

Those who wish to challenge Frey's fundamental view of John in this book will have to offer a better account and exegesis of the key Johannine texts, since Frey's views are, in the end, demonstrated on the basis of fresh exegesis and in dialogue with the most significant scholarly voices. Those interested in John's Gospel, and particularly John's theology, will do well to grapple long and hard with this book.

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Darren Sarisky, *Reading the Bible Theologically*

(Cambridge: CUP, 2019), pp. xix + 407. £90.00.

Susannah Ticciati

King's College London, Strand, London, UK (susannah.ticciati@kcl.ac.uk)

Reading the Bible Theologically sets out to clarify the character of theological interpretation of the Bible. Resourced by Augustine, and setting his approach in contrast with Spinoza's 'naturalism', Sarisky seeks a *via media* between two positions that fall in opposite ways into a history/theology dualism: the first he dubs 'ahistorical dualism', in which historical considerations are excluded in favour of theological meaning (p. 244); the second, named a 'dualism of the immanent frame', has room only for historical considerations, 'focusing exclusively on the text's mundane qualities, so as to give minimal attention to how they point beyond themselves to the triune God' (p. 246).

Sarisky begins by offering an Augustinian theological account of reader and text within which interpretation is to be situated. The reader is in *via* towards eschatological union with the triune God, and scripture is a set of signs – ultimately dispensable when that union occurs – that point beyond themselves to God. In his own constructive account, however, he borrows as much from Spinoza (despite the language of contrast) as he does from Augustine. Indeed, the contrast only works because of the shared common ground. In Sarisky's words: 'there is real value in some of Spinoza's principles ... , even on the assumption that a transcendent God does exist. Moreover, this same valuable contribution is not to be found in Augustine's approach ... While Augustine insists that some texts require close historical study, he does not call for *all* biblical texts to receive such study in the way that Spinoza [does]' (pp. 170–1). Embracing Spinoza's historicism, he rejects only his 'naturalism', defined as an ontology that reduces God to nature (p. 163), or in other words denies the existence of a transcendent God (p. 164).

Sarisky ultimately arrives at his own modified version of the well-known *explicatio, meditatio, applicatio* triad. He avoids ahistorical dualism by the thoroughgoing historical casting of *explicatio*, described as 'the most rudimentary level of reading, which positions texts in their situation of origin' (p. 325). At the same time he is intent on avoiding a historical foundationalism, and does so by acknowledging that theological assumptions and questions are already in play at this rudimentary level, albeit in a modest and revisable way (pp. 304–5). In this he retains the Augustinian insight that a sign can only be significant for someone if she already has some knowledge of what it points to.

While Sarisky seeks a *via media*, he is in fact much more preoccupied with one of the poles he seeks to avoid. He makes quick work of Stanley Hauerwas' commentary on

Matthew in the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible Series, as a representative example of ahistorically dualist theological interpretation (pp. 252–8), under which banner he also references Rusty Reno's 'Series Preface' for the Brazos Commentary (pp. 248–9), and Katherine Sonderegger's engagement with scripture in volume 1 of her *Systematic Theology* (pp. 244–5). He dismisses what he sees as their riding roughshod over necessary historical questions of the text. Sarisky is much more painstaking in his engagement with representatives of the other pole. Having taken James Barr as his example of an interpreter who operates with a dualism of the immanent frame (pp. 259–64), he returns to an equivalent set of issues in the final chapter, in which he confronts the objection that 'proper reading ... requires interpreters to bracket out all the theological beliefs they hold' (p. 332). Citing Barr, Barton and Stendahl as exemplary objectors, Sarisky returns to Spinoza in order ultimately to draw a line between his *ontological* naturalism and the more recent critics' *methodological* naturalism (pp. 351–5). Distinguishing his position from both on the grounds of a theological ontology, Sarisky nevertheless ends up only a hair's breadth away from them.

Without gainsaying the book's considerable achievements, I would nevertheless like to suggest that this line between ontological and methodological naturalism represents a systematic conflation in the book between two quite distinct issues. On the one hand, his critique of Spinoza is that he denies a transcendent God, collapsing everything into history. History and theology refer, here, to 'two realities', the 'immanent realm' and God (p. 71). (Such a construal of God's relationship with creation is one I would in any case want to question, and I would also want to suggest that it leads to a flat-footed reading of Spinoza, who is arguably much closer to classical theism than as presented here.) On the other hand, however, – and here is the key problem – Sarisky gives this 'two realms' thinking a hermeneutical translation, taking Spinoza's naturalism to correspond to his hermeneutical distinction between meaning and truth (pp. 171–83). And from here the line to those recent critics, and in particular, Stendahl's meant/means distinction, is obvious. Wanting to maintain a ('modest') place for theology within interpretation, Sarisky argues for a relativised version of Spinoza's distinction: historical questions ('meaning') must be given a relatively autonomous place, but without bracketing all theological commitment ('truth') (pp. 184–5). The mapping of meaning/truth onto history/theology is implicit.

In order to recognise the distinctness of hermeneutical and substantive issues, however, just consider the theologian who denies that one must look beyond history to find God (in another realm), but affirms rather that God is to be found in its midst. This is a denial of a substantive history/theology dualism. But the same theologian may deny that asking after a text's origins is the only (or even best) way to engage with the history to which God is present, thus more than relativising a procedural meaning/truth distinction. Such a theologian (arguably e.g. Sonderegger or Hauerwas) is likely to be counted by Sarisky as an ahistorical dualist in terms of hermeneutical method. I wonder, however, whether Sarisky's judgement here derives in part at least from his own substantive dualism (or 'two realms' thinking), which in turn leads him to embrace an only slightly relativised modernist hermeneutic. The upshot is a strangely thin account of theology. The book affirms at key points that scripture points to the triune God. But once the triune God has been extracted from history (the 'immanent realm'), there remains very little to say about what it might look like to be in relationship with this God.

Another reason for this apparent thinness might be the entirely theoretical cast of the book, which (oddly) at no point displays its account of theological interpretation by way of any exegesis. This is a deliberate choice, however, and while it may have downsides, it also has benefits. As a monograph on theological hermeneutics, Sarisky's book is measured,

careful and thorough, and painstaking in its engagement with the literature. Above all it is (for the most part) non-polemical, offering its proposal as one that follows naturally from a particular set of theological assumptions, but not as the only alternative. In this way it is admirably unpretentious and refreshingly modest.

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Leopoldo A. Sanchez, *Sculptor Spirit: Models of Sanctification from Spirit Christology*

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Roger L. Revell

Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK (rlr35@cam.ac.uk)

Lutheran theologian Leopoldo Sanchez sets out to reconsider the nature of sanctification in light of Spirit christology, pursuing his task in an orderly, creative and practical manner. In this undertaking, he means to overcome the ‘Spirit void’ which riddles much modern theology, while also steering clear of a ‘Spirit only’ outlook that is insufficiently trinitarian (pp. xiv–xv). Although this book is intended for pastors and church leaders in North America, it is nevertheless suitable for a wider reception.

The work comprises eight chapters, together with an introduction and conclusion. Mindful of those who favour the Logos christology of the early councils, the first few chapters aim to bolster support for Spirit christology. Thus, chapter 1 engages with the pneumatological reflections of contemporary thinkers such as G. W. H. Lampe, Yves Congar, Eugene Rogers, and Ralph Del Colle, whose efforts are seen to ‘set the stage’ for the project’s ultimate goal (p. 8). The second chapter concentrates on an array of patristic thinkers, such as Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, and Didymus the Blind. Their legacy, too, yields valuable insights into the relationship ‘between Jesus and the Spirit and its implications for the sanctified life’ (p. 42). Along the way, Sanchez disavows any desire to supplant a Logos christology. Rather, he champions a *complementary approach* which is capable of ‘safeguard[ing] the Son’s preexistence and incarnation, while giving his life and mission a pneumatic trajectory’ (p. 42; cf. p. 17).

The next five chapters present a series of models which elucidate the Spirit’s sanctifying activity in believers as it unfolds with special reference to the example of Christ. Each discussion begins by sketching the biblical foundation for the model being introduced. Next, there is a catechetical exposition, informed by patristic thought and Luther (given Sanchez’s ecclesial home). A concluding rumination ponders how the respective models ‘foste[r] certain spiritual practices or ways of being in the world’ (p. 9).

Chapter 3 unveils the ‘Renewal Model’, which depicts the Spirit’s work of conforming believers to Christ’s death and resurrection through repentance and continual reconciliation with God and neighbour. The ‘Dramatic Model’ of chapter 4 depicts sanctification as empowerment by the Spirit for battle against the ‘powers of the anti-kingdom’ (p. 89). In chapter 5 one encounters the ‘Sacrificial Model’, which finds its centre of gravity in idea of kenosis. Those in the Spirit, argues Sanchez, will be gradually emptied