

REVIEWS

A Biblical Theology of Exile by Daniel L. Smith-Christopher (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), xiv + 209pp.

In this latest book in the *Overtures to Biblical Theology* series, Smith-Christopher draws insights from postcolonial studies to suggest a rereading of the biblical texts that emerge during and out of the Babylonian exile. The author clearly states two central assumptions and goals for the book. The first is that “the specific Babylonian exile must be appreciated as both a historical disaster *and* a disaster that gave rise to a variety of social and religious responses with significant social and religious consequences” (p. 6). Second, he contends that these responses “can be arranged into a coherent picture of a social/theological response to the transhistorical conditions of diaspora, and that this has great contemporary theological significance for modern Christian movements” (p. 6). The book develops the argument that the biblical texts surrounding the exile suggest a model of resistance to the empire that is penitential, wise, missionary, and subversive, yet nonviolent. In the final chapter Smith-Christopher argues that Christians need to recognize their own state of exile within secular society. Furthermore, such Christian exiles “have the biblical resources to live an alternative existence that affirms justice and peace, seeking to move forward God’s holy experiment of creating an authentic humanity that is consciously gathered in non-conformity to the structures around them” (p. 195).

The strengths of this book lie in the wealth of sources and the thorough reviews of scholarship both in biblical and postcolonial studies. It is an interesting and challenging endeavor that sheds new light on some well-read texts and brings to light other lesser known passages. Yet while Smith-Christopher challenges Christians to live an alternative exilic existence and in so doing proposes ways to resist the powers that be, the book often leaves the reader hanging, wishing the author had explained more of the theological implications of such an existence. A major weakness of the book lies more in its omissions than in its explicit argument. That is, there is an apparent dismissal or disregard for the varieties of theology since Constantine—one gets the impression that nearly all of Christian theology since the fourth century is in error inasmuch as it is linked to the “empire of Christendom”. Thus, for example, an Augustinian tradition holds little authority over a contemporary church trying to live in exile. Surely this is not the case even for Smith-Christopher, who will in future work, one hopes, more carefully attend to the helpful ways some of these texts have been read, even if such readings take place within a so-called “dominant” culture.

Of the book’s eight chapters, Smith-Christopher examines issues of methodology in the first and revisits some of these again in Chapter 8. He rightly points out the ways in which exile gets described negatively in contemporary theology such that those who argue for a theology of exile are often labeled “sectarian”. He challenges the assumption that existence in exile is politically irresponsible and ineffective and, following John Howard Yoder and Walter Brueggemann, argues instead that exile

can function as “a category from which to challenge the supposed political theologies of previous ethical discourse” (p. 13).

Drawing on the work of James Scott on “hidden transcripts”, Smith-Christopher argues that strategies of resistance to the dominant culture need not take the form of attempts to reestablish the old state existence—the alternatives are not simply “statist resistance” or collaboration. Rather, Smith-Christopher asks, “Would other forms of identity besides independent nation-states give rise to other forms of resistance? Is resistance only real when swords are drawn and generals obeyed?” (p. 23). The rest of the book answers the former question positively and the latter negatively. The argument presumes “the viability of a community in exile” and the ability of this same community to resist the empire in ways not associated with “nationalist aspirations and imperial connivance” (p. 25).

In Chapter 2 Smith-Christopher proposes reading some of the biblical texts on exile through the lens of late-twentieth century postcolonial studies and research on victims of trauma, disaster, and refugee studies. He argues that an assessment of the impact of the Babylonian exile must make use of such studies if it is not to become a theology that simply “blames the victim”. Using the royal correspondence passages in Ezra 1–7, Smith-Christopher argues against the view that the general Hebrew response to the Persians was positive, and suggests instead that these documents can be read as “symbols of dominance”—the texts reveal a minority people trying to survive and maintain their identity in the midst of fear before the powerful empire. Rather than viewing the Babylonian or Persian rulers as sympathetic, generous masters, under whom the Jews prospered, a close reading of the texts suggest that “we are invited to picture the lowly exile . . . standing before the majestic presence of the Persian monarch” defiantly affirming “Blessed be the Lord, the God of our ancestors . . .” (p. 43). Smith-Christopher concludes that “the editors of Ezra-Nehemiah represent a subversive theology, a hidden transcript, that reserves the recognition of authority to God alone, while maintaining a necessarily polite demeanor to the imperial representatives” (p. 45).

The book also contains a brief survey of the archaeological evidence for the exile and suggests a rereading of this evidence from the perspective of the victims. Such a reading would require a reassessment of the extent of the crisis and would counter the tendency in biblical scholarship to presume a tame, even comfortable existence of the Jews in exile.

Chapter 3 introduces the reader more directly to refugee and disaster studies as a way to guide the readings of Ezekiel and Lamentations. The author then goes on to criticize David J. Halperin’s psychological reading of Ezekiel for not taking into consideration the social and political conditions (i.e. exile) that were the direct causes of Ezekiel’s trauma. There is also a strong critique of literary studies of Lamentations that tend to deny or overlook the reality of the trauma caused by exile. He concludes that reading “these texts without some sense of the trauma of exile is tantamount to blaming the victims . . . and perhaps grossly misunderstanding much of the power of the text in its social context” (p. 104).

In the fourth chapter Smith-Christopher begins the more constructive work of reading the texts as theologies of exile. He begins with an analysis of the power of narrative to repair identities and follows this with an examination of penitential prayers as examples of public practices “around which large-scale identity would be constructed” (p. 111). Such prayers are both political statements and examples of “narrative repair” in that they call the people to recognize the failures of the past—i.e. the monarchy—and call for the creation of a “radically different identity from that exemplified by . . . the monarchy” (p. 121). Such a “politics of penitence accepts that the status of apparent ‘national’ weakness is neither ineffective nor temporary” (p. 122).

Following an analysis of the universalism of Jonah's message, Smith-Christopher explains that the emphasis on purity in the mixed-marriage crisis of Ezra-Nehemiah can best be understood in light of the social and political conditions of minority groups. Studies of such peoples show that in order to maintain their identity, and as a way to resist the influences of the empire, minority cultures must stress purity laws and non-mixing with outsiders in order to maintain their status as the "righteous remnant". The concern to maintain identity is "essential to the survival of a minority witness" (p. 161).

In Chapter 7 the author suggests reading Wisdom and Daniel as literature of a people struggling under the conditions of exile. As such these are examples of underground resistance to the system. For Smith-Christopher, Wisdom literature thus becomes an example of the diaspora ethics of nonviolence—they suggest "disbelief that the political realities under which the people are living are either inevitable or good" (p. 173), and represent an "alternative [form of resistance] to the violent Hebrew ethics of self-preservation" (p. 176). In the case of Daniel, this alternative is a "laughing at the state" (p. 187).

The final chapter concludes with the argument that "an ecclesiology built on 'exile' . . . represents a revolutionary regrouping, rethinking, and re-strategizing option for contemporary Christian existence" (p. 191). Smith-Christopher argues that the church already exists in exile, though most Christians do not want to accept this or are not aware of this circumstance. He reminds readers that Christians must always provide an alternative to the world. Recalling Yoder and Brueggemann, the author argues that such an alternative is always missionary and ad hoc, and that Christians have biblical resources to draw upon for such an existence. This "theology of abandoning Constantine" is "to assert a postcolonialist, as well as exilic, biblical theology" (p. 195). Unfortunately, he does not make a strong case for why Christians should draw on these texts that point toward exile and not on those that might endorse more violent types of resistance or even nationalistic tendencies. Here one presumes that the impetus is Christological, though this is not an explicit part of Smith-Christopher's argument.

Aside from the few criticisms mentioned above, Smith-Christopher's book provides us with insightful readings to challenge and encourage Christians toward the path of faithful exilic witness.

C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell
South American Theological Seminary
 Londrina
 BRAZIL

Politics, Theology and History, by Raymond Plant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xv + 380 pp.

The guiding question of Raymond Plant's confessedly "zigzagging" (p. xiv) contribution to Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion is what role Christian beliefs can and should play in defining a moral basis for liberal democratic society (p. 2). For Plant properly answering this question presupposes clarity with respect to two other issues: (a) the nature, range, and specificity of application of Christian beliefs to societal assumptions, practices and institutions, and (b) the possibility of thinking of democratic liberal society as having a real moral basis (p. 1). It is treatment of these two issues that make up the great bulk of the book of three parts, in which parts 1 and 3 are devoted to the first and second issues respectively, and part 2 combines

elements of both. The importance of these questions is as uncontroversial as the credentials of Plant (who is a political philosopher, politician, Hegel scholar, and sometime theologian) are first class. If the conclusions of *Politics, Theology and History* do not quite reward the effort, it is not because Plant does not ask his questions with sufficient seriousness, or has failed to do his homework. Indeed Plant rehearses the widest range of possible opinion on the issue of the prospects for a valid political theology and produces in minute detail the pros and cons of the functionalist and normative accounts of liberal democratic society. What happens in *Politics, Theology and History* is that the presentation of both more general and specific debates so dominate the text that conclusions tend to be deferred or become indeterminate. While one appreciates Plant's inclusiveness in bringing as many voices as possible to the conversation, and sympathizes with his desire to mediate between contending positions, the result is a kind of diffusiveness that robs the book of real decisiveness and punch.

The vices and virtues of Plant's approach are evident in his expansive rehearsal of the various answers provided by the Christian tradition regarding how Christians render their specific beliefs about the goods of individual and community in a pluralistic situation. We have chapters on the prophets (ch. 2) and natural law (ch. 6), chapters on narrative theology (ch.5) and chapters on representative figures of the classical theological tradition (e. g. Augustine and Calvin) (ch.3) and the modern or contemporary tradition (featuring Pannenberg). Even more impressive than the range of coverage is Plant's ability within a single chapter to engage the secondary literature on the topic, indeed quite different kinds of secondary literature. Chapters 2 and 5 provide particularly good examples of this. In chapter 2, accepting as fundamental the intrinsic connection between prophetic discourse and politics, Plant engages both the universalistic view of von Rad and his school and his more particularistic opposition. Yet at the same time Plant pays attention to the debate in contemporary political theory between Walzer and his critics who argue over the relative merits of communitarianism and universalism on quite different grounds. Chapter 5 is extraordinarily crowded. In addition to discussion of 'narrative' theologians such as Hauerwas, Frei, Lindbeck, and Metz as representing important objections to the universalist case, this chapter also reads Davidson, Wittgenstein, Foucault, and even Nietzsche as their philosophical analogues, and Walzer and Sandel as their correlatives in the area of political theory. While the discussion is often illuminating in the details, the heterogeneity of the lists and lack of clarity regarding the nature of correlation seriously affects the argumentative outcome.

Moreover, here, as in chapter 6 (p. 153 ff), Plant is so successful in presenting objections to universalism that effectively he undermines his own constructive proposal. This appears to be a modified universalism, for universalism of some stripe is a *sine qua non* if Christianity is to have the capability of contributing to the moral foundation of liberal democratic society. In fact in the introduction to part 2, Plant seems to equivocate respecting the achievement of part 1. Instead of claiming what he needs to claim, namely, that in and through the contest between political theologies of more universalistic and more particularistic persuasion he has made a case for a modified form of universalism, Plant instead suggests somewhat irrelevantly that the achievement of part 1 is that it validates the value of community relative to the individual (p. 180).

Incoherence mounts when one examines more carefully the historically tempered universalism that seems to constitute the essence of Plant's positive proposal. If the basic contours of this historically specified political theology are provided by Hegel, it is Hegel also who is credited (ch. 2; ch. 5) with articulating precisely the kind of view of the divine that is a desideratum if a theology is properly to negotiate with the social and political realm that has its own genuine autonomy. Of course, Plant

understands that only a Hegel purged of his hubristic desire for totality and absolute knowledge is adequate to such a task. It can hardly be granted that the grounds adduced by Plant for preferring Hegel to such classical thinkers as Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin, and Barth are compelling. While there is a certain plausibility to the case that Hegelianism rather than the theistic tradition gives the *saeculum* more status, this is not necessarily the same as granting it more integrity. Indeed, one could argue that the intrinsic relationality between the divine and the non-divine so admired by Plant results in the sacralization of the body politic, which is the target of the prophetic tradition. As Kathryn Tanner has argued so persuasively in her *The Politics of God* the theistic tradition may in principle—and not simply in fact—be in a better position to offer critique. This problem, however, is itself both relativized by, while contributing to, the larger structural problem. Even if Plant succeeded in making a stronger case for the validity of his modified Hegelianism, indeed precisely to the extent that he did so, it would exacerbate the gap between intention and his actual performance. For Plant seems to accept without reservation the validity of the critique of universalism in general, and the Hegelian historical version in particular.

Plant's problem in formulating a position on the possibility of a political theology that can successfully survive the crucible of objection compromises the entire project. This is not to say that there is not much of value in *Politics, Theology and History*. Individually, each of the six chapters of part 1 offer excellent treatments of different aspects of the particularist-universalist debate in theology, and have truly illuminating things to say. The same can be said of the individual chapters that make up the second and third parts of the book. In addition, while some of the indecisiveness that mars part 1 also bedevils part 2, which makes the case that Liberalism possesses an eradicable moral basis, Plant is considerably more successful here. He mounts a successful argument in chapter 7 that the market economy cannot be regarded as bereft of moral underpinnings or moral limits. Even if the case is somewhat negative and minimalistic, it puts a significant dent in the merely procedural view of liberal-democratic society. Plant manages to inflict further damage on the procedural view in chapter 8, when he argues that liberalism should be regarded as something more than a set of procedures to foster the maximum amount of individual autonomy. He is particularly sharp in combating the view that freedom can be meaningfully ascribed to individuals and groups in the absence of the conditions for the realization of their projects and desires.

Plant's contribution on this front is, however, insufficient to save the book. Even if he is successful in demonstrating the reality and necessity for a moral basis of liberal-democratic society, this would not in itself demonstrate the relevance of specifically Christian beliefs for society as a whole. Of course, historically speaking these moral beliefs may have derived from Christianity, but this does not mean that they cannot be justified independently of it. Plant's own appeal to Kant and utilitarianism throughout his book suggest that this is possible. Finally then, despite its many particular goods, *Politics, Theology and History* does not cohere into a whole, and seems unable to transcend the context of its production in individual lectures and lecture series and to be hindered rather than helped by the virtues of civility and fair-mindedness functioning at their absolute maximum.

Cyril O'Regan
 Department of Theology
 University of Notre Dame
 Notre Dame, IN 46556-5639
 USA

Acts of Religion by Jacques Derrida, edited and with an introduction by Gil Anidjar (London: Routledge, 2002), vi + 436 pp.

It was almost too good to be true: Jacques Derrida, who had already won over the heart of theologians and scholars in religious studies across North America was now actually talking about religion, sounding almost pious at times. One of the first rumblings of this was Derrida's 1989 lecture at Cardozo Law School, entitled "Force of Law". Here, in one fell swoop, Derrida deconstructed the common myths that deconstruction was apolitical (or downright immoral) and atheistic by announcing not only that "deconstruction is justice" (p. 243), but that in fact this justice of deconstruction is in some sense a *messianic* justice (p. 254). This would launch more than a decade of work that engaged not only classical religious themes of negative theology, mysticism, justice, ethics, gift, and hospitality (particularly in the "Abrahamic" religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam), but also specifically religious texts ranging from rabbinic and Islamic sources to the New Testament and Augustine's *Confessions*. It was everything these "postmodern" theologians could have hoped for: their suggestions that Derrida was an important resource for constructive theology was vindicated by the work that Gil Anidjar has very helpfully collected in this volume. *Acts of Religion* includes now almost canonical works such as "Force of Law" (with revisions of earlier published texts, including a later foreword and postscript to the second part), "Faith and Knowledge" (1996) and the earlier "Des Tours de Babel" (1980), as well as less familiar works such as "Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German" (1989) and the more recent "A Silkworm of One's Own" (1996) from an engagement with Hélène Cixous. A special value of the volume might be found in the inclusion of two previously unpublished essays: "The Eyes of Language: The Abyss and the Volcano", a reflection on language through the correspondence of Gershom Scholem and Franz Rosenzweig, and "Hospitality", a published version of Derrida and religion should also consult his Villanova Roundtable discussion in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* and his meditation on Kierkegaard, *Gift of Death*.) And before engaging in a critique of a selected theme, let me concede that there is much in this book that can be fruitfully appropriated (I would particularly point to Derrida's reading of the Babel narrative).

While Derrida's work explicitly concerned with religion has been appropriated by (largely North American) scholars in theology and religious studies as almost a messianic advent itself, I would here register a strong reservation about such a project, and thus would want to excuse myself from what has become the cottage industry of "postmodern theology" or "deconstruction and religion". The virtue of this volume is that it collects for us a wide variety of essays in order to make clear a disturbing central theme in Derrida's work on religion: the evacuation of determinate content from a "pure" religion as a result of the equation of determination with violence.

This "logic of purity," as we might call it, is seen in the essay that, in a way, started it all, "The Force of Law". Here Derrida reminds us (since Aquinas made the same point in Paris a little earlier) that we should not confuse law with justice: law, as determinate and specific ("positive") is founded by an "interpretive violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust" (p. 241). As an interpretive decision, law is something that is structured by violence (p. 242), and as structures are always susceptible to deconstruction, we must conclude that "law [*droit*] is essentially *deconstructible*" (p. 242). However, before we think that this spells the end of justice as such ("[t]he fact that law is deconstructible is not bad news" [p. 242]), Derrida claims that "it is this deconstructible structure of law or, if you prefer, of justice as law, that also ensures

the possibility of deconstruction. Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. *Deconstruction is justice*" (p. 243). While this will also mean that justice never arrives—it is, like Blanchot's Messiah, perpetually deferred—Derrida thinks this is a salutary structure because it subverts our tendencies to identify our particular regimes with Justice Itself. (One would think, of course, that such a Kantianism as "justice itself" would be anathema in Paris, but apparently not.) However, we must note that it also means we are inevitably consigned to violence insofar as any determinate, particular decision must necessarily be violent (p. 242). The "infinite demands of justice" (p. 247, cp. p. 244) can never be met by finite respondents. As such, finitude itself seems consigned to violence.

The same movements are repeated almost a decade later in "Faith and Knowledge", where Derrida, expanding upon the hints of the "messianic" in "Force of Law", turns explicitly to the question of the relationship between religion and justice. Justice, he suggests, has a messianic structure about it: "This would be the opening to the future or to the coming of the other as the advent of justice, but without horizon of expectation and without prophetic prefiguration. The coming of the other can only emerge as a singular event when no anticipation *sees it coming*" (p. 56). However, if this justice is to be truly just, it must also be *abstract*, "a faith without dogma" (p. 57): so while it still entails a *faith*, and thus a kind of *religion* (pp. 64–66), this messianic justice must cut all ties with particular, determinate Abrahamic religions in order to extricate itself from the violence of particularity. Thus Derrida describes it as a "messianicity without messianism" (p. 56). While Derrida struggles with how to characterize the relationship between the "messianic" and determinate, historical messianisms (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), in the end he asserts that the messianic "does not depend upon any messianism, it follows no determinate revelation, it belongs properly to no Abrahamic religion" (p. 56). Why is it necessary to extricate the messianic from this contaminating relationship with historical religions? Because of the assumptions earlier articulated in "Force of Law", *viz.*, the equation of determination with violence. The way to avoid the "wars of religion", according to Derrida, is to "abstract" from the particularities of religious belief.

This same movement of "abstraction" or "purification" can be seen in "Hospitality" (and more fully in *The Politics of Friendship*) which posits structures of "pure forgiveness" and "pure hospitality" which demand the same divorce from determinate, finite structures.

The picture of the "religion" that emerges from these essays is one that I think can be described as thoroughly *modernist*. As I have argued elsewhere (and Graham Ward has also suggested), the later Derrida offers us a very Kantian religion which must postulate a kind of regulative ideal of impossible purity. (The fact that this ideal, unlike Kant's, cannot be asymptotically approached does not negate its function as a regulative ideal as such.) So in the end, Derrida's "religion"—as he wants to call it—is a very thin, classically liberal commitment to democracy—just the kind of "thin" religion Rawls will permit one to sneak into the public sphere. But as such, Derrida's so-called "religion"—a religion without liturgy, a religion without church or synagogue in the end—differs little from something like Rorty's decidedly non-religious commitment to justice. Derrida's is a religion without synagogue or church or mosque because, despite all the hand-waving about "community" and "tradition", his own theoretical commitments must conclude that any *particular* community with a *particular* confession inevitably entails *violence*. Every worship service—even an Anabaptist one!—is a kind of covert operation; every sanctuary must ultimately and necessarily be a "war room". Space does not permit the argument here, but I think we can (and should) reject the logic that undergirds this framework.

This criticism of Derrida's account of religion does not, however, mitigate the value of this volume as a helpful collection of texts. In the end, *Acts of Religion* is an important book that theologians must go through, not around.

James K. A. Smith
 Department of Philosophy
 Calvin College
 Grand Rapids, MI 49546
 USA

Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment by James Arthur Diamond
 (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), x + 235 pp.

One of the benign effects of the society created by a Jewish state is a veritable Maimonides industry. Like any academic vogue, of course, it can also circle endlessly around certain questions, with the usual interpreters invoked again and again; or even worse, to a proliferation of "theories" purporting to expose what the Rambam (= Rabbi Moses ben Maimon) "really meant". The latter is a particular temptation with an author who explicitly warned his readers of strategies of concealment—a lead which Leo Strauss exploited. Diamond avoids both of these diversionary strategies—the pedantic and the omniscient overview—by taking us on a journey designed to show, in one example after another, how Maimonides uses both Torah and Talmud to allow us to appropriate a philosophical wisdom, constructing his arguments by astutely employing the language of scripture to intimate what cannot be said directly. But these strategies would escape ordinary readers either of scripture or the *Guide of the Perplexed*. So to Diamond is left the task of apprenticing his readers to the Rambam's way of proceeding, by showing them how he develops a philosophical theology out of the interplay between written and oral tradition: Torah and Talmud. Moreover, the way he executes this task answers many of the Rambam's critics from his own tradition, who have long accused him of tailoring the scriptures to a procrustean neo-Platonic bed. Diamond's ploy is rather reminiscent of Wittgenstein: by attending to the twists and turns of the Rambam's own idiom, he shows him forging a "bridge between metaphysics and law" (p. 131), so that the ensuing movement between the two becomes mutually illuminating. This permits him a novel way of stretching discourse at those places where he explicitly notes that our language will be inadequate and tend to mislead all but the most instructed.

It is a joy for a philosopher to follow the reasoning which Diamond so deftly exposes, especially as it offers a clear embodiment of a philosophical use of scripture which a current group of Jews, Christians, and Muslims call "scriptural reasoning". And it is Diamond's contention that such is the Rambam's method; a case which he makes by elucidating Maimonides' judicious use of "proof texts". By helping readers to attend to the Rambam's practice, its fruits are made manifest. Yet "proof texts" turn out to be a conceit, for it is by dint of careful inter-textuality that these texts come to illuminate a deity who escapes the anthropomorphism so endemic to prophetic religion. Perhaps especially so, given the narrative mode of the Hebrew scriptures, but to Christianity as well, with the daunting parameters shaping the ontological constitution of Jesus. So one must let oneself be guided through the thickets of inter-textuality that an artist like Maimonides could presume in his astute readers, yet Diamond's deft guidance can teach us to learn how to reason as they could. The results are startling in their nuance, as they lead us beyond obvious linguistic implications to reveal layers of meaning. Yet there is no over-riding attempt

to provide a cipher (despite the misleading subtitle "Deciphering Scripture and Midrash"), so much as carefully calling to mind how it is that the Rambam proceeds to weave a "stratagem of biblical and rabbinic citation that is instrumental in sustaining this dialogue and achieving a synthesis between [what the author dubs] the Abrahamic and Mosaic ventures" (p. 162). Specific issues from the Jewish tradition of philosophical interpretation of scripture are articulated, but always in a refreshingly novel way: the figures of Jacob and of Solomon's married harlot offer contrasting visions of human sexuality and development, while divine providence is explored via Jacob's ladder in two stellar chapters, where key words like "standing" [*amidah*] and "sitting" [*yeshivah*], "place" [*maqom*] and "throne" [*kisse*], and especially "heavens" [*shamaim*], are exploited to illuminate crucial philosophical issues relating creation to its creator. Finally the *aqedah* [binding of Isaac] offers a paradigmatic example of a trial, allowing the Rambam to compare it with other biblical trials to weave a dialectical interface between Torah and metaphysics. Diamond's own sensitivity to the rich intertextuality within the *Guide* itself, as well as the way it interweaves written and oral scripture, allows Maimonides' mode of argumentation to emerge in a way that never fails to illuminate, and challenges contemporary inquirers to a daunting project of emulation.

In the spirit of improving a work which already merits careful study, I should like to suggest one pervasive lacuna, as well as wonder that the author's reading of Maimonides' philosophical assertions hardly matches his literary sensitivity. The lacuna touches the Islamic context of a thinker who lived in "the Islamicate" (Marshall Hodgson), wrote the *Guide* in Judaeo-Arabic (Arabic composed with Hebrew letters), was constantly in dialogue with Ibn-Sina (often presenting his thought as that of Aristotle), and most probably had assimilated key works of Ghazali. His account of prophecy is virtually lifted from Ibn-Sina, his elucidation of "the throne" echoes the centrality of that theme in Islamic commentary on the Qur'an, while his use of "husk and kernel" for interlocking readings of scripture is reminiscent of Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum ad-Din*, and his use of *maqom* to indicate that Jacob "has reached a metaphorical place of rank and perfection along the steady path of knowledge and prepares himself for further achievement of this nature" (p. 36) begs for comparison with Sufi "stations". I mention these as lacunae in Diamond's elucidation of Maimonides because readers acquainted with Islamic thought will notice obvious points of connection, and to remind all of us that expositions of medieval Jewish thought can no more remain innocent of Islamic connotations than Christian exegetes can afford to ignore Jewish textual readings. This is especially true when presenting as informed and resonant a reader of Islamic texts as the Rambam, but it presents itself in our day as a paramount task of scholars to overcome a false modern separation of issues some medievals had to consider jointly. That our contemporary hyper-specialization militates against this only stresses the demand on individual scholars, and suggests how our work may foster reconciliation in our time.

My next critique is, if anything, more telling, in that it suggests that Diamond reads Maimonides' philosophical assertions in a flatfooted manner which belies the Rambam's careful transposition of neo-Platonic categories by the wisdom of the Torah—a strategy which Diamond exposes so well in its literary execution. This is especially evident (and distracting) in his brilliant exposition of "the seven units of Jacob's ladder and their message" (notably pp. 96–121), which he takes to be a sustained treatment of divine providence, intent on "a radical reevaluation of God's relationship to the world that does not disturb His immutability, as depicted by the static posture of 'standing erect'" (p. 121). This "reevaluation" had already been described as effectively denying "divine providence all its traditional connotations of a caring, involved God" (p. 97). But this description of the intent of the Rambam's philosophical elucidation of scripture cuts against the grain of the author's otherwise

sophisticated hermeneutics when he equates 'unchanging' with 'fixed', and lapses into clichés like "static existence" to oppose a "ceaseless atemporal eternity . . . immune to the vicissitudes of world history and human affairs" to the metaphors of "control" and "intervention" intimated by scriptural narrative (pp. 102–103). Now linking 'static' with 'unchanging' is like imagining that something not subject to heat must be freezing; for 'static' is defined as 'zero-motion' (just as 'freezing' is a thermal category) yet 'immutable' intends to move us beyond motion and rest. Moreover, to speak of Maimonides' God as "bare essence" (p. 106) or "static existence" (p. 102), and to present the providential scheme of "separate intellects as a barrier to God's unmediated providence" (p. 112) is to substitute an imaginative construal for what he had already identified as "the ontic uniqueness of God's knowledge: . . . an intellect *in actu* devoid of any potentiality" (p. 91). If such a One determines to exercise active care and concern through intermediaries, so much the better; and that this same One cannot be manipulated by creaturely demands sits quite well with a creator who has no need to *control* or to *intervene*, for the creator's knowing is properly likened to an artificer and not to that of creatures who must come to know from objects known (p. 138).

Maimonides is making a valiant effort to lead our intellects away from imaginative categories to articulate, as best we can, One whose very essence is to exist: "He who is" (p. 44). Yet Diamond cannot find any pedagogy in this attempt, but rather convicts him of "substituting the philosophical vocabulary of divine immutability, . . . indicating that it is static and monotonous" (p. 97). But it would be more reasonable, certainly, to find the Rambam making as judicious a use of the idiom of neo-Platonism as he did of Torah and Talmud, so perhaps his otherwise astute interpreter is missing some crucial cues here, as his imagining 'immutable' to mean 'static and monotonous' reveals. The result is a veritable cascade of misleading dichotomies of the sort indicated here, which present the Rambam's God as enjoying a false transcendence of remoteness. This cannot but weaken his refreshingly original thesis, though there is no need to do so once one credits Maimonides with using philosophical vocabulary as deftly as he did scriptural. Might it not rather be that the interpretative ear so attuned to Torah and Talmud could be tone-deaf to similar nuances in this idiom? Again, however, this critique may sound excessive, in demanding of one so well-equipped literarily a similar astuteness with regard to philosophical discourse. Yet when we set out to elucidate medievals, our narrower disciplinary boundaries can hinder rather than help us. So we cannot fail to check our readings with others more at home with other idiomata than we are. Utilizing clues already present in Diamond's work, one could jettison the misleading dichotomies mentioned, to show how the Rambam's attention to scripture helped him to transform a standard philosophical idiom to complete the task which Diamond has so well proposed as his own. May his next book lead us in that direction.

David B. Burrell, C.S.C.
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame IN 46556
 USA

Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender by Sarah Coakley
 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2002), xx + 172 pp.

The essays in Sarah Coakley's new collection converge around two central themes. The first, signaled by the title, is that of the relationship between power and sub-

mission within the Christian tradition and, more pointedly, the legitimacy and limitation of feminist critiques of Christian claims about God's power and the necessity of human submission to that power. Coakley's primary concern in relationship to this thematic is to elucidate the ways in which human beings can be empowered through their submission to the divine, most concretely in contemplative prayer practices. The second and related theme that runs throughout the essays is the "messy entanglement" of Christian doctrines and sinful human existence. In an essay dealing with the English Benedictine John Chapman's *Spiritual Letters* (1935), Coakley argues that Chapman's work remains important precisely because of his attention to these messy entanglements—"of authoritative claims to divine power, on the one hand, and of human abuses on the other; of frail human sexuality, on the one hand, of the divine erotic allure on the other; of creative gender play, on the one hand, and of gender prescription on the other" (p. 54). Christian contemplative practice, Coakley argues, depends on powers of discernment by means of which the human and the divine can be—if never completely and only ever provisionally—disentangled. Coakley's work, by continually underlining the complex interplay of human and divine within central Christian doctrines (kenotic Christology in Chapter 1, creaturely dependence on God in Chapter 3, personhood within the Trinity in Chapter 7, and the nature of the resurrection and the resurrected body in Chapters 8 and 9) both demonstrates these "messy entanglements" and begins to articulate how they might be reconfigured in more just and theologically compelling ways.

Coakley's methodological claims rest on central presumptions about the nature of human language as it is used to refer to and describe God. She rejects any model of religious language that posits that the ways in which we talk about God simply reflect or mirror human relations. Hence her critique of those feminist theologies that seem too easily to presume accounts of God's power serve to uphold unjust power relations between human beings or that ascetic practices "encourage societal 'submissiveness', disassociated introversion, apolitical anaesthesia, or the silencing of 'woman'" (p. xvii). Yet at the same time, Coakley questions the adequacy of claims for an absolute gap between human language concerning God and God itself. Coakley shows that Gregory of Nyssa's (c. 330–c.395) apophasis challenges the assimilation of the divine to the human realm, for example, yet she suggests that apophasis is never able fully to evacuate the human and its implications from Christian doctrine. She therefore seeks both to "acknowledge the deeply insidious ways in which . . . messages of trivialization and subordination can indeed be smuggled even into spiritual direction which is otherwise rife with wisdom" (p. xvii) and to demonstrate the ways in which apophasis can unsettle the very hierarchies on which divine language sometimes appears to depend (p. xix).

The interplay of cataphasis (naming) and apophasis (unnaming) receives its most definitive articulation in Coakley's discussions of the doctrines of the Trinity (Chapter 7) and the resurrected body (Chapter 9), in part because these are the chapters in which the writings of Gregory of Nyssa play the most vital role in Coakley's analysis. I will focus here on Chapter 7, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: Current Analytic Discussion and the 'Cappadocian' Theology". The particular debates in analytic philosophy of religion to which Coakley responds lie beyond the scope of this review. Suffice it to say that Coakley uses contemporary attempts to provide reasoned grounds for belief in the Trinity and its articulation as a starting point for her own philosophical account of the Trinity, one that both demonstrates the mutual independence of cataphasis and apophasis in naming and describing the divine and highlights the destabilizing power of apophasis with regard to issues of gender. Coakley argues that Gregory of Nyssa's "profoundly apophatic sensibilities make the assessment of the intended *status* of his trinitarian language a particularly subtle matter for reflection". Yet she also insists that "Gregory's approach demon-

strates how unwise it is to dislocate trinitarian debates from the matrix of human transformation that is that Trinity's very point of intersection with our lives" (p. 112). This twofold argument depends on a much more subtle account of the relationship between human lives and human language for the divine than that normally put forward within analytic philosophy of religion. Language about God does not reflect human realities, nor does it finally touch even the divine realm about which it purports to speak. Yet human language about God can transform human beings, rendering them better able to apprehend the realities toward which that language points. As Coakley rightly notes, moreover, if we follow Gregory on these issues, "such transformation is unthinkable without profound, even alarming, shifts in our gender perceptions, shifts which have bearing as much on our thinking about God as on our understanding of ourselves" (p. 112).

Coakley is extremely subtle on these issues and her work marks a tremendous advance both in analytic and feminist philosophy of religion. At the same time, a crucial issue remains unresolved, for it is not clear to me how seriously Coakley ultimately takes Gregory of Nyssa's apophatic assertions. The problem comes to the fore when Coakley asks "what sort of language" Trinitarian language is for Gregory. Here she assumes—she admits not uncontentiously—"that neither 'metaphorical' nor 'analogical' language for God is incompatible with 'literal' claims". She goes on to assert that if she is right, "then a profound apophatic sensibility about the divine 'essence', such as Gregory exemplifies, does not necessarily lead to a 'pan-metaphoricism', nor even to the claim that metaphors are irreducible" (p. 124). Underlying this argument, however, is Coakley's additional assumption that apophatic language is reducible to or the same as metaphorical and analogical language. If she can show that the latter are compatible with literal language (i.e., language that makes "a statement in which 'one is attributing to the subject the property with which the predicate is associated by its semantic status in the language'" [p. 124]), then she believes she can uphold realist claims about the divine while maintaining a rigorous apophaticism.

Coakley may well be right that there is a way in which metaphors can "encode 'literal' meanings". As she argues, "if I say, for instance, that 'Christ is a rock', I clearly do not mean this 'literally' (it is a metaphor); but I do mean ('literally') that Christ is reliable, unchanging, etc" (p. 124). But is this what is meant by apophasis? When Gregory argues that all predicates of the divine must be both said and unsaid, does he not also mean to include the assertion that Christ is reliable and unchanging? In other words, are not metaphors themselves among those things that must be unsaid in the process of self- and divine transformation marked by apophatic language? Coakley argues that metaphors and analogies bear with them "a strong accompanying sense of the finally inexpressible nature of the divine; as such, the metaphorical status of the language does not detract from the realistic seriousness of the claim, but merely draws our attention to the limitations of what we can 'nail down' linguistically where God is concerned" (p. 126). Metaphor and analogy do entail an apophatic moment in which the gap between the metaphor or analogy and that to which it points is starkly visible, but Gregory and many others within the Christian tradition also insist on the much more radical denial of divine predication marked by apophasis. With this denial—absolutely dependent as it is on the simultaneous naming of the divine—substantialist metaphysics is itself called into question. (On this issue, see Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994], pp. 1–16.)

The transformations wrought on the human and divine level by a rigorously pursued apophasis effect both gender and substantive conceptions of personhood (be they human or divine), a claim that Coakley intuits in her discussion of gender even as she attempts to guard against it in her account of God. Further theological

and philosophical attention to the effects of apophasis—together with reflection on the forms of bodily ascesis that generally accompany apophasis, perhaps itself best understood as a form of linguistic ascesis—might yield further insights into how feminism can usefully rethink the complex interplay of power and submission so central to Coakley's book. In particular, it might help feminists articulate the conception of "non-coercive divine power"—and perhaps also of "non-coercive human power"—for which Coakley calls (p. 5).

Amy Hollywood
The Divinity School
University of Chicago
 1025 E. 58th Street
 Chicago, IL 60637
 USA

Speech and Theology: Language and the logic of incarnation by James K. A. Smith
 (New York: Routledge, 2002), xiii + 186 pp.

This volume is an important contribution to the rapidly expanding field that might be called "continental philosophy of religion". Its central question, inspired in large part by Heidegger's critique of onto-theology and the revived interest in negative theology triggered especially by Derrida and Marion, is how it is possible and proper to speak of God. So we are in "postmodern" territory. This volume is also the seventh to appear in the Radical Orthodoxy Series, edited by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward. So it is not surprising to find that here postmodern discussion leads back to the premodern, in this case Augustine (with a brief nod in the direction of Aquinas).

Smith poses the question of how to speak about God as the need to find a third way beyond the violence of a kataphatics that Heidegger calls onto-theological, Levinas calls ontological, Marion calls metaphysical, and Smith calls reductionist, positivist, or objectifying and an apophatics that sees silence as the only alternative and gives up God-talk altogether. The former is unsatisfactory because it reduces the other to the same (Levinas), that is, it professes to grasp and comprehend God in its conceptuality, reducing God to an idol commensurate with human understanding; the latter is unsatisfactory because, within the framework of biblical faith that is here presupposed, we cannot not speak of God.

The solution, obvious at least in its generality, is to make weaker claims, not about God, to be sure, but about the adequacy of our language to its intended referent. (Thus, for example, the postmodern critique of religious language has nothing to say about divine omniscience, for it is directed against human, not divine knowing.) Truth has traditionally been defined as the *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. In this technical sense, "adequation" is the equality or perfect match between thought or language and reality. Our beliefs are true when the language in which they are expressed perfectly mirrors or corresponds to what they are about. But the working assumption here is that God is too great to be captured by our concepts in this way, or, conversely, that anything that could be would not be God but rather an idol. However adequate our God-talk may be to instruct us what to believe and how to act, it does not and should not pass the adequation test by which finite truth is defined.

For help in giving specific formulation to this general strategy, Smith turns first to the early Heidegger (pre-*Being and Time*) and then to Augustine. In both cases he is helped by generalizing the problem of incommensurability; for God is only a special

case, or perhaps *the* special case, of the broader question: is our language capable of adequately describing reality or expressing our experience? It is in terms of what he calls factual life that the early Heidegger poses the second form of this question; and it is in terms of the notion of formal indication that he offers a suggestion Smith wishes to appropriate for theological discourse. Simply put, concepts function as formal indicators (N.B. It is about the *how* and not about the *what*) when they are understood to point to that which they cannot adequately capture. Smith gives a nice account of formal indication as humility before the mystery but, given his concern with appropriate God-talk, is surprisingly uncritical of Heidegger's claim that theology is not about God but about the meaning of faith and the intentions of the community. This sounds more like an introduction to Schleiermacher than to Augustine.

But Smith turns to Augustine and, in the first instance, to his theory of language as such and the double incommensurability of words and things on the one hand, and words and the self on the other. It is in a theological context that Smith finds Augustine's responses to this double problem, namely that praise is the language appropriate to God and confession the language appropriate to the self, both of them fully aware of their inadequacy to describe and express, respectively, that to which they refer. It is obviously the first of these that is most directly relevant to Smith's theological concerns. He recognizes that praise is a performative use of language but also that while not primarily a matter of theory, it presupposes and includes a cognitive element. By analogy both with Heidegger's formal indication and Marion's distinction between conceptual idols and icons, the latter pointing beyond themselves to what they cannot comprehend, Smith describes the referential function of praise as being cognitively determinate but not definitive. When God talk finds its telos in praise (or prayer), it can avoid the violence involved in assuming that it is the bearer of final meaning or total comprehension. For the goal is not to grasp God but to give oneself.

Smith's search for a third way has been guided by an ethical imperative, namely to find a language that does justice to its referent by showing it the proper respect. In Augustine, that third way finds a theological paradigm as well, namely the Incarnation. Drawing on Augustine's analogy between the Word and the word, Smith suggests that just as God becomes flesh, and thus immanent, without ceasing to be God, and thus transcendent, so God, the self, and the world enter into human language which at the same time they exceed. Human language is at once the presence and absence of what it intends. In his final chapter he will argue, suggestively if too briefly, that incarnation is not only the paradigm for human speech, whether theological or not, but also the condition of its possibility. "If we affirm that 'we love because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19), we can also affirm that we speak, because he has first spoken" (p. 155).

Throughout the argument that leads to positing the logic of incarnation as the key to language in general and theological language in particular, there runs a sustained polemic against Levinas and Marion. In a way this is strange because they are two of the most eloquent critics of the violence with which certain modes of discourse reduce the other to the same by purporting to capture transcendence within immanence. Moreover, like Smith, they insist that the Other, whether it be the widow, orphan, and stranger of Levinas or the God of Marion, must appear within our experience, must become phenomena. It is in that sense that both insist that they remain phenomenologists in spite of their critiques of the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger. Indeed, the incarnational notion of transcendence within but not reducible to immanence is shared by both, and Marion gives scenes from the incarnation as instances of the saturated phenomenon, his version of the "third way".

But while he does not hesitate to borrow from both Levinas and Marion, Smith regularly rejects their analysis of the conceptual violence that reduces the other to

the same and replaces icons with idols. Thus, for example, he rejects their critique of Husserl as setting conditions for experience that preclude the presence of the transcendent within it. Over against Levinas he points to the alter ego as appresented but not given to intuition as a case of genuine transcendence in Husserl; and over against Marion he recalls that objects of vision are given to intuition in adumbrations or profiles but remain transcendent because there are always more possible perspectives from which the object can be but has not yet been observed. There is, of course, a certain transcendence in both of these instances, but Levinas and Marion are fully aware of it and equally clear that it has nothing to do with the transcendence that concerns them ethically and religiously, the transcendence of a subject by whom we are called and addressed, put in question, and decentered from being the source and measure of meaning. To stick with Marion and the issue of divine alterity, could he possibly think that God's transcendence is to be found in a physical object that I have not seen from every angle or in another center of human experience intending the world in a body beside mine?

Equally off target, unfortunately, are Smith's complaints that Marion reduces religion to theology and that he reduces the plurality of religion to Roman Catholicism. Even more troubling, perhaps, is the claim that Levinas and Marion themselves preclude the possibility of revelation by requiring that it be absolute and unconditioned whereas, Smith argues, if God is to appear, to show up in human experience, it will have to be in terms of the conditions of the human subject. No doubt this is true in some sense, but what Levinas and Marion deny is that the anticipations of what Husserl calls the transcendental ego and its horizons of expectation can place limits on the divine self-giving. Revelation, on the contrary, is precisely the appearance within experience of that which surprises those expectations and shatters those limits. It is no accident that God does not appear, indeed, cannot appear, in the phenomenologies of either Husserl or Heidegger. For Levinas and Marion genuine alterity must be absolute by refusing to be relative to such restriction and must be unconditioned by becoming the condition for a very different mode of experience. In this respect they are in tune with Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*, not opponents of that text as Smith suggests.

If *Speech and Theology* is not a particularly helpful guide to Levinas and Marion, it is an illuminating statement of the general problem with which they and many others are now concerned and a bold turn from postmodern critique to premodern, Augustinian philosophical theology.

Merold Westphal
 Department of Philosophy
 Fordham University
 Bronx, NY 10458
 USA

Kierkegaard and the Treachery of Love by Amy Laura Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xi + 222 pp.

Amy Laura Hall's primary concern in this study is to re-attune her reader to the unrelenting strenuousness of Christian love according to Kierkegaard. Against those contemporary scholars (particularly Jamie Ferreira and Sylvia Walsh) who have looked to contextualize and moderate Kierkegaard's more provocative passages on love, Hall looks to "retrieve his intensity" (p. 12): to remind her reader of love's perilousness, its inscrutability, its "anguished conscience" (p. 16), and to re-open the

“unbridgeable abyss gaping” between Christian and preferential love, between lover and beloved, and between divine command and human response (p. 1). In order to trace the contours of Kierkegaard’s account of love, Hall first offers a brief reading of *Works of Love*, and then proceeds to read four of the pseudonymous works—*Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition*, *Either/Or*, and *Stages on Life’s Way*—through the concerns of this particular signed text, especially its emphasis upon the constant cycle of “sin, debt, gratitude, sin, debt, and always a renewal of gratitude” (p. 12). While *Works of Love* alone provides the conceptual framework upon which Hall will rely throughout her analysis, the pseudonymous authors provide apophatic illustrations: “in the pseudonymous texts, Kierkegaard gives life, voice, and volition to the sketches of blunder and vice in *Works of Love*” (p. 2). Ultimately, Hall looks to present these four “irreligious texts” (p. 3) in such a way that each reader might see himself reflected in their deeply flawed characters and come thereby to recognize his own failure to love properly. Hall’s project is therefore analogous to that of the author of *Works of Love*, who tried to provoke in his readers an “awareness of the sin indispensable for our repentance and to evoke the confession necessary for our reception of grace” (p. 13).

In the first chapter, Hall lays out the points of *Works of Love* that will inform her readings of the pseudonymous texts, including the Christian requirement to love and forgive unconditionally, Christ as the only true fulfillment of his own command to love, and the lover’s perpetual indebtedness with respect to God. Hall moves quickly over the much-loathed section on the lover’s relationship to the dead, mentioning it only to emphasize Christian love’s freedom from calculation and reciprocity (p. 35). Hall also highlights neighbor-love as an interruption of erotic love’s tendency to mold the other into an extension of oneself. Commanded to love the beloved first and foremost as *neighbor*, the “redoubled” lover is compelled to recognize the beloved as primarily God-related, and therefore unmediably distinct from herself. In this manner, Hall establishes *Works of Love* as an utterly Lutheran effort to render “the life of the spirit infinitely more strenuous” (p. 21) by presenting God’s command so starkly, so uncompromisingly, that each of us must confess we do not fulfill it.

Of course, there are countless ways to fall short of Christian love thus construed, and in the following chapters, Hall elaborates a number of them through careful readings of the pseudonymous characters’ views on love. Devoting a chapter to each of the four works, Hall demonstrates that every major character—de Silentio, his merman, Constantius, his poet, Judge William, “A,” the Seducer, and *Stages’* “Diarist”—fails to meet the requirements of Christian love. While Hall attends very closely to the particularities of context and voice that make each of these men *uniquely* unable to love properly, she notes that each character exhibits one or both of two characteristics: a refusal to confess he is a sinner and a desire to deny or rise above the actuality of the beloved. These flaws can only be seen and counteracted, she argues, through the interpretive lens of *Works of Love*, which sets forth the lover’s continuous recognition of sin, debt, and forgiveness on the one hand, and his unflagging commitment to actuality on the other, as (nearly impossible) conditions of possibility for genuine love.

Puzzlingly, Hall does not work through this latter condition, the importance of actuality, until the end of the chapter on *Repetition*, where she maintains that in addition to a constant recognition of sin and forgiveness, *Works of Love* also calls for “a true engagement” with the “complex, actual beloved” (pp. 86–87). She explains that the reason Constantius, the young poet, the knight of infinite resignation, and the “Diarist” all fall short of Christian love is that they renounce the beloved in favor of some “higher” realm of pure spirit and abstraction. *Works of Love* corrects this error, inciting the sinner not to give up the finite for the infinite but to look inward and

realize that she is “nothing before God” (p. 191)—to scrutinize and abandon herself rather than the beloved.

While it is clear that this “infinite movement of repentance” (p. 75) brings the sinner back into the infinite debt that characterizes the God-relationship, it is harder to see how it brings her back to the beloved in all his messy actuality. To be sure, the “self-renunciation” by which “we search ourselves for the many munitions of fallen love” (p. 192) prevents one’s committing what Hall calls the worst error of false love: obliterating the distinction between self and other. But thus prompted to “peer scrupulously at our self” (p. 191), to “become sufficiently preoccupied with our sin to avoid comparison” with the beloved (p. 193), and to “demarcate” continually the boundaries of our selfhood against a “redoubled” (twinned?) “other” (p. 175), does the lover not run the risk of self-obsession? Somewhat disturbingly, recognizing the “actuality” of the other ultimately plays itself out not as listening to the other, responding to her, or attending to her needs, but as letting the other be the other before God while I concentrate on myself before God.

For Hall, *Works of Love* provides the pseudonymous texts with the “Christian correction” (p. 141) they so desperately need, “thwart[ing] the efforts of those who seek, either in the epistemological pandemonium of *Fear and Trembling* or in the aesthetic acquiescence of *Repetition*, a call to liberated play rather than to confession” (p. 84). While this is undoubtedly so, Hall’s appeal to this signed work as a necessary corrective to the pseudonymous texts raises a number of problems. First, it effects a facile divide between these two halves of the Kierkegaardian corpus. Interestingly enough, while Hall focuses on the sinner’s inability to recognize his sin and the follower’s absolute contemporaneity with Christ (pp. 19, 28, 42, 174); on Kierkegaard’s call to actuality; on the sinfulness of the Diarist’s “enclosing reserve” and his despair of the possibility of forgiveness (pp. 153, 161, 165); and on the distinction between the State Church’s demand and God’s demand (p. 180), the book makes no mention of the *Philosophical Fragments*, the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *The Sickness Unto Death*, or *Practice in Christianity*. Even occasional references to these four texts in particular would not only have rounded out Hall’s analysis, but also would have troubled her distinction between the “irreligious” pseudonymous works and the “religious” signed works. Hall exposes the inadequacies of every character in the four texts she engages, but even if each of *them* can be said to misunderstand the importance of the God-relationship (p. 182, and I am not certain that this is the case), Climacus and Anti-Climacus certainly could not be accused of as much. Secondly, Hall’s methodology underestimates the extent to which these pseudonymous texts “correct” themselves. While *Works of Love* provides a fascinating lens through which to examine some of Kierkegaard’s characters (and, by extension, ourselves), it is certainly not the only means of exposing the distance between all of us and faith. Revealing this distance is precisely the work of these texts’ various disavowals, revocations, circumlocutions, and contradictions. Thirdly, by discarding the conceptual resources that the pseudonymous texts themselves offer (repetition, the teleological suspension of the ethical, resignation, enclosing reserve) in favor of the logical structures of *Works of Love* (neighbor, sin, debt, forgiveness), Hall precludes the emergence of a more multidirectional intertextuality. Using *Works of Love* as a definitive interpretive framework for all the other texts, Hall prevents the pseudonymous texts from assessing one another and, perhaps more significantly, from assessing *Works of Love*. Perhaps it is this unreciprocal hermeneutic that causes this reading of *Works of Love* to risk sacrificing actuality to a kind of self-obsessed asceticism; perhaps, for example, the logic of repetition could have helped Hall to connect the God-relationship to the restoration of the finite, or perhaps the Seducer’s suggestion that the most valuable woman is “in effect . . . dead” (p. 145) might be productively turned against the penultimate section of *Works of Love*, or perhaps Abraham’s love of Isaac might blur the distinc-

tion Hall so rigorously maintains between self and other, preferential and Christian love, and self-abandonment and resignation. Yet while Hall calls upon *Works of Love* to unsettle every pseudonymous text, she allows nothing to unsettle *Works of Love*, or, for that matter, its "author".

Throughout *Kierkegaard and the Treachery of Love*, Hall measures each of the pseudonyms' perspectives on love against "Kierkegaard on love" (p. 128), distinguishing their voices from "Kierkegaard's own voice" (p. 146), and looking to read each of the works "as Kierkegaard intends" (p. 110). "Kierkegaard"—from his identity to his theology to his renunciative flight from the actuality of Regina Olsen—never comes under scrutiny. Yet this reification (almost a deification) ends up undermining Hall's own project. If it is truly the case that "we are continually to cultivate what the Frater calls a 'Socratic horror of being in error'" (p. 172)—if, seen in the light of Christ's command to love, none of us can claim superiority to the seducer, the appropriated wife, or the dumbed-down Kantian husband—then Kierkegaard, it would seem, should be no exception. Even assuming that the "Kierkegaard" of *Works of Love* can be unproblematically identified with Kierkegaard-himself (and I for one am tempted to think of "Kierkegaard" as just another character), would not his sheer humanity, if nothing else, render *Works of Love* susceptible to a critical reading? And who better to turn the harsh light of Christianity against Kierkegaard than his "own" pseudonyms?

Mary-Jane Rubenstein
150 Claremont Ave., Apt 5E
New York, NY 10027
USA

Theology and the Dialogue of Religions by Michael Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xiv + 274 pp.

"How is a theology which would recognise otherness to be pursued?" (p. 49) This is the central question that Michael Barnes seeks to answer in this richly interesting new volume in the Cambridge series of Studies in Christian Doctrine. The question's formulation is significant: Barnes does not want a theory of the other, an accounting of the other that would, beginning from Christian assumptions, exhaust the other's otherness and turn difference into sameness. Any such theory would be an exercise in tautology, which he refuses in favor of an ethical heterology that, for moral and theological reasons, both preserves and negotiates difference. This is Michel de Certeau's language, and the governing ideas of Barnes' book come from him; its other main conversation partners are Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur.

Barnes says that he understands his central question as proper to the theology of religions. More specifically still, he presents his work as a theology of inter-religious dialogue that will sketch a phenomenology of the otherness which appears in such dialogue, and that will as a result help theologians thinking about and engaging in dialogue to discern the virtues required for its proper practice. But this is not in fact what he provides. Most of the book has nothing particular to say about the religious other. It is instead about otherness and the other in general, which is both more ambitious and more interesting. The category 'religion' is abandoned, airily and dismissively, quite early in the book, and the religious other is not thereafter differentiated from the other in general. In this reviewer's judgment this is nothing but good: differentiating the religious other from the nonreligious other is a theoretical task with almost no theological payoff, and it is therefore good that Barnes does not waste

time on it. But it remains a puzzle why the book is titled as it is. It seems that Barnes came to his theology of dialogue with the other from an interest in and practice of inter-religious dialogue (his earlier publications suggest this). But the trace of that interest is hard to find in this book.

Barnes shares with de Certeau and Levinas a deep concern to avoid a totalizing theory of the other. Such a theory seeks, and usually rapidly finds, closure in its understanding of the other, exhausting this understanding by applying a concept to the other that leaves nothing more to say than what is contained in the concept, and as a result permits the other no voice, no strangeness, no genuine otherness. When concepts of this kind are applied to the other (pagan, heretic, occasion for evangelization, and so on), the other is frozen into a complete and final theory, and is thereafter unable to speak or be heard. So, at least, thinks Barnes, following de Certeau and Levinas.

Totalizing theory of this sort, argues Barnes, is unacceptable for many reasons. First, it makes genuine dialogue impossible: the other cannot speak or be heard except as a token of the type into which he has been defined by the totalizing concept, and the interlocutor is thereby impoverished. Second, it always fails, because the other can in fact never finally be accounted for theoretically in this way: strangeness always returns, otherness is always re-asserted, and the conceptual and ethical dissonance produced by this fact is deeply uncomfortable for the totalizing theorist, and is likely to be resolved by aversion of the gaze or even by violence, the attempted erasure of the other's returning trace. Barnes has some perceptive comments to make on the history of Christian theoretical claims about Judaism and the Jewish other in this connection. Third, and most importantly for Barnes, totalizing theories of the other are not coherent with a Christian *habitus*, a liturgically-formed Christian mode of being in the world.

About this third objection to totalizing theories Barnes has much of interest to say. A Christian *habitus*, in his view, is always one of felt imperfection (he might have quoted, though he does not, I Timothy 1:15, where Paul confesses himself as the first among sinners, in support of this view): someone conformed to it will understand encounter with the other always as a negotiation of the broken middle (Barnes borrows here a phrase of Gillian Rose's, and some of her critique of Levinas), a site of ambiguity, incomplete understanding, and never-ending renegotiation. The eucharist provides the paradigm here: in its celebration we stammeringly accept the hospitality offered us by God, an offer always made, as it was in the originating Last Supper, to a community including betrayers and murderers. A *habitus* formed by repeated celebration upon this site will extend itself into its engagement of the other. An engagement formed in this way will not assert itself, will not erase the other ("a certain passivity in the face of the other is to be recognised as intrinsic to the Christian vocation itself" p. 67), and will see its mission to the other (to the extent that mission is theorized) as a mission of hospitality to the other in the broken middle. Upon such a site the other can never be fully accounted for.

This theology of the other, barely sketched here, is splendidly illustrated by Barnes with vignettes from the history of Christianity in India. He depicts the Jesuit Roberto de Nobili's work in South India during the first half of the seventeenth century, which involved learning the local languages (Tamil and Sanskrit) to a level of competence sufficient to compose in them, as well as adopting much of the dress and style of life appropriate to a Brahmanical *sannyāsī*, as exhibiting elements of the *habitus* he commands. Other examples are taken from the twentieth-century Christian ashram-movement in India, and from the recent Indian theologies provoked by Dalit insurgencies. Barnes is not naïve or idealistic about his examples: as his own theory suggests, no one occupies the Christian *habitus* without blemish or sin. The seductive temptations of totalizing theory are always hard to resist and never

fully resisted, and Barnes depicts the lacks and failings in his examples as well as their strengths.

There's a great deal to applaud and be grateful for in this book. It offers a fully Christian theology, beginning from and returning to the liturgy. The issue it identifies is of central importance to any such theology, and while, as I have suggested, it does not adequately identify its topic, its argument for an ethical heterology as essential to Christian theology is convincing. It makes excellent use of de Certeau and Levinas, and while specialists in the thought of either are unlikely to learn anything new, theologians who have not yet come to grips with de Certeau (and few yet have in the English-speaking world) should be stimulated in the direction of doing so by what Barnes does with him here.

But an uneasiness remains, for this reviewer at least. An opposition between totalizing theory and ethical heterology runs through the book, and it is an opposition altogether too sharply drawn. A proper part of Christian theology precisely is the development, upon Christian grounds, of a set of concepts to order thought about the other. If I understand Barnes rightly, sortal terms such as 'pagan', 'heretic', 'schismatic', 'the unbaptized,' and so on have no proper place in Christian thought, for each of them is an element in a theory that inevitably tautologizes the others it tries to sort and designate, and thus makes a tentatively hospitable entry into conversation with them impossible. This would be correct if the Christian practice of thinking the other stopped with such ideas—and Barnes is certainly right that it often has and still sometimes does. But that such concepts are an unavoidable and proper part of the Christian practice of thinking the other does not mean that they exhaust the Christian practice of seeing and loving the other. The gaze is and must be guided by understandings of what it is looking at; if it is a Christian gaze it should always, in addition, be hospitably loving, informed by an awareness of its own sin and the goodness of the particular at which it looks. Barnes tends to jettison theory that directs and informs the gaze (he would call it a theology of dialogue) in favor of a phenomenology of the loving gaze (which he would call a theology for dialogue). But it is perfectly possible to have both. In fact it is inevitable: the question is only how to get their mutual self-correction into harmonic balance. Barnes errs, when he does, in denigrating and permitting no place for the properly a priori elements of Christian thought about the other.

Paul J. Griffiths
University of Illinois at Chicago
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (MC 228)
601 S. Morgan Street
Chicago IL 60607-7104
 USA

Origen Against Plato by Mark Julian Edwards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), vi + 191 pp.

When F. J. A. Hort was asked in 1884 to design a schematic pattern for the stained glass windows of Emmanuel College chapel in Cambridge, he elected Origen to be the Patristic representative in the South wall windows, which portray figures exemplifying the pastoral task of speculative theology in the life of the Church. Mark Edwards' book could be an apology for Hort's choice. He argues that Origen is not guilty of the crime for which he is generally known, namely, of contaminating the pristine deposit of the faith with the pagan taint of Platonism. Edwards appears to

have heeded the caveats of Henri de Lubac half a century ago, when he urges us to regard Origen as an ecclesiast formed from within a wholly Christian matrix who adamantly believed that whilst elements of the wisdom of Egypt may be plundered for the use of the Church's teaching, they are nevertheless swallowed up by the supreme wisdom of the cross.

Edwards seeks to rescue Origen from his modern and ancient detractors: from the councils that decried his teachings, from the commonplaces of contemporary scholarship, and from his instrumentalisation in contemporary theological controversy. He does so by demonstrating that Origen held to a 'total' Christological view of his world. Origen's eschatology, cosmology and cosmogony, psychology, his allegorical reading of Scripture, and his conception of revelation, are all suffused with his understanding of Christ, the Trinity and, thus, his thoroughly theological anthropology. The cosmology of Origen, he argues in chapter 2, follows upon the orthodox unity of Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus the cosmic Christ. The One of the Platonists is not the God who reveals himself through the work of the Logos. We are shown how Origen's cosmology rests upon a theological understanding of history, in which neither memory nor the embodied revelation of Christ is negated. In chapter 3, Edwards eschews the commonplace that Origen held, in any heterodox fashion, that the soul was pre-existent, and also denies that he had an heretical notion of *apokatastasis*. Nor, Edwards further argues, did Origen hold a notion of the transmigration of souls and their *metempsychosis* (re-embodiment). Against the Platonists, Edwards argues that Origen's anthropology does not allow the disparagement of the embodied state, but recognises it to be the locus of the exercise of virtue. Finally, in chapter 4, Edwards argues that Scripture has a threefold composition in Origen's work, taken from a wholly Pauline anthropology. Scripture, as sacrament, consists of body, soul and spirit. Taking us through the definition of allegory in contemporary literary theory, the method of reading to which the Platonists subscribed, and the Alexandrian tradition of exegesis, he shows how Origen's allegorical reading can be rescued from the censure of modern scholars and theologians by demonstrating that Origen's was a novel yet thoroughly Biblical mode of reading that took as its sources this Pauline anthropology, a Trinitarian faith, and the three works attributed to Solomon.

De Lubac warned us that the reader of Origen must make judicious use of the various translations of his surviving works and be aware of the politics surrounding them. Furthermore, he was saddened by the lack of attention to the more 'popular' works and also Origen's homilies. Edwards seems again to have heeded de Lubac's advice when he asks that we return to the texts and consider the arguments employed therein and not simply take stated opinions for granted. Edwards sustains his own argument with examples from Origen's entire *oeuvre* and with close attention to textual variations. Furthermore, we are navigated through the tricky waters of the age of 'Middle Platonism', and Edwards ensures that we do not run aground on the sandbank of chronological sloppiness and anachronism (where we might forget, for example, that the later Neo-Platonists borrowed *from* Christianity). In the opening chapter, we are warned against taking sixth century polemic as hard fact, or of seeing Alexandria as a city consisting simply of Platonists. There is much to be gained from discussing the possible Aristotelian teaching under which Origen might have been tutored, and to noting that the intellectual culture of Alexandria might well have turned the philosopher's attention towards the Bible as much as to Plato. Edwards' main argument is supplemented by asides that are no less illuminating. There is a fresh discussion of St. Clement's Trinitarianism and of Philo's unique place in Alexandria, and a plea for a re-appraisal of the Gnostic writings in the manner of the present re-reading of Origen.

Edwards seeks to restore an historical Origen against contemporary, often Protestant, readings by the theologians. Yet, if he presents an *apologia* for Origen to those

who decry his Platonism from the perspective of a desire to renew an 'Hebraic' understanding of theology, he does so by throwing their presuppositions into relief. Often modern theologians have a flawed understanding of Plato, of the diversity of Platonisms more generally, and of the relationship of 'philosophy' and 'theology' in this period and in the Fathers especially (often because they take conciliar pronouncements too literally). He argues that parallel developments in the philosophical and theological trends of the schools and in Christianity do not simply amount to dependence, and moreover that a common vocabulary does not denote synonymy. Despite the book's polemical title, Edwards is not simply out to denounce Platonism in order to make a case for Origen before the jury of contemporary theology. If it is true that one can spot an Anglican or a Catholic atheist, then maybe one can spot a Platonic Christian (which is not the same as a Christian Platonist). The book might well have been called 'Origen amongst and apart from the Platonists' for Edwards shows that although Origen was playing on the same playground, he was playing a different game.

The title of the book perhaps teases us with the possibility of some discussions that Edwards has omitted or could have expanded. And although he has treated such topics elsewhere, their inclusion might have aided the reader in following the argument. Edwards could have provided more of a discussion of the politics of reading Plato in contemporary theology, and in the academy more generally. Why is it that Plato seems to have become a battleground, and what is at stake in the interpretation of his thought and that of his followers? Indeed, there could have been a more thorough re-reading of Plato that saved Plato from his critics, who are often the same as those who attack thinkers like Origen. Edwards' own extensive knowledge of the more theurgic Neo-Platonists, Iamblichus and Proclus, who borrowed from Christianity and read Plato differently to, say, Plotinus, could well have been employed to transform Plato from his characterisation as the arid, world-hating rationalist. The argument might have been further sustained by more clearly delineating the difference between philosophy and theology, Platonic, Christian or otherwise; an issue not irrelevant in contemporary debates. Given the so-called unwritten tradition of Plato's teachings and its relationship to a community that might be characterised as 'religious' (as evinced by the work of the Tübingen school, and especially therein Hans Joachim Krämer, and 'popularised' by Hans-Georg Gadamer), how would we compare and contrast a Platonic community to the Church? Furthermore, some contemporary theological partisans of Platonism would be uneasy with the apparent ascription of all graceful 'descent' to Christianity in opposition to the seemingly 'Pelagian' ascent of the philosophers. More could have been said about the role of myth in the Platonic corpus and some might argue that, given the extensive use of myth by Plato, he is not so po-faced about it as Edwards seems at times to suggest. A systematician might wish to hear more about how Christianity does or does not view pagan thought as a prolepsis of the triumph of the Christian mythic. A more thorough discussion of the 'Greek' side of the Pauline corpus and its cosmology might usefully have complemented the excellent discussion of the provenance of the ideas behind the Fourth Gospel. All of this said, however, too much attention to Plato, and to the question as to whether Origen needs to be 'healed' of his Platonism, would have made this a different book. Edwards does not pretend for this to be a work of theological systematics or for it to be a rigorous philosophical description of Platonism. Rather, it is an historical endeavour in which one thinker is reappraised.

Edwards shows again, as de Lubac did fifty years ago, in the light of more recent scholarship and in greater depth, that Origen's detractors and the book-burners have served well the enemies of Christianity and intellectual history. Edwards succeeds in his attempt to put the lie to many of the assumptions that we fail to interrogate and, importantly, instils a desire to read Origen again. Edwards' book provides a fitting

and timely reminder of what is so inspiring in both this early Christian's attempt to write a philosophical theology and in his piety.

Matthew Bullimore
 Emmanuel College
 Cambridge CB2 3AP
 UK

Realism and Christian Faith: God, Grammar, and Meaning by Andrew Moore
 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xi + 269 pp.

Realism, at bottom, is the view that entities exist apart from human minds. The view has a respectable philosophical history but has recently garnered increased attention in the wake of deconstructionists' charge that the meaningfulness of human language is simply constructed along with the speaking of it. Andrew Moore enters this fray announcing his intention to defend classical theological realism, the view that "God exists independently of our awareness of him" (pp. 1–2).

Moore begins with the ontological claim that "God is the most real thing" (p. 14). One might think that an argument for realism that begins by presuming a nonmental entity to be the most real thing (*ens realissimum*) begs the question. But Moore contends that rival strategies, by arguing the other way around, "from truth to God" as it were, end up with the god of the philosophers rather than the Christian God (p. 18). This is tantamount to idolatry and is a greater sin than that of framing a circular argument. "About which God should those who name themselves after the Lord Jesus Christ be realists? About the God who led Israel out of Egypt and raised Jesus from the dead" (p. 26). Consequently, Christians ought to attend to reality (e.g., the sheer givenness of the New Testament witness concerning the risen Christ) in such a manner that the "grammar" of this reality is not distorted by forcing upon it explanatory schemes ill-fitting for *Christian* belief.

Other "theological" realists try to make their case by aligning with scientific realism. Moore distances himself from them by pointing out a number of crippling dis-analogies between theology and science. First, doctrines are not explanatory theories. The identity of theology's chief Causal Agent is not "dubbed" by a disinterested observer but revealed by the Agent himself. Moreover, the fallibilism that typifies science is simply unacceptable to theology because—and this is a crucial point for Moore—*ontology precedes epistemology* (p. 48). (That is, the limits of human knowing do not determine what can be said to exist. Rather, what in fact exists determines the shape of human knowing.) Second, doctrines are neither predictive nor progressive in the ways scientific theories are; to treat them thus entails a category mistake (p. 52). Third, while theological realists face some of the same sorts of problems scientific realists face (e.g., underdetermination of theories by data and the likelihood that current knowledge will be superceded), the ontological commitments of believers prevent them from ever treating "God" as a mere hypothesis awaiting confirmation. (Apparently, believers may, in part, get wrong the "whatness" of an entity but never its "thatness.")

In chapter 4 Moore argues against a so-called Wittgensteinian view of theology-as-grammar contending that "theology is not only a grammatical or regulative activity, but is itself regulated" (p. 95). I say "so-called" because Moore does not engage Wittgenstein directly as much as he engages two epigones: D. Z. Phillips and George Lindbeck. Against Phillips, Moore objects that Christian practices are not an infallible guide to Christian language precisely because practices themselves need to be

regulated and prevented from "falling into damaging autonomy" by means of the conception of God's independent reality (p. 92; how a *conception* is supposed to do this he does not say). Moore seems to be asking Phillips: Where is the Other to whom believers are related? "Is their spiritual affect merely an effect of their practices, a solipsistic projection; or is it the result of an encounter with the Divine Other?" (p. 86). Against Lindbeck Moore complains that second-order discourse (doctrines) cannot regulate first-order claims (ordinary religious speech) without falling into an "infinite regress" of rules for applying the rules for applying... etc., doctrines (p. 99).

Those familiar with Wittgenstein will immediately see that Moore's objection to Lindbeck reproduces Saul Kripke's misreading of Wittgenstein on rule-following and therefore misunderstands the distinction that Lindbeck was getting at. Doctrines are *not* the rules; they embody the rules, as conjugated verbs embody verbal paradigms. Nor do the charges against Phillips hold up to scrutiny. For example, one cannot quote Phillips in snippets to show that he is (or is not) a realist (or antirealist), since Phillips has spent a career showing that the very debate itself is perpetuated by deep-seated linguistic confusion. To retort that Phillips *must* be one or the other is to miss the point of his work entirely.

In chapter 5 Moore insists against the nonrealist constructivists (especially against his avowed nemesis Don Cupitt who seemingly makes of Christian language and practices anything he wants) that there is an external reality against which practices may be measured for their authenticity: "the grammar of Christian faith is God himself" (p. 108). Moore claims that "agreements in [Christian] judgment that undergird our language use need continually and consciously to be reformed" (p. 109). Fortunately, in his eyes, "the practices of faith are governed by God's direct presence" (p. 110). Since "theology is a practice as much at risk of falling into disrepair as any other" (p. 111), Moore warns that heresy in faith and practice occurs when the *apparent* grammar falls short of *intended* grammar (p. 118). To be specific, "the material content of the grammar of faith is the presence of God-in-Christ" (p. 119).

In chapter 6 Moore attempts his transcendental argument: "granted the view that God is the *ens realissimum*, we need to propose accounts of epistemology, ontology and language that are coherent with it" (p. 138). On the one hand he claims that since Christ is the *eikon* of God, realism must embrace *some* form of representational language (p. 140). On the other hand, in order to avoid idolatry Christians must recognize Christ, and not theology, as the final and only representation: "Jesus is risen with all the reality of the Creator God, the *ens realissimum*" (p. 146).

In chapter 7 Moore contends that realism is neither a research program, nor a practical postulate, nor an assumption of Christianity, nor a necessary condition of rational faith (pp. 183–189). Rather, realism "expresses an ontological commitment to God's prevenience" (p. 189). Consequently, realism is regulative in the sense that "God's action whereby he reveals himself" constitutes "the intended grammar of human practices" (p. 189). Since this way of putting things leaves Christians stuck with questions about how they know and speak of God's character, Moore undertakes the application of speech-act theory to Christian theology in chapter 8. Unfortunately, this discussion barely spans twenty pages and fails to show how believers today can approach the revelation that is Christ without using the very mode of theological speech and reason in need of calibration. At best he gestures toward a teleological reading of Scripture in order to "secure" for believers that the Bible be seen "as a witness to both the conforming of the fallen world to God's word and the conforming of human words to God's 'world'" (p. 225).

In keeping with God's prevenience, Moore predictably affirms God as the initial speaking agent and asserts that "God has to be taken at his word" (p. 204). The trick, of course, is knowing when God's word is *assertion* (manifesting his nature) and when

it is *promise* (suggesting God's hiddenness; p. 205). This tension reached its zenith in Jesus for whom meaning was "teleologically suspended" until his vindication by God in resurrection subsequent to his obedience in death.

In the final chapter Moore asserts that "Christians only ever have reality under a description" (p. 214). While he means to use this fact to encourage believers to participate in the story by which God's reality is known (p. 217), one wonders if by this admission he has not eviscerated his entire project. However, Moore denies that having reality under a description is tantamount to some sort of relativism. For, what is at stake is not that people accommodate God to human conceptual schemes but that "in Christ, God . . . has relativized our conceptual schemes to himself" (p. 218).

In response to Moore's reliance on speech-act theory, it seems reasonable to ask "What sort of speech-act is his book and for what audience is it intended?" Perhaps Moore is doing systematic theology for ordinary Christian believers. If so, it is unclear why he should dwell on "realism" rather than the theologically rich notion of prevenience. Perhaps Moore intends his book as an admonishment and instruction for "heretical" believers, such as Don Cupitt whom he targets early on as one who inhabits an intellectual space improper for Christians. The trouble with Cupitt, of course, is that he claims as canonical the same scriptures as Moore, but gives them an anti-realist reading. Moore acknowledges that Cupitt and he occupy different "thought-worlds" and "points of view" (pp. 111–113, 169, 180, etc.). But putting things this way fosters the very problem of correspondence that realism is intent on conquering.

Moore surely cannot have intended his book as an *apologia* for nonbelievers. In the first place, the "argument" of the book is bafflingly circular. Perhaps more damaging, however, is the fact that focus of the "argument" shifts more than once. While beginning with the promise of a transcendental defense of realism in the strongest sense (the independent existence of YHWH), he lowers his sights to argue for an external realism that is a "purely formal constraint" and "does not say how things are but only that there is a way that they are that is independent of our representations" (citing Searle, p. 192). After all the fuss about the particular identity of God in the early chapters, why should he settle for so little? His bravado all but disappears in chapter 9: "We have to *trust* that what we have under a description in the Bible is indeed reality" (pp. 228–229, emphasis mine). Citing Putnam with approval: "our language game rests not on proof or on Reason but on *trust*" (p. 239). Moore *asserts* that God vindicated Jesus by resurrection, but concedes that whether we have spoken faithfully "will be known fully only when the Book of Life is opened" (p. 239). One wonders where the "argument" went.

It seems then, that Moore is writing to those educated persons (the book would be a tough read for anyone with less than graduate education in philosophical theology) who are both his sort of Christians *and* bent on constructing arguments for realism. Of course the "theological realists" whom he chides in chapter 3 have aligned with scientific realism for the purpose of constructing an *apologia* for the Christian faith. If Moore takes them as his primary audience, then the speech-act that is his book must be taken as a plea for theological realists to surrender their allegiance to scientific realism and to replace it . . . but with what?

Brad J. Kallenberg
 Department of Religious Studies
 University of Dayton
 300 College Park
 Dayton, OH 45469-1530
 USA