost without exception, the response was that there is a bad psychological effect in the use of rhythm" (103). Then we get her theological interpretation of that data: faithfully married couples use contraception without doing damage to themselves and their marriages. Or, as Crowley told the commission:

> Couples are generous. Christian couples want to have children. It is the very fruit of their love for each other. What is needed is to rid ourselves of this negative outlook on psychological and spiritual values. Couples can be trusted. They will accept the progress of change, and they will have increased confidence in the Church as she helps them grow in love and demonstrates her trust and confidence in them (122).

In focusing on Crowley, McClory has rediscovered our tradition's best "natural law" approach to morality. Aquinas held that natural is the opposite of violence (see *ST* I-II, q. 6, a. 5), and so linked natural law moral theology to human experience in the world. Aquinas's approach implies that if something is unnatural to human beings we should be able to describe the violence it does to them. The truth of human nature does not change, but we come to understand what that truth is and how to describe it by our experiences in history. Patty Crowley was arguing that experience might just demonstrate that contraception is natural to human beings.

The later scholastic tradition truncated Aquinas and claimed to know what is natural by syllogistic inference without recourse to human experience. If McClory does not argue theologically against the positions of those he takes to be villains on this issue, he does show that Crowley's opponents argued in just this truncated way. For example, he cites commission member Stanislas de Lestapis' rejection of Crowley's survey as a nontheological idealization of the experience of married couples (107). This Jesuit sociologist's 1966 rejection of the ex-

perience of married people as theologically irrelevant was strange, but the 1990 argument of commission member (but mostly no-show) Fr. Gerald Kelly is outlandish. Kelly wonders "what purpose statisticians, social scientists, lay witnesses, even family life directors served on this commission since they could speak only about questions irrelevant to the moral determination the original Commission was called upon to make" (157). The problem with de Lestapis' and Kelly's arguments is that they remain stuck in an incoherent and nontraditional theological method.

McClory does praise one of the newest defenders of the ban on contraception, Janet Smith, because her "sincerity and irenic tone make her a persuasive debater" (157). McClory would have done well to point out the similarity between Smith's and Crowley's ways of arguing. Directly contradicting Crowley's conclusions, and almost thirty years later, Smith brings empirical evidence to bear on her belief that we live in a "contraceptive culture" in which "damage to relationships and to society as a whole" is everywhere noticeable (Smith, *Alleluia*, August 13, 1994, 14). Both Smith and Crowley argue out of a natural law method that correlates to human experience, Smith claiming to be able to demonstrate violence in contraception and Crowley in rhythm.

In the end, what I got out of reading McClory's book is the hope that these two women will come together in one room to talk about what is natural and what is violent in the realm of sexuality. I am serious in asking for this discussion, and here are two suggestions for its context. First, Crowley's surveys no doubt need to be redone in light of improvements in what we now call natural family planning. Second, Smith will do well to avoid glib references to what she calls the "contraceptive culture." The phrase actually seems to have been coined in the mid 1950s (before oral contraceptives were even widely known to exist, let alone used) by the very Father de Lestapis whose syllogistic natural law Smith herself rejects. De Lestapis' much berated "contraceptive civilization" turns out to be little more than a hobgoblin justifying his a priori rejection of any "sordid mechanical device" for the regulation of births (see de Lestapis, *La limitation des Naissances*, 2d ed., 1959, 68ff.).

These suggestions take us a long way from McClory's *Turning Point.* But if this work is to be any kind of helpful turning point in a tired discussion it will be so because it has let Patty Crowley speak again after many years. How helpful for all of us if she and Janet Smith could have a theological discussion together.

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A Holy and Living Sacrifice: The Eucharist in Christian Perspective. By Ernest Falardeau. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996. 82 pp.

The Eucharist as sacrifice has been the focus of a fair amount of polemical exchange between Catholics and Protestants since the time of the Reformation. In *A Holy and Living Sacrifice,* Ernest Falardeau, a Blessed Sacrament priest and director of the office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, seeks to make available to the general reader the growing ecumenical agreement on this, one of the principal theological roadblocks on the path to Christian unity. Falardeau's goal in writing the book is two-fold. First, he seeks "to ground current Catholic devotion more deeply in the solid ecumenical theological consensus presently in place among the Churches" and, second, "to explain to our ecumenical friends how such devotion is consonant with the ecumenical convergence, and how it can lead to a more fruitful living of the Gospel" (x). As in his previous book, *One Bread and Cup: Source of Communion,* the author offers a "spiritual theology" on the topic, conscious of his task as one of bringing "together the fruitful theological reflections and liturgical histories which point the way to a better celebration and reception of the Eucharist."

In order to accomplish this ambitious goal the first chapter reviews the understanding of sacrifice in the Bible and later (especially medieval) tradition. The subsequent six chapters then deal with other doctrinal themes that touch on the notion of eucharistic sacrifice: the Eucharist for the Forgiveness of Sin (2), Memorial (3), Communion (4), Priesthood (5), Eschatology (6), and Spirituality (7).

This book contains much that is worthwhile. Written in a manner accessible to Christians from a wide range of backgrounds, it is clear that the author is convinced that an understanding of the history of regarding the Eucharist as sacrifice will do much not only to further ecumenical dialogue, but to aid in developing a more profound eucharistic spirituality among the faithful of all Christian traditions. While it is clear that the book is written from a Roman Catholic perspective, it is evident that the author is conversant with the major contemporary ecumenical discussions on the Eucharist, especially those held under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and the bilateral discussions between Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans. In this, the book serves as a good introduction to some of the current debate surrounding this controverted topic.

In any book of this modest size that treats so vast a topic as eucharistic sacrifice there are bound to be lacunae. For those who wish to use

this book to inform ecumenical discussion there are two major areas where Falardeau's discussion needs to be complemented. First (and quite curiously), there is not enough attention given to the biblical and especially the patristic origins of eucharistic sacrifice, despite an affirmation in the preface that the ecumenical consensus "rests squarely on biblical and patristic evidence and understanding" (x). While there are glancing references to David Power's *The Sacrifice We Offer* and Kenneth Stevenson's *The Eucharist and Offering,* major works that could have served to inform the sketchy presentation of the patristic material are ignored—such as Robert Daly's *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* and Nathan Mitchell's *Cult and Controversy.* Second, it is also unfortunate from a methodological point of view that the euchology is never cited. The work done in the various churches in revising their eucharistic prayers since the 1960s could have served as a solid basis for illustrating both the consensus surrounding this topic as well as the areas where there is still uneasiness in the use of sacrificial/offering language applied to the Eucharist. Again, this is curious since the very title of the book comes from the Eucharistic Prayer III of the Roman Sacramentary (although no reference is ever made to this particular text).

Despite these limitations the author has performed a valuable service to the churches in bringing the growing consensus on eucharistic sacrifice to the attention of a greater number of the faithful. Complemented with other studies, it could serve as a helpful starting place for ecumenical study and discussion.

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The Pastoral Companion: A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry. By John M. Huels. New Series, Second Edition; Revised, Updated, and Expanded. Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1995. xvii + 432 pp. $20.00.

Receiving the new edition of *The Pastoral Companion* is like greeting an old friend and then discovering that the friend is more cherished and helpful than ever before.

Originally (1929) an English translation of a German work, the first series of *The Pastoral Companion* went through fourteen updated editions (the last in 1961). After the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* the book was thoroughly revised and reissued, and now John Huels has once again "revised, updated, and expanded" it. Always a valuable, dependable, and practical aid in pastoral ministry, it is now better than ever.

For many thousands of Catholic ministers *The Pastoral Companion* is already familiar and well regarded. It is accurately described as "a Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry." It makes the Church's official regulations relating to pastoral ministry readily available. However, it contains much more canonical and pastoral material than the canons of the *Code.* The author draws upon many other sources of canonical norms, especially those regarding the sacred liturgy.

Several important canonical documents, interpretations, and policies have appeared since the 1986 edition of the book, and they are all included in this second edition. New sections expand several chapters, and six new appendices have been added. The select bibliography and the glossary of canonical terms are of special value. The inclusion throughout of canons and descriptive language of the Eastern Catholic churches is especially praiseworthy.

The book contains chapters on fundamental laws and general norms, on each of the seven sacraments (five on marriage), on other acts of divine worship, on sacred places and times, on ecumenism and the liturgy, and on parish administration.

The Pastoral Companion contains both canonical norms and clear commentary on those norms. The two are visually distinct: the commentary is indented on each page, and the canonical norms are followed by the citation of their sources. John Huels' commentary is wise, balanced, insightful, and reliable. It shows why he is regarded as one of the foremost authorities on sacramental and liturgical canon law in North America.

This is not a "how to" book; rather, it provides a vision of the parameters within which good pastoral practice, especially sacramental celebrations, should be carried on. It is especially well organized and easily accessible. The book is handsome and well designed; a gracious Gothic print marks the beginning of each chapter. For a volume of this size, style, and quality, the price is remarkably low.

Even more now than in the past, *The Pastoral Companion* is highly recommended for anyone engaged in or preparing for ministry in the Catholic Church.

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Medical Ethics: An Introduction. By Kenneth Kearon. Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995. 111 pp. $9.95.

Kenneth Kearon, rector of Dublin's Tullow Parish and lecturer at the Church of Ireland Theological College, Trinity College, takes on an am-

bitious task in *Medical Ethics: An Introduction.* He offers not a thorough treatment of the theme, but "a readily accessible introduction" (7) to medical ethics for health care professionals, ministers, and the general public so that they may "find their way around the debates" and "make up their own mind on the subject" (7). After three introductory chapters dealing with foundational issues (right to life, person as subject, and a definition of death), Kearon treats specific topics suggesting that the principles to guide ethical reflection will arise through this inductive approach. He examines themes such as euthanasia, abortion, assisted conception, access to health care, and AIDS.

Although Kearon's effort is laudable, it appears that he has taken on too much and does not reach his goals. With regard to providing "readily accessible" information to his readers, Kearon is careful to avoid technical jargon. However, the information that he provides is uneven. At times the material seems sufficient given the scope of the work. For example, his treatment of consent (chapter two) is rather thorough and informative. Likewise chapter three on a definition of death, although I have some reservations here with regard to Kearon's definition of life ("potential to relate") and lack of precision in speaking of the actual physical condition of the dying ("hopeless"). This unevenness and lack of precision carries over to specific themes also. He covers well the issues involved and rival opinions in the abortion debate (with a slight inaccuracy in the Roman Catholic stance) and assisted conception. But the following chapter on issues related to assisted conception treats them so briefly and insufficiently that it hardly seems worth including in the text. Sometimes Kearon debates issues (e.g., suicide); at other times, he simply presents opinions without comment. Thus one could reasonably question whether adequate data are made accessible to the reader in order to make up his or her mind on an issue.

Kearon's goal of assisting people to make up their own minds about issues may be questionable in itself. He presupposes that people are prepared to make up their minds. Yet he offers no method for decisionmaking. Readers may feel overwhelmed rather than assisted in clarifying their own minds on issues.

Finally, I would offer a more substantive critique of the work related to the former one. Kearon states that human rights are at the heart of ethical thinking (9), hence "the right to life" as the opening chapter. Kearon's subsequent presentation of conscience and consent focuses on a person's right to choose for him or herself, based on a right to self-determination (autonomy) in decision-making. Limits on autonomy arise when another's rights might be infringed upon. This raises a question. Is not the whole ethical project concerned principally with

the *good,* the human good in particular? And is not this good protected by human rights and duties? Without this foundational starting point, one has no reference point to make right judgments about his or her conduct and to assess the validity of claims to rights. Suggesting that one make up one's own mind on life and death issues in medical ethics apart from clear guiding principles with respect to the good opens one to the danger of falling into a moral relativism and individualism that can only contribute to moral confusion, not the genuine pursuit of authentic human good for oneself and others. Kearon has not provided assistance with regard to the foundational good or, specifically, how one balances the right to life with the right to autonomy.

In the end, this text fails to achieve its goals and would be only modestly helpful to its intended audience. Although I appreciate Kearon's efforts. I would suggest using other available works.

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Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction. Ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad, 1993. 397 pp. $29.95.

This unprecedented collection is the first of a two-volume commentary resulting from five years of work by the Women in the Biblical World section of the Society of Biblical Literature in preparation for the 1995 centennial of the publication of *The Woman's Bible* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. This first volume is an introduction to the Scriptures, charting a comprehensive approach to feminist biblical interpretation. The second promises to be a commentary on the Christian Testament and other early Christian writings. Seeking to be inclusive, ecumenical, and multicultural, this book draws on the expertise of twenty-six women scholars from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States. It promotes an interactive approach between reader, text, and context, and seeks a shift from the paradigm of domination to one of radical equality.

Following the preface by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, part one focuses on "Charting Interpretation from Different Sociohistorical Locations" and includes "History of Biblical Interpretation by European Women" by Elisabeth Gössmann; "Anna Julia Cooper and Sojourner Truth: Two Nineteenth-Century Black Feminist Interpreters of Scripture," by Karen Baker-Fletcher; "Politicizing the Sacred Texts:

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and The Woman's Bible" by Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford; "Dusting the Bible on the Floor: A Hermeneutics of Wisdom" by Rita Nakashima Brock; "Feminist Interpretations in Africa" by Teresa Okure; and "La Palabra de Dios en Nosotras—The Word of God in Us" by Ada María Isasi-Díaz.

Part two on "Changing Patriarchal Blueprints: Creating Feminist Frames of Meaning" includes "Racism and Ethnocentrism in Feminist Biblical Interpretation" by Kwok Pui-lan; "Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian Interpretation" by Judith Plaskow; "Native American Women, Missionaries, and Scriptures" by Carol Devens-Green; "Unity of the Bible, Unity of the Church: Confessionalism, Ecumenism, and Feminist Hermeneutics" by Melanie A. May and Lauree Hersch Meyer; "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity" by Claudia V. Camp; and "The Face of Transcendence as a Challenge to the Reading of the Bible in Latin America" by Ivone Gebara.

Part three, "Scrutinizing the Master's Tools: Rethinking Critical Methods," contains: "Les Belles Infidèles/Fidelity or Feminism? The Meaning of Feminist Biblical Translation" by Elizabeth A. Castelli; "Historical-Critical Methods" by Monika Fander; "Toward a Materialist-Feminist Reading" by Brigitte Kahl; "Literary-Critical Methods" by Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Janice Capel Anderson; "Social, Sociological, and Anthropological Methods" by Mary Ann Tolbert; "Toward a Multicultural Ecumenical History" by Barbara H. Geller Nathanson; and "Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History" by Karen Jo Torjesen.

Part four, "Transforming the Master's House: Building a 'Room of Our Own,'" rounds off the collection with "Feminist Interpretation and Liturigical Proclamation" by Marjorie Procter-Smith; "Womanist Interpretation and Preaching in the Black Church" by Katie G. Cannon; "Shifting the Paradigm: Feminist Bible Study" by Alison M. Cheek; "A Method of Conscientization: Feminist Bible Study in the Netherlands" by Lieve Troch; and "Teaching Feminist Biblical Studies in a Post-colonial Context" by Kathleen O'Brien Wicker.

This collection is scholarly in tone, though intelligible to informed readers who are not biblical specialists. For the newcomer to feminist hermeneutics, the book serves well to alert one to the importance of recognizing the effect of sociohistorical location on biblical interpretation, the difference in perspective when reading with feminist eyes, and the tools to do so. The examination of traditional critical methods in part three shows well the ways in which these methods can serve as either an ally or an adversary in the feminist task. The interrelatedness of racism, ethnocentrism, and sexism is made clear. The novice will

find the practical suggestions and examples for teaching and ritual expression in part four very helpful.

For those who are already well immersed in feminist hermeneutics this book does not break new ground. Some of the essays reproduce what the author has written elsewhere, but gathered into one volume, they are more readily accessible then they would be in diverse journals. There is a good deal of repetition from essay to essay, as each one reiterates how women's voices have not been heard and how the past patriarchal framework has shaped traditional biblical interpretation. In addition, the same sources or groundbreaking women are quoted or alluded to again and again. For the uninitiated this repetion will serve as a good reinforcement in the learning process; for the more experienced in feminist interpretation it will become wearying. Each essay concludes with extensive notes and recommended readings. Together they provide a rich bibliography for further pursuit. Overall, this book achieves its goal: "to empower readers for the tasks of engaging in critical analysis and for developing a different sociohistorical and theoethical imagination: (xi).

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Reading Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary. By Bonnie Thurston. New York: Crossroad, 1995. 197 pp. $16.95.

Bonnie Thurston's commentary on three shorter Pauline epistles is another contribution in the Reading the New Testament Series published by Crossroad Press. The series, intended for the general reader, is designed to present the "big picture" and the principal themes of each of the New Testament texts without burdening the reader with elaborate verse by verse commentary. Thurston's readable style and clear presentation make her contribution an especially valuable addition to this fine project.

This book is divided into three sections, one for each of the three letters. In each section, an introductory chapter briefly describes, first of all, the city to which the letter is addressed (Colossae, Ephesus, Thessalonica) and then the nature of the Christian Church in that city. Thurston next deals with introductory questions of authenticity, the

circumstances attendant in the writing of each letter, and the structure evident in each of these texts. In her judgment Colossians is best understood as genuinely Pauline, while Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians are surely pseudepigraphical. A helpful introduction to Deutero-Pauline Christianity precedes the commentaries on Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians. Thurston fairly represents the scholarly debates on many of these introductory questions. Moreover, she often skillfully simplifies many complex issues in the interests of the general reader. Her judgments are sound and reflect the current scholarly consensus on disputed issues. For each of the three texts there follows a brief commentary arranged according to the logical and formal sections of the respective letter. In keeping with the overall aims of the commentary series, particular emphasis is given to the literary and theological dimensions of each of the texts. Each section of commentary, furthermore, concludes with carefully selected bibliographic references for further reading.

Thurston's discussion of the "Christ-hymn" in Colossians 1:15-20 exemplifies both her overall method and her treatment of that letter. Rather than break new ground, she intends to "summarize existing literature and to suggest a reading of the hymn as it exists in the text and as it served Paul's purposes in the Colossian situation" (21). After a careful survey of the major viewpoints, she concludes that the hymn is a pre-Pauline insertion in the letter. Its bipartite structure focuses first on Christ and creation, and second on Christ and reconciliation. These technical issues aside, Thurston turns to the purpose of the hymn within the Colossian letter. She claims that the hymn draws from the reservoir of the Jewish Wisdom tradition and functions to counter inadequate christological viewpoints in Colossae and to reassert the supreme lordship and primacy of Christ. The second part of the hymn then establishes Christ's headship of the body, the Church, and his role as reconciler of all creation. Thurston's exposition is measured, careful, and eminently clear.

She handles with equal skill the thorny problem of the so-called "Colossian heresy," which, she says, "is nearly impossible to define precisely" (37). Thurston chooses to focus her comments not on a hypothetically reconstructed "heresy," but on the letter's own remarks and arguments. The purpose of Colossians is thoroughly christological; it reasserts above all the supreme lordship of Christ. The parenesis of the second half of the letter, including the household code, merely spells out the social consequences of its christological stance.

Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians receive the same balanced reading. Thurston accepts the non-Pauline authorship of these letters and judges their primary purposes, in fidelity to Paul, to exhort Christians

in Asia Minor toward unity under the headship of Christ (Ephesians) and to refute notions that the Day of the Lord had already come (2 Thessalonians). For the intended general readership, Thurston has compiled remarkably thorough commentaries on these three letters that will prove sound and reliable for all who consult them.

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Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis. By L. Gregory Jones. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. xix + 313 pp. $17.99 paper; $27.99 cloth.

Any doubts that L. Gregory Jones is a significant voice in Christian theology today are dispelled by his most recent book, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis.* The core thesis of this remarkable work is that for Christians forgiveness involves much more than a single gesture or even a repentant spirit; indeed, Jones suggests, "it is an embodied way of life in an ever-deepening friendship with the Triune God and with others." Keenly aware of how forgiveness has been trivialized in our culture, Jones, an associate professor of theology at Loyola College in Baltimore, argues that while forgiveness is liberating and full of hope, it is also costly because it commits one to a way of life in which diminishing and destructive habits are continually unlearned and gracious practices such as reconciliation, truthfulness, peace, and joy are embraced. For the Christian who has been set free by the forgiveness of Christ, embodying forgiveness is like learning a craft amidst a community striving to live in communion with God, other human beings, and all of creation. This is why, as Jones continually reminds us, forgiveness is both a gift and a task.

In the first third of the book, Jones thoroughly critiques and rejects two cultural understandings of forgiveness. The first is a therapeutic notion of forgiveness, which Jones rightly claims has overtaken and marginalized a truly theological and more substantive understanding of forgiveness. Not only is the therapeutic model of forgiveness privatized and extremely individualistic, but its aim is not the restoration of people into communion with God and with others, but enabling them to be at peace with themselves, something quite different from Christianity's focus on accountability, repentance, confession, and reconciliation.

The second approach, which Jones sees as equally pernicious, is a complete rejection of the relevance and efficacy of forgiveness on the grounds that life is inevitably violent and such violence must be met not with mercy and forgiveness, but with force. On this view he writes, "Violence may not be as hopeful as forgiveness, but it seems more realistic and more effective—and, perhaps, more truthful about the way the world really is." But the problem with such presumed realism is that it dead-ends in despair. As Jones continually reminds us, if there is no place for forgiveness in a world bloodied and broken by sin, then violence is indeed master of us all.

In the second part of the book, Jones turns his attention to providing a theological foundation for a Christian account of forgiveness. He reflects on the gospel portrait of Jesus who is the perfect embodiment of the forgiveness of God. He reminds us that the Spirit given at Pentecost is continually in our midst not only to free us from the destructive burdens of our past, but also to invite us to more graced and hopeful ways of living into the future. And perhaps most importantly, he shows us that forgiveness is to issue in a new way of life, a genuinely communal existence that transforms us into a holy people. This new way of life is inseparable from the sacraments, particularly baptism, the Eucharist, and rituals of reconciliation, because they are the practices that free us from attitudes and actions that divide and educate us into the ways of God that make a peaceful and joyous existence possible.

In the last third of *Embodying Forgiveness,* Jones focuses on the tough questions that seem to undermine the power of forgiveness: What about people who refuse forgiveness and reject every attempt at reconciliation? What about those who insist on being our enemies? Can revenge ever be justified? Jones examines each of these issues with care and sensitivity, but concludes that people who live from the mercy of God are obliged to hope in the repentance and conversion of all sinners, even our most persistent enemies. In *Embodying Forgiveness,* Jones has written a masterpiece that is compelling and challenging, but also full of hope because his aim is to remind us that with a God who "makes all things new," no situation, however destructive, and no past, however painful, need ever control us. There is no better book than this on a subject that strikes at the heart of life. Beautifully written, carefully argued, and refreshingly substantive, *Embodying Forgiveness* is destined to be a classic.

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Hail Mary? The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism. By Maurice Hamington. New York: Routledge, 1995. x + 216 pp.

This review is being written during May, Mary's month, as the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins called it. Many Catholics still recall the "lush" May processions that were very much part of the landscape of preconciliar Catholicism: girls in uniform and boys in suits marching around the block on which parish facilities were located, singing a plethora of songs honoring Mary as virgin, mother, queen of May. It all seemed quite wonderful, not to mention well ordered.

Lurking around the corner of time, however, was a world waiting to rip the May crown out of our hands, and it is probably just as well. The well-orderedness of that world is sometimes highly suspect. Many feminist Catholics today remind the Church that Mary functioned to define ultimate patriarchal womanhood, something quite in contrast to other brands of ultimate womanhood.

The truth be told, Mary is more than simply a person. She is, and always has been, an image, a symbol, an ideological figure, or, as Hamington's *Hail Mary?* reasonably argues, a social construction. So also were those May processions. They were certainly about Mary, no doubt, but they were freighted with far more than we sometimes recognize: the call of women to be mothers (Mary as Jesus' mother) or nuns (Mary as virgin); the purity that was expected of women (and men); the role of women in Church in society; Catholicism (with the real Madonna) being the true religion.

Hamington's work, of course, addresses not May processions, but the location of the Marian image and ideology in Catholicism, and with it the understanding of womanhood (and one suspects as a consequence "manhood") encoded in that ideological image.

The book itself consists of an introduction, six chapters, endnotes, and index. A brief glance at the chapter titles is instructive: "The History and Social Construction of Mary" (1); "The Struggle to Control Mary" (2); "Catholic Sexual Morality and the Blessed Virgin Mary" (3); "Mary, the Mediatrix and Asymmetrical Gender Power" (4); "Women and Evil/Mary and Eve" (5); "The Recasting of the Marian Image" (6). All the chapters of this book are intriguing; however, the first and last chapters are especially important as they serve as bookends of sorts.

Chapter 1 argues for an understanding of the person and role of Mary in Catholicism as a social construction. As such, the image of Mary can hardly be said to be innocent, that is, devoid of ideological content. Rather, it is freighted with all sorts of meaning. Mary functions as image, symbol, and ideology, and not simply as a historical figure in her own right. It is precisely this aspect of the Marian image

that has been unmasked by contemporary Christian critical thinking, especially Catholic feminist thought. Much of the remainder of the work (chs. 2–5) is illustrative of this fundamental thesis. Chapter 2 understands the struggle to control the Marian image as a gendered struggle. In Chapter 3 the relationship between Mary's virginity and Catholic sexual ethics is explored. Chapter 4 examines the relationship between Mary as mediatrix and the restraints placed by patriarchy on that image. In the fifth chapter the Eve/Mary typology is visited, accompanied by an exploration of its implications for women in Catholicism.

The final chapter then attempts to recast the Marian image. Here Hamington turns to the recent writings of feminist theologians such as Elizabeth Johnson, Catharina Halkes, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ivone Gebara, and Maria Bingemer—all of whom write from within the Catholic tradition. In the writings of these theologians, one finds alternative approaches to the "Mary Problem." For example, in Elizabeth Johnson's approach, one finds a Mary who was a member of the class of the working poor, an outsider, a victim of violence, a prophet of justice, a woman. Hamington succinctly provides a window into the thought of each of the above theologians, while also providing respectful and helpful critiques to further conversation.

In this final analysis, one also realizes that the image of Mary is not simply a social construction, but a theological one as well. Mary not only reveals much about what the Catholic tradition understands the role of women (and men) to be, but she also reveals much about how Catholicism understands God. Despite the incessant denials by theologians and hierarchs to the contrary, Mary has, in fact, functioned as a God-image (even at times a subtle goddess of sorts) legitimating social roles. As Elizabeth Johnson has noted elsewhere, much that the Catholic tradition says about the "mother of God" should really be said about "God the Mother."

If you peek through the theological blinds today, you quickly notice that the Marian culture war rages about us, both within and outside Catholicism. Marian sightings (apparitions) have increased throughout the world precisely at a moment when there is an increased interest in Mary among certain feminist and liberation theologians. In many respects this war is illustrative of Hamington's fundamental thesis. Karl Barth, the great Protestant theologian, once noted that Catholicism's teaching on Mary was a supreme instance of its fundamental theological error. From one perspective Barth was correct—partially. Much of the Catholic imagination certainly is hitched to the Marian image and tradition. As a Catholic, this reviewer credits in hope those perspectives as more on than off target.

Mary as person, image, and symbol says much about how Catholic Christianity understands God, Christ, humanity, grace, and sin. Likewise the image of Mary exports socially constructed ideals.

Whether one is interested in Mary as a social construction, a theological construction, or both, this work reads well and is worth one's time and effort. It provides an interesting approach to Mary—a provocative work reminding Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians that, despite attempts to crown Mary either literally or metaphorically, diamonds are certainly not this woman's best friend.

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The Romance of Reason: An Adventure in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas. By Montague Brown. Petersham, Mass.: Saint Bede's Publications, 1993. 177 pp. $12.95.

Montague Brown's *The Romance of Reason* is an extended exercise in Thomistic philosophical reasoning. Brown, a professor of philosophy at St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire, wants to show that for Aquinas reason and wonder, far from being in opposition, are inherently connected in the search for truth. Acknowledging his debt to Lonergan's reading of Aquinas, Brown contends that wonder awakens our desire to know and to understand, and reason is our dynamic capacity to do so. Without wonder, reason stagnates in ossified and simplistic assertions and deductive systems that may have no connection to reality; however, unlinked to reason, wonder diminishes to fantasy. To demonstrate his thesis, Brown focuses on four "double-edged truths," propositions that at first seem irreconcilable, but which, on closer inspection, are entirely compatible:

(1) the apparent tension between science and God; (2) the apparent contradiction in claiming that human beings are both material and spiritual creatures; (3) the problematic relationship between providence and free will; and (4) the apparent tension between wanting to claim, on the one hand, that God is the source of morality and, on the other hand, that our moral oblixations can be discovered by attending to our human nature.

These are fundamental philosophical questions, each of which demonstrates Brown's contention that genuine philosophy begins in wonder and a hunger to know the truth. In addressing them, Brown resolves any apparent antagonism between the propositions by arguing that God does not override scientific understanding, human freedom, or authentic morality, but actually makes each possible. For

instance, if science leads to questions about God, God is the foundation for the very intelligibility on which scientific research depends. Similarly, when discussing human freedom Brown suggests, following Aquinas, that for God to be the first cause of all that is does not take away human freedom by making God directly responsible for everything; rather, by creating our human nature as intelligent and free, a provident God is the absolute guarantee of freedom.

The most interesting and engaging section of the book is chapter five, "God and Morality." Brown argues that God can be the source of all moral obligations without religious belief being necessary for moral claims to be made. He draws this conclusion from an examination of Aquinas's understanding of the natural law. He rightly observes that for Aquinas, as for Aristotle, happiness and goodness are inseparable. Human beings are happy, Brown contends, when their lives participate in the basic goods Aquinas saw as constitutive of human flourishing: life itself, family and friendship, political community, aesthetic experiences. Brown wants to root morality in these basic goods as a way of guarding against relativism and subjectivism. This is an important concern, but he overlooks that for Aquinas the very possibility of being able to flourish in family and friendship and community depended on cultivating the virtues in which moral goodness resides. Brown wants to safeguard a natural law morality, but in doing so misconstrues Thomistic ethics by suggesting that the center of Aquinas's schema of the moral life is not the virtues, but the natural law. On the contrary, if the natural law identifies the basic physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual goods essential to human flourishing, Aquinas knew that only the person who has perfected the virtues of prudence and justice is truly able to recognize these basic goods and knows how to pursue them.

This raises a larger methodological question: Is a philosophical reading of Aquinas adequate for truly understanding him? Brown argues that it is, but one can respond that even to understand what makes something reasonable for Aquinas, particularly human behavior, cannot be known apart from the theological virtues, especially charity, and the friendship with God to which they call us. In this respect, what reason means for Aquinas is not self-evident, but derived from the Christian vision out of which he wrote.

These are important questions and the strength of Brown's book is that he makes us want to think about them. Although one can question turns in his arguments and some of his conclusions, to read this book is to become part of a conversation that matters, and for that alone it is worthwhile. *The Romance of Reason* is clearly written and quite substantive. In the hands of a good teacher, it would be a solid text for an

undergraduate course in philosophy or for anyone wishing to further his or her study of Aquinas.

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Motherprayer: The Pregnant Woman's Spiritual Companion. By Tikva Frymer-Kensky. New York. Riverhead Books, 1995. Introduction by the author. 231 pp. plus notes by chapter and Index. $22.00.

Despite its title, which might suggest a selection of traditional pieties, and despite its bookjacket cover illustration—a Dante Gabriel Rosetti face of serene, almost other-worldly pristine beauty—this is not a book for what my mother used to call "ladies of delicate disposition." It is a meaty. vital, earthy occasionally erotic celebration of every aspect of pregnancy and childbirth, written from the perspective of a woman who is, by self-description, "an American feminist Jew," also a teacher and scholar (director of biblical studies for the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and a professor of Hebrew Bible at the University of Chicago Divinity School); also a wife and mother. It is a rich broth of a book, both spicy and nourishing, a life-affirming mix of prayer, poetry. theological and spiritual reflections, intercessions, mythology and folklore, set against the pressing day-by-day realities of the pregnant woman's physical experience: swelling feet, aching backs, nausea, and exhaustion. Some of the imagery is theologically daring and memorable; after asserting that parenthood, pregnancy, and nurturance follow the highest tradition of *imitatio dei,* the poet asks:

When you were pregnant with lsrael, Lord
—did your ankles swell?
—did your fingers tingle and droop?
Did you spend your time waiting, marking time,
and doing infinite chores? . . .

This book originated in the author's personal experience. Sensing that "something was wrong" nearing the fortieth week of her pregnancy, she consulted her doctor and was told that she had an hour to go home, pack her bags and be ready for a caesarean delivery the following morning. She took with her to the hospital two novels, a TV guide, and "by an act of divine Providence or sheer lunacy a file folder full of Sumerian and Akkadian birth incantations." (The latter had been assembled for an non-birth-related research project.) The night before her surgery, she studied the ancient birth incantations. "As I read them, I felt the tradition of millennia of women who had given birth before me. I felt their strain and their joy and felt connected to the

great cosmic process of renewal. . . . My own short life span became extended by a spiritual communion with women past and future. . . ."

It took her almost a year to get angry, and to ask why she, "well educated in Judaism and in Christianity, had to go all the way back to Babylon in order to find something to read before childbirth. And what could most women do, who do not read Sumerian?" What, indeed? Confronting the wasteland of inattention to bodily processes in Western religious and secular culture—inattention to "the awesome markers of growing up," to biological life processes ranging from menstruation to menopause, from ejaculation to impotence—and, above all, the "profound silence of our religious traditions regarding the spiritual dimensions of pregnancy and childbirth"—the author vowed to try to make our religious traditions pay attention to pregnancy, to expand these religious traditions yet still remain faithful to them.

Her basic principles are clearly outlined. First, although sympathetic to the feminist option of choosing not to have children (a choice made by some in order to break the culturally-imposed link between biology and destiny) her first principle is the assumption that "having children is an important activity." She does not wish to convince women to bear children, but to provide those who choose to do so with religious imagery and language to maximize the spiritual dimensions of this choice. Second is her firm commitment to monotheism and to its feminist transformation. She has mined the texts of Judaism and Christianity to create the poems and meditations in her book. While the androcentricity of these texts has angered and alienated some feminists to the point of rejection, she refuses to leave her religion tradition to express female identity: "I do not want to spend Sabbath at synagogue and give birth in a coven."

Third is her belief that the necessary renewal of religion in the next century involves a willingness to conduct the discourse "throughout monotheism"—(here apparently restricted to Judaism and Christianity, since Islam provides no source material in this book.) A past history of Christian hostility and supersessionism and Jewish defensiveness in response has exacted a great price and is better laid aside. Judaism and Christianity are sister monotheist religions that have much to say to each other, and women are obligated to engage in this interfaith dialogue.

Like the author. this reviewer has struggled with the denigration and dismissal of women, and the discrimination against them embodied in the religious law and culture of her tradition, and like the author, chooses to light her battles within that religion, not outside it. The dilemma of women who find their nurture and identity in the same faith that belittles them is one common across faith lines, and their sharing of experience, scholarship and initiative is mutually reinforc-

ing. A few Muslim women have been involved in this process, and it is hoped that more will be in the future. Certainly around the issues treated in this book, the involvement of Muslim women would be enriching all around.

And though I agree with the author that a past history of Christian hostility and supersessionism has exacted a great price, I suspect it cannot be laid aside entirely until the hostility and supersessionism themselves have been laid aside. Great and undeniable progress toward that end has been achieved in recent decades. It cannot be discounted or dismissed. But we are not that far away from the declaration, by a major Christian denominational leader of the day, that "God almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew," and the policy decision by that denomination this very year to launch a missionary effort to Jews. Interreligious dialogue among women may not embody it, but supersessionism lives. Moreover, some Christian feminists have cast Judaism in the role of villain in the Christian feminist drama: Jesus becomes the great liberator, and his Jewish background becomes the dark, evil, hateful legacy which he rejected in order to free womankind. They will cite the rabbinic strictures, but forget that St. Paul told women to bow to their husbands as masters and be silent in church.

These realities should not discourage Jewish feminists from women's dialogue. On the contrary, they should spur the process. But they should be prepared to confront the distortions and supercessionist mind sets when encountered. If the author has never encountered them, she is a very lucky feminist indeed, and has moved in rarified circles.

The books chapter headings are instructive: Menstruation; Quest; Formation; Affirmation; Midpassage; Danger and Dread; Prayer; Awaiting the Hour; Labor; Birth. Each section includes prayers, poems. incantations, legends and stories, or creative rituals appropriate to the subject. While some of these are drawn from Babylonian and Aramaic sources, most are Jewish or Christian in origin. From the barren Hannah's silent prayer for a child (Sam 1:10-12)—which, the author reminds us, became the prototype and paradigm for all personal prayers in Jewish tradition—to the striking poetic vision of the blood of birth as a sign of the covenant which binds us to God, the blood of deliverance, the blood of redemption, the author has provided a movable feast.

Some years ago, I remember asking a woman student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College what she was working on at the time. She said she was creating a new ceremony for the naming of a female child in the synagogue. She paused for a minute and then added, somewhat plaintively, "It's not easy to create a ritual." Tikva Frymer-Kensky's book reminds us that it is not. Some of her innovative rituals are more successful than others, which seems only natural. I person-

ally liked the idea of a special birthing garment, appropriate for the labor at hand, but "colorful, festive and glorious." I liked the poetry and most of the prayers, those reclaimed, recreated and newly created. The suggested amulets and wall plaques did not appeal to me. However, rituals become rituals over time, through the acceptance and confirmation of the practicing community. I hope some of the author's will enter the mainstream; whether or not they are the ones I would choose is not important in the long run. There is enough here to give spiritual guidance and sisterly support to women of many cultures and beliefs.

Finally, *Motherprayer* put me in touch once again with the peril of childbirthing and—for many women—its terrors. Western women are the beneficiaries of medical progress in this field: disinfectants, anaesthesia, the delivery room, the surgeon on call. (There *are* modern miracles; two of the dearest and most beloved children I know are the products of *in vitro* fertilization.) Yet. in my grandmother's generation, women died routinely from childbirth. And though I chose natural childbirth as a personal option, I knew there was back-up medical help available in the hospital if something went wrong. This book is a powerful reminder that things have gone and can go wrong, and that bringing a child into the world is an awesome, painful, and glorious experience that empowers a woman to say, as did Eve, "I, with God, have created a human."

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