

where the themes Stubbs elucidates are expressed. Of course, in many Protestant circles, there are not theologically rich eucharistic liturgies with which to work. For Protestants in these traditions, Stubbs' practical instructions on how liturgically to express the theological principles he gleans from the temple will be very helpful. So, for the Protestant with a lack of liturgical material, this book will be immensely beneficial to creating eucharistic liturgies. For the Protestant with a deep well of eucharistic liturgies, this book will serve as a jumping off point for catechetical engagement with those liturgies.

Finally, one cannot cite everything and authors have to make decisions about which texts to engage, still there were a few recent texts on eucharistic theology missing from Stubbs' examination the engagement with which would have been really interesting (especially George Hunsinger's *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, David Grumett's *Material Eucharist* and my own, *An Incarnational Model of the Eucharist*). Nevertheless, this is an excellent resource that I hope will shape eucharistic theology and practice for years to come.

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## Douglas F. Ottati, *A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*

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In this volume Reformed theologian Douglas Ottati integrates a lifetime of theological reflection into a compelling and accessible systematic interpretation of Christian faith. Here, insights from Ottati's previous works – including his dissertation on H. R. Niebuhr's theology (1982), *Jesus Christ and Christian Vision* (1996), *Theology for Liberal Presbyterians and Other Endangered Species* (2006) and the first volume of his systematic theology (2013) – come together in one symphonic whole. Overall, he achieves his commitment to 'mitigate the split between scholarly and more accessible theological literature' (p. 3). Anyone from a college student to a seasoned scholar will benefit from the wisdom of these pages.

Ottati's theology rests on a threefold account of God as Creator, Judge and Redeemer, which he describes as 'the fundamental biblical and symbolic specification of the presiding mystery that envelops life and world' (p. 688). Following previous Reformed theologians including Schleiermacher, Barth and Gerrish, Ottati organises his systematic theology into concise propositions; he then groups these into three major parts: 'Method', 'Creation' (on creation or 'cosmic ecology', providence/sustenance, humans as created and God as Creator) and 'Redemption' (on Jesus Christ, the Spirit and the church, sin and regeneration, the 'fragmentation and renewal of the world' and God as Redeemer). The propositions are helpfully gathered into a single list at the beginning of the book, enhancing the reader's ability to navigate the whole.

The first half ('Method' and 'Creation') is substantively identical to *Theology for Liberal Protestants: God the Creator* (2013), slightly revised in response to reviewers and conversation partners. For instance, Ottati has removed 'liberal' from the title, instead offering a theology 'that can speak to all Christians' (he does offer a lucid defence of the term 'liberal' on pp. 8–12, clarifying that this signals his commitments to critical argument, historical consciousness and 'social criticism, engagement, and reform'). Another subtle change in terminology is a move from 'providence' to 'sustenance' as his preferred term for God's ongoing interaction with the world (propositions 30 and 45). This shift reflects two important commitments: the desire to communicate with non-specialists, and the desire to better describe God's relation with the world. On this latter point, 'sustenance' communicates Ottati's conviction that God's ongoing activity in cosmic ecology is not deterministic in the way that 'providence' might suggest.

Particularly helpful for those who identify as Reformed theologians, Ottati offers a lucid and winsome description of this tradition as a form of Christianity governed by strong affirmation of God's sovereign grace (p. 699). In addition, Ottati names four broad features of Reformed theology (pp. 108–15), arguing that it (1) 'insists on the adjustment of persons to God'; (2) 'affirms the priority of God's Word, recognizes that church teachings are subject to criticism, and remains open to wisdom and truth wherever those may be found'; (3) 'emphasizes the reordering of both inward disposition and outward action in thankful response to the gifts and the grace of God'; and (4) 'expresses and shapes a "worldly" faithfulness'. All four of these features shape Ottati's own theological reflections throughout.

Ottati draws deeply from his Reformed forebears, and like them, is willing to critique distortions in his own strand of Christianity. From Calvin, he draws a fundamental commitment to theology 'within the limits of piety alone'; from Edwards, attention to the religious affections; from Schleiermacher, the energy to revise theology in light of recent findings of history and science; from H. Richard Niebuhr and James Gustafson, an unflinching theocentric perspective and vigilant attention to the ethical consequences of theological statements. These influences, among others, become clear in his definition of theology, as 'practical wisdom that articulates a vision of God, the world, and ourselves in the service of a piety, a settled disposition, and a way of living' (p. 25).

The genius of Ottati's work is this: he illuminates how theology is source (rather than obstacle) for piety and practical living. Those of us who teach theology will savour his earthy examples of how particular theological statements both express and shape concrete ethical life. For instance, he reflects on the peculiar task of raising adolescent children. Although they are challenging authority, sleeping until noon and 'lurching toward questionable decisions about their futures', when we view them also as good gifts of God who do not belong to us, we may find our dispositions shaped by gratitude to God and respect for the integrity of our offspring (pp. 27–8). In such ordinary theological reflections, Ottati faithfully follows Calvin, who eschewed 'idle speculation' that dwells on abstract questions without clear connection to faithful living.

Both Ottati's distaste for theological speculation and his commitment to theology as practical wisdom shape his discussion of the Trinity. Early on, he affirms the basic logic of the economic Trinity as a summary of Christian faith, reflecting the encounter of the Christian community with God as creator and covenant partner, who in Jesus reconciles the world, and who 'by the Spirit ... renews the world, turns persons to new life, and gathers them into communion with God and community with one another' (p. 76). He

returns to the trinitarian dynamic in his description of the event of Jesus Christ that extends in two 'directions': backward to God's creation of all humanity and the covenant with Abraham, and forward to the renewal of all creation in the Spirit. 'Taken together,' he affirms, 'these expansions point to a Trinitarian dynamic of which Jesus Christ becomes the fulcrum. The covenanting Creator and God of Israel, the reconciliation accomplished in Christ, and the renewing work of the Spirit all exhibit the same trajectory toward redemption' (p. 338).

Though he affirms the trinitarian dynamic as vital to Christian faith, Ottati postpones explicit discussion of the Trinity until the epilogue: 'The Sense the Trinity Makes'. His decision to treat the Trinity at the end follows Schleiermacher – and Brian Gerrish, who in his *Christian Faith: Dogmatics in Outline* (2015) also treats Trinity as a 'retrospective conclusion' to the discussion of God as Creator and Redeemer. Like Gerrish, Ottati remains 'agnostic' about what we can know or say of intratrinitarian relations. Instead, he emphasises that the 'sense the Trinity makes' is that it both shapes and summarises our experiences of God and ourselves. He engages appreciatively Kathryn Tanner's more orthodox trinitarian theology, affirming with her that 'Father, Son, and Spirit' name the threefold apprehension of God working together to reconcile and renew life, but parting ways about the necessity of affirming that the three persons are co-equal and co-eternal persons in one 'substance'.

His reticence regarding the immanent Trinity is mirrored by his reticence regarding classical conciliar language of Christ as 'one person in two natures'. Ottati strongly affirms that Christ reconciles human beings to God and to each other, but also insists that this account of Jesus Christ as reconciler does not depend on classical categories; indeed, he finds 'the metaphysics of the conciliar Christology itself excessively speculative as well as biblically insecure' (pp. 378–9). Instead, the confession of Christ rests on observation of the way people are actually changed in their practical lives by encounter with the narrative and the community of Jesus, holding lightly the symbolic language of 'incarnation'. In the end, he affirms quite simply 'In Jesus Christ, we come to know the God of grace' (p. 387).

In his interpretation of Christ's reconciling work, Ottati unpacks the basic claim that 'Jesus as the Christ teaches the truth, embodies the way, and empowers the life' (p. 393). This threefold pattern (introduced in his earlier *Jesus Christ and Christian Vision*) correlates with Christ's 'threefold office' as prophet, king and priest – or as Ottati names them, the elements of 'teaching-instruction, governance-guidance, and sacrifice-atonement' (p. 393). First, Jesus *teaches the truth* of God's reign, characterised by justice and grace for all people, particularly those who are oppressed. Second, Jesus *embodies the way* of life that 'accords with this truth' (p. 419). That is, he displays in his life the 'theocentric piety' that accords with his teaching about God's reign, guiding the faithful in their lives of discipleship. As an 'alternative king', Jesus lives in a way that crosses barriers to help and to heal, is especially concerned for the vulnerable, forgives and welcomes the estranged and pursues reconciliation. And third, Jesus as the Christ *empowers the life* that aligns with the truth of God's reign. While Ottati deftly summarises the diverse gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection (including a welcome counter-cultural appreciation for Anselm's theology of atonement), he is most luminous in his own constructive account: first, because in Jesus' crucifixion-resurrection-exaltation we encounter the God of grace who brings new life out of death; second (most movingly) because in the cross we encounter a 'dangerous memory' and 'right nightmare' that enable us to see the consequences of sin on the

innocent victims of the world (pp. 482–7); and third, because encounter with sin can bring about repentance, reconciliation and renewed life.

Part II, 'Redemption', includes attention to both God's acts of redemption in Jesus Christ and the 'way that we receive Christ's benefits' (as Calvin puts it) through the Holy Spirit. While Ottati demurs from a more forthrightly trinitarian approach, he affirms the central role of the Spirit, particularly in connection with the renewal of human life. He describes the Spirit as 'the participatory energy of life manifest in the interdependent cosmos, an energy that is both focused and clarified by the other-directed ethos of Jesus as the Christ' (pp. 523–4), drawing on his recent foray into astrobiology at Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry, which has expanded attention to life not only on this planet but perhaps well beyond Earth. In addition to exploring these intersections of theology and science, Ottati emphasises the practical communal implications of life in the Spirit: 'the Spirit, which ... is the energy and ethos made manifest in participatory created life and in Christ the reconciler, gathers the church from the entire human race as a community of reconciliation that brings together people who often have been divided and in conflict' (p. 531). This ec-centric community shares life together, welcomes newcomers and 'engage[s] in a mission of reconciliation to the wider world'.

One of the most valuable sections of the volume is chapter 10, 'Human Life: Sin and Regeneration'. Here, Ottati further develops his fundamental description of sin as contraction and life/new life as expansion. Humans are made 'for communion with God in community with others'; we perpetually curve in on ourselves, turning away from the ec-centric life to which we are called; in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit we receive vision and power to live a new life. Ottati the theological ethicist shines in this section, with his keen attention to actual human affections and behaviour at their best and at their worst. He is a 'hopeful realist', acknowledging the depth of human tendency to love only those who belong to one's 'in-group' – and yet also noting ways in which people can be changed, expanding their loyalties to include others, under the influence of the gospel. He reinterprets regeneration, justification and sanctification in ways that speak to contemporary audiences, without jargon but with a deep appreciation for the practical wisdom of Reformed Protestantism. For example, Ottati reinterprets justification by grace alone directly for high school students, young professionals and folks close to the end of their professional lives, with the counter-cultural declaration that 'you have worth in God's sight whether or not you turn out to be a recognized success' (p. 603). He goes on to call attention not only to our own sense of worth, but to all others': 'In the light of the very good news of the gospel and the strange logic of grace alone, these other persons and groups have been called into existence and given the great and good gift of life by the God who creates and redeems. They, too, have a place and a time; they, too, have value in God's sight' (pp. 603–4).

Ottati's work is eminently worth reading. He writes in the clear tones of a professor adept at engaging eager young undergraduates as well as equally eager, sometimes overly pious seminarians uncertain about the whole enterprise of 'theology'. With story, song and wry narrative style, he lures his readers into theological reflection that attends at once to the ordinary details of human life and to expansive wonder at the glory of God.