

Menschwerdung for Himself and for the sake of His self-realisation' (SCD, vol. 3, p. 293, tr. altered). A further question would be whether God is *affected* by the life of God's creatures. Some propositions by Dorner point towards such a view.

Norgate notes a 'key weakness' in that 'the Spirit appears as almost entirely dependent on and subsequent to the determinations of Christ's godhumanity' (p. 220). I think, however, that such 'dependence' is unavoidable if the person of Christ is the centre of theology. The christological foundation of pneumatology is a sign of dogmatic strength, not weakness.

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William A. Dyrness, *Poetic Theology: God and the Poetic of Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), pp. 338. \$26.00.

In most churches the altar guild and the committee which organises peace actions perform their tasks amicably, but separately. The tendency to differentiate between the good and the beautiful, sometimes even to regard them as slightly incompatible, can be traced to the iconoclasm of Reformers who regarded images in particular and art in general as distracting and unbiblical, accordingly excluding visual art and 'secular' literature from worship. In *Poetic Theology* William Dyrness reflects on the development of that 'hermeneutic of suspicion', and its emphasis on what H. Richard Niebuhr termed 'Christ against culture'.

How we are to care for, craft, enjoy and share the things of this world is a question which arises as soon as we read the opening chapters of Genesis and continues through stories which range from sparse desert life to the building of Solomon's temple, and culminates in a vision of a heavenly city whose very infrastructure is a thing of glittering beauty. In response to that core question, Dyrness deftly maps the course of Christian reflection on aesthetics, from Augustine through Dante and Bunyan, into the Romantic revolution and then modernism and postmodernism, reaching frequently back to Plato and the biblical texts as well as invoking Tillich and Wolterstorff. But the book is not primarily a history of Christian aesthetics; its more ambitious project is to propose a 'poetic theology' which is biblical, Christ-centred and also attuned to the discourses of contemporary global cultures and to the desires which drive people both into and out of the church.

One of the most helpful features of Dyrness' work is the questions which frame his reflections. How do the sensitivities of the current generation 'relate

to the presence and purposes of God?' he asks at the outset, generously assuming that all desires derive from the deepest desires which drive us towards the holy, and examining even the dubious desires of a consumer culture in those terms. From that premise he proceeds to the second question, which brackets his work: 'In the light of the current climate of heightened spirituality, how might the story of what God was doing in Israel and Christ be represented? How, today, might the Gospel be actually heard?'

The 'current climate' he refers to is a public and ecclesial discourse deeply shaped by Kant and Romanticism, the latter definable by a longing, no longer explicitly Christian, but orientated towards transcendence, mysticism and the life of the spirit. Challenging the suspicion of earthly pleasures he believes has impoverished Protestant worship, Dyrness considers how the arts can best be incorporated into Christian worship. In the same way that the Romantics believed that poetry or 'language in its constitutive use' could open us to 'something higher or deeper', he believes that we might do the same through 'paint, figured shape, or dance', and do it in specific relation to the Christian story. Protestants can reclaim aesthetic practices as aids to rich, multicultural, deeply biblical worship, not indiscriminately, but with a wide, confident embrace. Anchored in the message of God's love, and rightly understanding *koinonia* as participation in helping the created order to flourish, the church can be and, he argues, urgently needs to be a site not only of ongoing 'reforming' but also of ongoing renewal of the kind which can come only when its members are involved in a continual exchange of gifts, including the gifts of music, dance, story and song.

One of the most moving points of the book's argument comes in the later chapters which address the surprising question, 'What does fostering the church's aesthetic life have to do with social justice?'. Citing Roberto Goizueta's *Caminemos con Jesus*, which articulates a 'theology of accompaniment', as well as Jesus' own words that we do not live by bread alone, he offers examples of communities in dire economic poverty which expend precious resources and effort to create rituals which are, literally, life-giving. He concludes a thought-provoking section on the relationship between beauty and justice by citing Wolterstorff's claim that perpetuating conditions which force some to live in 'aesthetic squalor' is a profound injustice: 'Living in aesthetic decency is not an optional luxury but a moral right. Justice requires it' (p. 276).

*Poetic Theology* challenges readers not only to reflect, but to act by forging within their congregations links between art, stewardship and justice in ways which are celebratory, creative and inviting. He points a way to generous orthodoxy by reminding us that within the divine economy of God's love, faithfulness and bold, innovative, imaginative use of God's gifts can be

entirely compatible. The book locates us in a long conversation with roots in ancient Israel and Athens and also focuses squarely on how the present cultural moment is beset with confusion but alive with possibilities for people of faith who are uniquely equipped to find in the beauty of the arts an avenue of access to the one who is above all others, altogether lovely.

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Lloyd P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. xi+1284. £150.00; \$240.00.

This new history of late ancient philosophy is designed not to replace but to be a successor to the beloved 1967 *Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. The main reason is the difference of format between the two works. Where the former *History* contained a few lengthy articles on major figures, written by eight scholars, the new version contains 48 pieces by 50 scholars, most of them professional philosophers, although most of the Christian figures are covered by historical theologians or historians of early Christianity. The editor is to be commended for the plan of the new work: he has built it as a series of units on various forms of philosophy in a given period, from the late Roman Empire to early-medieval times, punctuated by other units covering the three 'encounters' with philosophy by Judaism (i.e. Philo), Christianity (Justin Martyr to John Scotus Eriugena and beyond), and early Islam.

The two determining factors in the new *History* are its approach to time and its density. In contrast with the earlier version, the editor has made the wise choice to begin around the year 200 CE, rather than giving an account of the original philosophies which lie behind late ancient traditions, for which the reader is referred to the first *History*. This choice is meant to bring greater focus to late ancient philosophy *per se*, rather than portraying it as the afterlife of the real philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, etc. Second, the new *History* devotes less space per topic than the earlier work does, all followed by over 300 pages (!) of abbreviations, bibliography and indices. A compressed work will naturally reward those looking for an economical reference tool, but it will no doubt disappoint those who desire a more thorough introduction to the figures in question; and some of the chapters just feel too compressed. A third distinguishing factor is of course the amount of new research on late ancient philosophy which has taken place in the last 40 years.