

## **Wolf Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for A Post-Christian World***

**(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), pp. xiv + 258. \$48.00.**

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This collection of essays offers a fresh reading of the thoughts of a significant theologian who has been underappreciated in the English speaking world, Wolf Krötke, engaging the works of two of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century: Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Much gratitude is due to John P. Burgess for the translation of these previously untranslated essays by Krötke, making them accessible for the first time to readers in English. (Burgess has also offered a number of fresh translations of Barth and Bonhoeffer's works from German to English at various points throughout the essays as a means of clarification and emphasis.)

In this collection Krötke has provided nuanced and careful critical analysis and appropriation of both Barth and Bonhoeffer from his unique perspective as a theologian engaging their works within the context of Soviet-controlled East Germany, as well as post-Soviet united Germany. This vantage point provides ample opportunities for Krötke to reflect upon the various contexts of German life and theology as a shifting terrain that has not often been reflected thus in conversation with Barth and Bonhoeffer.

In Krötke's first series of essays, he engages constructively and critically with Barth's: theology in general (pp. 3–21), theological anthropology (pp. 22–44, 88–102), a 'central category' in his *Church Dogmatics* (pp. 45–59), christological interpretations (pp. 60–73), doctrine of election (pp. 74–87), theology and/as resistance (pp. 103–18), and ecclesiology as world-reconciling (pp. 119–34). In the second half of the essays, Krötke does similarly for Bonhoeffer's always controversial categories of 'religionlessness', 'religionless Christianity', and responsibility as such to the world (pp. 135–164, 232–46); theology proper (pp. 166–76); interpretation of the Psalms (pp. 177–89); and divine providence in relation to the 'State' and responsible resistance (pp. 190–231). He concludes with a brief appendix on protecting the private writings of persons like Bonhoeffer as intentionally private and personal rather than public and communal (pp. 247–52).

By means of this collection, Krötke provides insights not only into these two scholars, but also into the history of their interpreters who have provided all manner of readings that diverge from one another. This makes for a helpful reading of secondary literature (e.g. Eberhard Bethge, Walter Dreß, Gerhard Ebeling, Heino Falcke, Eberhard Jüngel, Anna Morawska, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Albrecht Schönherr and Hans Urs von Balthasar) beyond Krötke's own helpful readings of the primary literature. At every turn Krötke points to the christocentrism of Barth and Bonhoeffer in guiding their theological constructions and trajectories. He seeks to be faithful to their intent (which e.g. in Barth requires going beyond Barth) even as he critiques lack of clarity in such matters as Bonhoeffer's uses of 'religious/religions', 'resistance' and 'religionlessness', and in Barth's ecclesiology.

Krötke draws upon the theological anthropologies of Barth and Bonhoeffer (the latter being underdeveloped) as a means of engaging in their theologies of the electing Elect (i.e. the Christ, Jesus) in and through whom humans have been made partners

with God and find themselves caught up in God's redemptive love. The ecclesiological and missiological ramifications are teased out toward potential for declaring and enacting that divinely enacted freedom in love, even as some remainder is always left for the consummation. Krötke intentionally offers embodiment for ecclesial faithfulness in the midst of the 'State' and 'world' that does not yet recognise (either properly or actually) the reign of God. He carefully notes that for Bonhoeffer there is no rule or principle that dictates such action, but only the possibility of a responsible answer to the living God that is not excused from guilt. The manner in which Krötke has lived in the midst of various 'State' constructs, considered such in light of the theologies of Barth and Bonhoeffer, offers a fresh vista upon the dangers and possibilities of faithful witness to God in Christ.

Students and scholars who would seek to rehear some of the significant (and controversial) contributions of Barth and Bonhoeffer would do well to give Krötke a careful read. His argumentation is careful even as he offers fresh readings recontextualised for those in the English-speaking West. The essays themselves ought to prompt future studies in English of Krötke's own theological contributions beyond his reflections upon Barth and Bonhoeffer.

doi:10.1017/S0036930620000514

## Francis J. Beckwith, *Never Doubt Thomas: The Catholic Aquinas as Evangelical and Protestant*

(Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. 2019), pp. xiii + 199. \$29.95.

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Francis J. Beckwith has journeyed from Catholicism to evangelicalism, and back. He told the story in *Return to Rome* (Brazos, 2008). In *Never Doubt Thomas*, he addresses a handful of theological topics that have divided Catholics and Protestants, and which have featured in his own intellectual story. He does so in conversation with St Thomas Aquinas: not, for the most part, as an interlocutor newly brought in, but as a figure already of considerable interest to the evangelical authors he discusses. Elements of Beckwith's biography appear from time to time and serve to render a warm and appealing book yet more human.

The opening chapter surveys the shift in the standing of Aquinas among Protestant writers (or at least a good number of them) over recent decades, from representing all that is thought to be wrong with Catholicism, to eminent representative of a shared tradition, a spokesman for earlier sources in an age of theological retrieval. Beckwith emerges as broadly sympathetic to the current (often Protestant) mainstream of philosophy of religion, but also as gently and firmly critical of significant aspects. He rejects 'supreme being' theology, for instance, and a modal account of divine necessity, by which God is a being who exists in all possible worlds.

The four central chapters deal with natural law and natural theology, religious pluralism, intelligent design, and justification. Each celebrates ecumenical convergence, with