

could also affirm that 'As Son of Man, and therefore in human form, Jesus Christ does not exist at all except in the act of God, as He is first the Son of God' (IV/2, p. 102; emphasis mine). From the perspective of 'modernity' we are instead told that 'The "person" is made to be composite not through adding something to a divine being that is complete in itself without reference to the human' (p. 171).

Obviously, much more reflection and careful analysis of some of the key ideas offered in this volume would have to be engaged to do justice to the ideas expressed. While this is impossible in a brief review such as this, there are hints of answers which can be found even within this volume. For instance, in connection with divine providence, it is said that 'God is from himself and is in himself complete, requiring no reality beside himself to bring his blessedness to perfection' (p. 205). And in connection with the divine attributes, it is argued that, with Schleiermacher, there was a shift from speaking analogically about God in himself to speaking more about 'our experience of the divine' (p. 52), with the result that in the twentieth century 'the desire to make the gospel history an account of the internal life of God' (as in Robert Jenson's statement that 'God is what happens to Jesus and the world') meant that there was 'little point in arguing whether the language of attributes refers to the essence or the economy' (p. 53). All of this suggests that one will want to use this book with renewed awareness that 'modernity' may not be as benign a concept as some would like to believe.

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Andrew T. Lincoln, *Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition, and Theology* (London: SPCK, 2013), pp. 334. £25.00.

In order to be rigorously historical in approach, the author spends a long time in the first three chapters trawling evidence from sources other than Matthew and Luke, the better to interpret what early Christians thought about the Virgin Conception. The results are rather thin, but are nevertheless called on to warrant the conclusion on p. 33: 'it remains the case then that outside the annunciation stories the New Testament Writings witness to another tradition about Jesus' conception, namely that he was of the seed of David through Joseph as his biological father'.

Next, in handling the Matthean account, much is made of the reliving of the Moses story, although the author eschews the term 'midrashic' for Matthew 1–2. However, if Moses has to foreshadow Jesus, then he cannot

also be a type of Joseph; so Lincoln settles for the idea that there is merely a sort of Joseph parallel (p. 46).

According to Lincoln, Luke is similar. There are many pieces of scripture used by the evangelist to make up the patchwork quilt. Luke's big idea was that of *pax Christi* over against *pax Augusti*. The imaginative 'mythological' telling is, he thinks, quite like Plutarch, where plausibility is the name of the game. In such a way Luke fitted much of his material into ancient biographical conventions. Just as Plutarch, in the case of Alcibiades and Coriolanus, had sections describing their origins, their upbringing and their training, even their physical attributes, so too Luke (p. 65). This last one set the Auerbachian alarm bell ringing in this reviewer's head, the same head that found Plutarch's artificial 'twin lives' the epitome of dullness. What's more, Lincoln offers no detail about in what sense Theseus or Cicero were 'divine' for Plutarch or his implied reader. Moreover, if the Gospels were being written for Christians, especially for all Christians, just how relevant are such parallels?

Moving to the early creeds, the phrase 'begotten by Holy Spirit' does not exclude male human contribution. Yet he has to admit that the evidence from Philo does not support this (p. 93). Lincoln then argues that Jesus' significance as Emmanuel is more important than the issue of conception, which is a bit like saying that the heir to the throne's future as *Defensor Fidei* is more important than his paternity.

It seems beyond argument that Luke's focus in its final edition was particularly on Mary and her conception. Yet, the argument goes, if there has to be a miracle in Luke's account, then it is a private not a public one. For in the rest of the Gospel Jesus has Joseph as physical father, and he seems to make little of the question (p. 116).

As the book turns to consider the post-biblical tradition, the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Acts of Pilate* are adduced in favour of the idea that Jesus' illegitimacy was still a charge against him. With Irenaeus, for whose Adam-typology it was significant that he had no human father, the harsh, polemical rejection is proof that this belief was still a live option, whereas the earlier Justin (in *Dial.* 48 and 49) had not called the Ebionites 'heretics'. Ignatius was the first to 'buy' the Lukan-Matthean line rather than the Markan-Johannine one, taking 'David's seed' as to apply to Mary's contribution, not Joseph's, and this for reasons of trying to overcome heretical positions. None of this is done very convincingly, with appeals to asceticism and an ecclesiastical drive towards uniformity flattening earlier diversity, along with arguments from silence.

Schleiermacher ushered Enlightenment thought into theological thinking, and he who prioritised John's Prologue over any infancy narrative is said to

have struck a balance between faith and history, even if from the quotations, history had the whip hand. It has to be said that not for the first time there is quite a bit of unnecessary biographical material. Barth refused to take scholarly exegesis seriously, so is rather summarily dismissed. Lincoln admits that viewing the incarnation as the ‘implanting of God-consciousness’ might be just as problematic in its divine interventionism as traditional ‘hypostatic union’. He insists that all that is being requested is the acknowledgement that there is a variety of options. (Actually they amount to two: affirming or denying the virgin conception.) For there is more to truth than ‘literal truth’. Spong here is preferred to Machen, for scriptural truth is ‘polyphonic and dialogical’. The ancients did not intend everything to be taken literally. Yet in our contemporary terms Jesus must have had a Y-chromosome from some biological father, for him to be an individual human being. ‘Vive la difference.’

Belief in the virginal conception, then, served to safeguard Jesus’ humanity against a variety of docetic views. (Just how is not terribly clear.) A belief in exalted Christ got read back into eternity via the conception of an extraordinary kind. In fact if God assumed anything in the incarnation it was ‘a personal body, that is Jesus of Nazareth’ (p. 278) and persons are formed in narratives (Kelsey) of transformation. Sinless is as sinless does, and obedience gets vindicated by resurrection. Meanwhile, a Chalcedonian ‘hypostasis’ is not the same thing as a ‘person’, so Jesus could well have had two of the latter. Hence: ‘The divine subject God the Son, who takes on the human subject Jesus in the incarnation’ (pp. 286–7). There is a lot going on in this book and the range is impressive, even if some of the judgements are less so.

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Don Capps, *At Home in the World: A Study in Psychoanalysis, Religion and Art* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), pp. 212. £17.50/\$35.00.

In this book, Don Capps further pursues his interest in men and religion, a topic he also explored in his earlier books *Men, Religion and Melancholia* and *Men and their Religion*. Moving beyond a focus on the adolescent years, Capps now considers how adult men yearn to find a sense of being ‘at home in the world’, and how this quest is driven by the melancholy which emerges and lingers after the early childhood emotional separation of a boy from his