

of mystery, to be sure, but not as an absurdity or a bare contradiction. It seems to me that theologians therefore ought to welcome Hasker's book, and his attempt to defend the coherence of the most fundamental tenet of the faith.

William Wood

Oriel College, University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 4EW, UK

william.wood@oriel.ox.ac.uk

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Michael Barnes, *Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp. xiv + 292. £64.99/\$95.00 (hbk)/£19.99 (pbk)/\$79.99 (e-book).

Michael Barnes' *Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination* is an unusual book. Almost uniquely in this growing literature, it places questions of method or anxieties about the place of interreligious engagement in the university largely to one side (although not quite). Taking the form more of meditations than of lectures, the reader is invited to consider what Barnes names a 'dilemma' which is stated at the outset in the preface, and which returns in the postface at the end: 'The tension between the virtues of faithfulness and openness runs through this book' (p. x). This is not really a dilemma, it turns out, but a false opposition between doing justice to Christian theology and doing justice to the integrity of other traditions, as if one must always choose between them. Barnes' meditations are an attempt to overcome this false opposition by articulating a Christian theology whose inner logics demand that one do justice to the integrity of other traditions. The dominant categories are thus native to Christian theology and at the same time outward facing: 'hospitality', 'meeting', 'generosity', 'humility', 'conversation'. These are confidently and clearly articulated. The dominant mode is (to repeat) meditation, which leads to a beautifully sensitive account of Buddhist meditation and its attraction for Christians (pp. 141–52), which is nonetheless not uncritical: the attractions are queried and even corrected later on through an engagement with Rowan Williams (pp. 159ff.). This is itself a performance of the structure of the book: from 'crossing' to 'return', as I shall suggest.

The book is composed of eleven meditations ordered through three themes: 'meetings', 'crossings' and 'imaginings'. These three turn out to be a matter of 'schools' (where persons and ideas meet), 'translation' (where persons and ideas travel and are changed) and 'return' (where transformed persons and ideas resource and illuminate Christian theology). The role of the 'everyday' plays a big dual role in the study. On the one hand it is an alternative to a focus on 'textual traditions': it is persons rather than artefacts

which are centre-stage. On the other hand it is an alternative to a focus on 'beliefs': it is practices of 'ordinary life' rather than propositional claims which claim the author's attention. Barnes sets himself a stiff test of this focus early on in the book, where he gives an account of Auschwitz as the corruption of everyday practices rather than the domination of ideas (pp. 63–7). It is laid out with particular emphasis in the discussion of Christian–Muslim engagement, which is explored partly through an engagement with the *A Common Word* initiative: it is described (somewhat against the grain of its textual and propositional emphasis) more as an encounter between people than between texts. As the title of the book suggests, the guiding idea is that dialogue is a unique and irreplaceable opportunity for *learning*. Barnes meditates on his journey more deeply into his own tradition, a journey made possible by interreligious dialogue and indeed a journey that would not have been possible without it.

The book takes a relaxed view of theoretical models. John Hick is gently chided for articulating a 'view from nowhere' (p. 12); a low-key retrieval of Karl Rahner's idea of 'anonymous Christians' is offered, by mapping it against *Lumen Gentium* (pp. 13–14); Francis Clooney and Paul Griffiths are quietly redirected away from what is presented (although not emphatically) as a one-sided concern with reading texts towards a more social engagement with persons (pp. 18–22); Gavin D'Costa, Keith Ward, Jonathan Z Smith, Wilfred Cantwell Smith and William Cavanaugh are sampled for their querying of the term 'religion' (pp. 30–41); there are confrontations with Dawkins and Hitchens (pp. 59–63); Tzvetan Todorov is mined for his distinction between grammars of humanism and of totalitarianism (p. 64). These and many more tend to be brief and suggestive rather than detailed and critical: Barnes' concern is to lead through meditation more than to frame by theory. This is true even of the central section on translation, which includes discussion of Rozenzweig and Buber. Again, against the grain of their work, the discussion tends to narrate their lives more than deploy their theory – Barnes even complains in passing about Rozenzweig's 'Hegelian take on the relationship of religions', p. 107. 'Translation' for Barnes is a practical skill more than a theoretical problem.

In the course of this study a genuine dilemma does emerge. The meditations offered are particular to their author and are developed explicitly out of a particular life of engagement (in Dindigul, Auschwitz, Mount Athos, Jerusalem, Krakow, Śantivanam, Jersey City, Qom, Colombo, Anandpur); how are these to be understood also as theological claims with normative force for the Catholic tradition (the author writes as a Jesuit addressing the church)? Barnes' explicit strategy is to emphasise encyclicals (especially *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate*) but he is on this question more

hesitant and somewhat vaguer: it is left as a problem for his reader to judge.

It is a fascinating and rich book seeking to articulate not a theoretical model but, in its own words, 'a spirituality of dialogue' (p. 261). But I suspect that in the end, against the author's better instincts, theory gets in the way, twice. First, the brief but numerous theoretical asides are too superficial to do any heavy lifting, and they often push the prose towards making the kinds of propositional claims that the meditative mode might otherwise resist. Second there are structural contrary tendencies. The meditative structure is serial: beginning with a location, exploring the encounters (between persons more than texts) and drawing attention to what can be learned. Yet its conceptual structure – 'schools', 'translation', 'return' – is more sonata-like. The individual chapters prove too driven by their own particular concerns, rooted in everyday life, to be constrained within such an arc, and the result is that they tend to burst at the seams. This is a good book of meditations. Might it have been better with even less theory?

Nicholas Adams

University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK

n.adams@bham.ac.uk

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Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are and How They Got There* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 399. £22.99/\$44.95.

I completed my formal, academic theological education during the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. There was much of great value in that education, but one thing that was clearly missing was any real sense of the rich diversity, complex history and varied theology of the global Christian movement. My view of the church and of God's work in and through it was much too small. For the most part, my church history began with the Protestant Reformation, and my study of theology and ecclesiology was largely limited to the Protestant tradition. My sense of the church failed to be shaped substantively by the riches of the ancient and medieval church, by the Catholic, Orthodox and even Pentecostal traditions, and certainly by the dynamics of the incredible growth and theological vitality of the Christian movement in the global south.

For those, like me, with a limited formal education in world Christianity, Douglas Jacobson's book, *The World's Christians, Who They Are, Where They Are and How They Got There*, opens a whole new world of Christianity that is far more diverse, theologically challenging and ultimately encouraging than the limited Christianity from my northern hemisphere Protestant world.