

Stjerna has a lively writing style that often frames issues in a fresh way. While her ‘grammar of faith’ will help readers to learn key Lutheran concepts and emphases, the book itself contains many grammatical mistakes and stylistic inconsistencies, and these mar the overall quality of the work. One wonders why this gifted Lutheran scholar did not begin with a basic narrative of Luther’s theological development rather than with a lengthy chronological list of important events in his life. While the first chapter ends with insightful analysis of Luther’s concepts of freedom and faith, many beginning students will likely wonder what led to their development. More traditional-conservative Lutherans will also question several of the author’s assertions, for example, ‘that even unbaptized individuals are to be invited’ to the Lord’s Supper (p. 175). Still other statements will provoke discussion and debate. Consequently, the book will be a useful resource in seminary classrooms and ecumenical discussion groups.

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Shelli M. Poe, *The Constructive Promise of Schleiermacher’s Theology*

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Friedrich Schleiermacher published his dogmatics, *Christian Faith*, in the Kingdom of Prussia in 1830–1. Europe was recovering from the Napoleonic wars, and intellectual culture was shaped by Kant, post-Kantian idealism and Romanticism. Can a theology originating in such a remote situation have any relevance to twenty-first-century Christian doctrine? Poe is well aware of the objections to such relevance. As she shows by means of Patricia Gunther-Gleason’s work on Schleiermacher and women, Joerg Rieger’s claims about Schleiermacher’s complicity with colonialism, and Theodore Vial’s investigation of the implications of his work for racism, Schleiermacher’s is a mixed legacy.

Framing her interpretation in the context of concerns about racism, sexism, post-colonialism, and similar issues related to justice, Poe sets forth the purpose of this book:

My goal is to advance theological conversations around the doctrine of the Trinity, Christology and redemption, ecclesiology and pneumatology, and the doctrines of God and creation in ways that will propel the cause of social justice among Christian churches. Schleiermacher’s theology, I contend, is rich with potential for those willing to enter the present context and face its challenges and opportunities with openness to innovative ideas. (pp. 16–17)

Her book consists of interpretations of Schleiermacher’s doctrinal innovations in these areas, placed in dialogue with the work of numerous contemporary feminist, womanist,

post-colonial, and queer theologians. Throughout Poe argues the case that Schleiermacher's work is 'consonant with' or 'accords with' (p. 193) numerous efforts to reconstruct Christian doctrine in ways that serve social justice.

The doctrine of the Trinity has been criticised as 'kyriocentric' (to use Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's term). It is seen as supporting hierarchy, patriarchy and androcentrism. Poe points to Elizabeth Johnson's criticisms of sexism and idolatry, Grace Jantzen's and Linn Marie Tonstad's criticisms of 'death-centrism' and Tonstad's views of kyriarchy and domination–submission patterns. Schleiermacher himself was critical of the classical formulations of the imminent Trinity. Drawing on and extending her previous work (*Essential Trinitarianism: Schleiermacher as Trinitarian Theologian*, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), Poe argues that Schleiermacher's approach to the Trinity paves the way for 'essential Trinitarianism': the divine is conceived in trinitarian form as Love, Wisdom and Absolute/Universal Causality. Poe maintains that such an essential trinitarianism, informed by Schleiermacher and yet going beyond him, can address not only the problems pointed out by Schleiermacher himself but especially feminist, queer and other theological criticisms.

In her longest chapter Poe ties together a discussion of christology and soteriology. This chapter is a sustained conversation with womanist perspectives, for example, those of Delores Williams, Kelly Brown Douglas and Jacquelyn Grant. Both the two-natures doctrine and the theory of substitutionary atonement come in for especially harsh criticism. Once again, Schleiermacher's revisionism provides viable alternatives to classical doctrine. The christological problem is solved by envisioning 'divine indwelling' as the power of Christ's God-consciousness. His redemptive presence is the completion of the creation of human nature. The suffering of Christ *per se* is not redemptive, although it has meaning as his identification with the oppressed. Redemption occurs through 'taking persons of faith up into the strength of his God-consciousness' (p. 96). The chapter concludes with a discussion of some subordinate themes, especially the doctrine of sin.

In her discussion of the church, Poe takes up Schleiermacher's Christmas Eve dialogue, finding his emphasis on joy and community to be especially salutary. She ties this emphasis to an understanding of the 'common spirit', the spirit of Christ that infuses the church. This leads her into a reflection on 'feminist laughter', the prescription for joy in the prophetic task of combating injustice. The chapter ends with a surprising move beyond Schleiermacher: a proposal for a 'queer community of Woman' that draws together Lilith (in Judith Plaskow's interpretation), Eve (in Phyllis Trible's reading), Hagar (as Delores Williams presents her) and Mary (in Marcella Althaus Reid's envisioning).

The final chapter, 'God and Creation', has several agendas. It is a discussion of divine sovereignty and omnipotence, arguing that with Schleiermacher they can be understood in such a way that they do not induce human passivity and acquiescence in systems of oppression. Schleiermacher made a major contribution in rethinking God's relation to and responsibility for sin and evil. The chapter takes a turn to practical theology through a consideration of R. Marie Griffith's work among evangelical women and raising the question of feminist ecumenism, and by entering into the feminist debate over Sarah Coakley's proposal for purgative submission in contemplative prayer. Poe proposes instead 'incarnational submission'.

Poe's project is theologically revisionist; she retains but transforms classical doctrines. She is working on the social justice/liberationist end of the theological spectrum. Although she draws on Schleiermacher's nineteenth-century revisionism throughout, she is not uncritical. She finds his thought especially deficient in treating (or failing

to treat) Jesus' Jewishness. Schleiermacher has, she contends, an inadequate perspective on orthodox Judaism in his case for Jewish civil rights. His 'teleological' view of redemption (that is, holding that all other religions are destined to pass over into Christianity) she finds to be unacceptable but susceptible to revision; his reliance on an afterlife to ensure blessedness for all is inconsistent with positions he adopted elsewhere. The book is impressive in its scope and in the amount of material that she has mastered and incorporated in the discussion. The book's main contributions are its vigorous defence of Schleiermacher's relevance for contemporary progressive theology, its creative synthesis of feminist, womanist, queer and post-colonial perspectives, and its original constructive proposals.

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John C. Peckham, *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenant God of Scripture*

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John Peckham's *Divine Attributes* seeks to vindicate what he calls a moderate classical view of God. Peckham begins his book with some biblical parameters on the doctrine of God and a sketch of the debate between the biblical narrative and the so-called 'God of the philosophers' before going into the divine emotions in relation to God's essential immutability in chapter 3. He concludes there that 'an adequate canonical model must affirm that God is both changeless in some crucial respects and changes relationally in other respects (including emotional change)' (p. 63). While remaining essentially unchanging in his moral character and independence, God feels emotions and responds to creatures reciprocally. These emotions and relational changes are voluntary on the part of God, and remains only analogical to human affections, purified as they are from their irrational connotations in fallen human beings. In chapter 3 Peckham argues that time should be minimally understood as successions in God's life, which God freely experiences as he creates and relates with the world. As such Peckham rejects divine timelessness. Chapter 4 argues that God has definite foreknowledge, and that this is compatible with humans enjoying libertarian free will. Chapters 5 and 6 follow through on that conclusion by affirming a model of divine providence consistent with libertarianism and draws out its resources for responding to the problem of evil. In this regard, Peckham affirms the distinction between antecedent and consequent wills of God (which he calls God's ideal and remedial will, respectively) – a distinction found in classical Arminianism. Chapter 7 focuses on the Trinity, and argues for a broadly social view of the triune God, with the persons each having a 'distinct faculty of reason, will, and self-consciousness' (p. 241). This chapter also shows Peckham's rejection of what he calls strict simplicity, with all of its concomitant commitments about God's immutability, impassibility and pure aseity.