

has significantly moved beyond Rawlsianism. Third, while Sagovsky discusses critics of political liberalism, he fails to take them at all seriously. Feminists, Marxists and Communitarians are introduced as minor voices only to be quickly dismissed. On these three counts, as well as on its overall account, *Christian Tradition and the Practice of Justice* will confirm the convictions of Rawlsian liberals, but it will not convince anyone not already so committed.

Derek Alan Woodard-Lehman

Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ 08542, USA

[derek.woodard-lehman@ptsem.edu](mailto:derek.woodard-lehman@ptsem.edu)

doi:10.1017/S0036930612000543

Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. xii +322. \$34.00/£22.99.

After two decades of teaching and researching in universities and seminaries, prominent US pastoral and practical theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore presents here, using a collection of twelve previously published essays with introductions, a normative vision of the disciplines to which she has contributed. Believing that recent pastoral and practical theological scholarship has ‘disrupted conventional theological boundaries’ (p. 1), the author rejoices in the pluralistic, diverse methods and experiences these disciplines bring to theology. They provide ‘an expanded subject matter, alternative ways of knowing, and richer terms for analysis in doing Christian theology’ (p. 1).

The essays in each of the three parts of the book then critically expatiate on: the theological subject matter that is found to be the ‘living web’ of human being; alternative knowing as practical wisdom based on embodied experience (including that of mothers – still much ignored in pastoral and practical theology); gender analysis as an indispensable category for analysis in theology. In reverse order, this charts the author’s journey from feminist psychology and pastoral theology in the 1990s through to practice theory and, more recently, practical theology.

While practical theologians usually seek to address several audiences, including the public and ministers in parishes, often with a view to changing theories and actions, this book is for professional academic peers, providing a meta-account and theories of the features and tasks of practical and pastoral theology. It is not an introduction to the subject, nor does it aim directly to improve performance in the constituent parts of practical theological education and practice. It does, however, provide a vision and a number of critical horizons within which practical theologians might orientate their work.

Like all collections of essays there are overlaps and aporias of attention, so the book can be read in parts, as interest directs. Consistently accessible, approachable, and clear throughout, perhaps some of the chapters could have benefited from editing to increase concept density. But, of course, readers have the freedom to turn the pages faster, or to move on. It is useful to see the theoretical underpinnings of one theologian's work as it has evolved historically, and valuable to have collected in one volume work which focuses on particular issues but which has been published in disparate places and at different times.

I particularly value Miller-McLemore's steadfast allegiance to the distinctiveness, integrity and value of pastoral theology as a psychologically informed response to persons and pathos. This is a very North American view of the pastoral, but Miller-McLemore is right to reassert the value of psychological-theological learning and thinking in pastoral theology, albeit that she situates this within her very useful concept of the living web as a way of opening up personal encounters to wider social and political factors. Miller-McLemore coined the term 'the living web' and it is good to see both a full exposition of it here, and some corrective work on its limits provoked by encounters with clinical pastoral education. A real strength of the book is that readers see the author changing her mind over time, thus witnessing a real practical theological intelligence at work.

Another striking aspect is its emphasis on embodied, local democratic knowing and the commitment to expand practical theology to be the work of all the people of God. The author is implacably opposed to elitism of any kind; her attack on those who dismiss the skills of ministry and living as merely 'hints and tips' is salutary. If practical theology is embodied knowledge, then real practices are its aim and object. It is one thing to criticise the 'clerical paradigm' which dominated theological education at one time, quite another to miss the inadvertent dominance of an equally pernicious 'academic paradigm' which removes all kinds of theological exploration from contact with the lives of ministers and congregations. Miller-McLemore's ideas flow out of taking her own experience and practice seriously – thus, here, readers see how the theory of practical and pastoral theology can emerge gracefully, but not complacently, from life, ministry and academic practice.

Such is the proper pluralism and localism of practical theology that the book will probably be mainly of direct value to US readers. It is one of the frustrating limitations of this still relatively small discipline that its practitioners in one country often fail to communicate fully with those in others. So, disappointingly, some very significant British thinkers like John Swinton, Heather Walton, Duncan Forrester and others, who share

a very similar agenda and set of commitments with Miller-McLemore, do not yet seem significantly to have influenced her thought and development. Australian Terry Veling's seminal work on practical theology is also apparently ignored. But one person cannot encompass the whole world of knowledge, and hopefully this will not be Miller-McLemore's last word on her discipline. While I share the author's hopes for the nature and future of practical theology, I remain a little uncertain as to whether the vision advanced here will really affect the wider practice of the theological academy to the extent that she would like.

The book is terrific value for money and should be on the shelves of any advanced pastoral or practical theologian, wherever they live. May all its aspirations and dreams for pastoral and practical theology be abundantly realised.

Stephen Pattison

University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK  
*s.pattison.1@bham.ac.uk*

doi:10.1017/S0036930612000506

Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-Century Social Context of Paul's Letter*, WUNT 237 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. xiv + 190. \$79.00.

Justin Hardin's monograph on *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* addresses the social and religious background of the letter's recipients. The key question that Hardin seeks to answer is: 'What were the Galatians actually doing at the time of Paul's letter?' (p. 15). Essentially, Hardin concludes that the Galatians were contemplating circumcision in order to give themselves a proper socio-political status among the Jewish community (p. 112). In the mean time, however, some of the Galatians were participating in the imperial cult as an attempt to ease their awkward social standing (pp. 141–7).

Hardin begins his study with an overview of the imperial cult in the Julio-Claudian era broadly, before specifically addressing the extent that the cult of Rome had affected both the northern and the southern cities of Galatia. Hardin's historical research leaves little doubt about the expanse of imperial ideology throughout the eastern portions of the Roman Empire, and there is good reason to assume that the Galatians would have been affected by the pervasive emperor cult to some degree. However, this is not the same as suggesting that the imperial cult had directly affected the crisis in Galatia that Paul was addressing. Yet Hardin attempts to provide evidence for this in his treatment of Gal 6:12–13 and 4:8–10.