

controversy: the Donatist success up to the death of Parmenian (ca. 392) had to do with good leadership of this Donatist bishop and with the absence of such leadership in the Catholic Church. Describing Origen as a Christian philosopher (19) is a bit strange, especially when one takes into account that Origen did not like the secular philosophy of his time. Mitchell and Van Nuffelen were the editors of the volume, mentioned on page 20, contributing to a book with numerous authors; they were not the authors of it.

Long quotes from Augustine's works are helpful for they illustrate and underpin the reflections of Kenney. Kenney several times speaks of pagan philosophy (4), a terminology I dislike, for Platonism and Stoicism, to mention only two, were part of the cultural heritage in which Christianity would find its way, nor should the Stoic background of Christian ethics from the time of Paul be underestimated. After one hundred years of debate about whether Augustine converted to a Christian Neo-Platonism or a Neo-Platonic Christianity, I think that such statements as "the pagan Platonism had misunderstood the human condition" are a bit exaggerated for the period discussed in this book.

The so-called Great Persecution was in Africa over in 311 (cf. p. 11).

To conclude: the great merit of this work is that it offers in a clear way a good introduction into Augustine's thoughts up to the beginning of the fifth century. The book thus will offer a good service to all who are interested in the greatest patristic thinker of the Latin West. The book well meets the aims of the series Reading Augustine.

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A Little Book for New Preachers: Why and How to Study Homiletics. By Matthew D. Kim. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020. 127 pages. \$12.00 (paper).

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The Chinese philosopher Confucius (d. 479 BCE) teaches: "He who speaks without modesty will find it difficult to make his words good." Matthew D. Kim's *A Little Book for New Preachers* is a modest book, both in length and in size (7 by 4.25 inches). It is written in a welcoming, even self-effacing style. In sum, it is a very good word for new preachers.

As a Roman Catholic preacher rooted in a lectionary tradition, I was skeptical of the personal value of such a guide published by an Evangelical publishing house that stresses the authority and teaching of the Bible. My own tradition gives equal weight to tradition and increasing the authority of

experience and its context. My skepticism quickly ebbed and eventually faded as I traversed this unpretentious little gem. Initially it was the tone that disarmed me, explicated toward the end when Kim admits that his “goal in life is to be a cheerleader for preachers and a champion for preaching” (121). As an experienced preacher with my own presuppositions and even pretenses about homilizing, I never felt chided or disparaged in the writing. This is not a celebrated preacher and teacher telling us what is wrong with our preaching or how to be like him. Kim is a cheerleader in full appreciative mode.

There is much laudable in this book that, from an outsider’s perspective, seems to push the evangelical envelope. Notable is the embrace of practical theology (64–65) as a significant lens for preaching. This honors the tradition of his *alma mater*, the University of Edinburgh, especially of colleague and celebrated practical theology Duncan Forrester (d. 2016) from that institution.

A parallel gift is Kim’s cultural acuity, rooted in his own experience and the topic of previous publications. Affirming “faithful cultural exegesis” (chapter 4) as critical for contemporary preaching is important for homilists regardless of denomination. Although the various publics here are not seriously excavated, the fact that he mentions those with disabilities and with autoimmune diseases, the autistic and survivors of sexual abuse, those suffering from depression and members of the LGBTQ community (81) at least alerts preachers to the often-silent diversity that sits in front of us every week. The mention of these groups—and more than a dozen more—were compacted into a single paragraph in the brief section “The Least of These Cultures.” At first read, this seemed like a facile litany of the marginalized. However, the consistently self-aware author then ponders if lumping all of these people together into one category basically encompasses everyone. This is followed by a poignant tale about personal diminishment and the brutal death of a loved one. Although this could seem like emotional manipulation, my empathy meter jumped off the page. People who know and embrace suffering, preachers who acknowledge and draw upon suffering in their lives and the lives of those around them, have something to teach. The final section of the book on characteristics of a faithful preacher affirms this authorial thread. The characteristics of pastoral and loving, of character and integrity, of prayerful and spirit-led are not only commendable but also resonate richly in this writing.

Unsurprisingly, there are elements in the book with which I disagree. The continued use of “faithful” as a litmus test was a bit baffling. “Faithful according to whom?” is always my question—especially in hierarchically decentered denominations. The framework of “application” (83) when invoking practical theology seems contradictory. Practical theology does not presume

“application” to some context, but a mutual critical dialogue with it. The cultural lens is also problematic, especially when considering education achievement, age, or sexual orientation, which are not “cultures” but “social locations” within a context. Although there is some nod to the richer frame of “context” (67), it is not seriously engaged. A good dose of Stephan Bevan’s *Models of Contextual Theology* would be useful.

Caveats aside, this is a small book with a big heart. Professor Kim is a gifted cheerleader for the preaching life. I would like to meet him, would be enriched hearing him preach and, maybe more, would be grateful for his feedback on my preaching. This book made me a fan.

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Catholic Theological Union

Sex, Love, and Families: Catholic Perspectives. Edited by Jason King and Julie Hanlon Rubio. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020. 315 pages. \$34.95 (paper).

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To say that the pandemic brought on by COVID-19 has dramatically altered sex, love, and family would be an understatement. For many, family life has suddenly become very compressed, with parents and kids now home together all the time. Social distancing has meant that our interactions outside our homes are largely remote—we’ve all been forced to become Zoom experts. All this (along with a great deal of sadness, fear, and anxiety) offers an opening for some fresh theological considerations on family and relationships.

Published just before the pandemic began in the United States, *Sex, Love, and Families: Catholic Perspectives* is a collection of twenty-five essays divided into three sections: sex, love, and family. The editors, Jason King and Julie Hanlon Rubio, explain that their goal is to avoid the polarization marking so much of contemporary Catholic moral theology; on the one hand, fidelity to the magisterium and the absolute moral norms it defends, and on the other hand, revisionist perspectives and possible dissent. Moreover, they look to include essays that do not rehash “old arguments” but rather that seek to begin “new conversations.” The volume certainly does offer a survey of many different new conversations in moral theology—including ones that introduce such theological innovations as a “theology of foreplay” and “queer natural law.”

The strongest essays in the volume, though, are those that attempt to blur the line that has long separated Catholic sexual ethics from Catholic social