

Readers will undoubtedly be challenged to assess the validity of some of von Speyr's insights.

At times it is difficult to sort out the source of analogies meant to elucidate trinitarian relations. Is an analogy von Speyr's or Sutton's? In a short section on the Eucharist, after having quoted von Speyr, Sutton explains her meaning thus: "The Eucharist is the Son slung out of heaven by the Father like a tethered grappling hook, sinking its sharp points into the drifting earth, with the Holy Spirit pulling the tether to return earth back to heaven" (216). The worshiper is indeed brought close to God in the eucharistic embrace, but by what mechanism? Precisely what portion of the earth experiences the sharp points of this grappling hook? Sutton chooses this image to explain von Speyr, but it gives the reader pause to consider why such an image would even occur to a commentator on her work. Von Speyr needs an apologist capable of accounting for her analogical imagination if her trinitarian theology is to be taken more seriously today. One wonders, for example, what the difference might be between von Speyr's mystical visions claiming to capture trinitarian exchanges—she recounts deliberations about the Son's "decision" to become incarnate—and, say, J. R. R. Tolkien's fictional creation myth at the start of *The Silmarillion*. Tolkien had a rich prayer life, too, replete with visions of angels, but readers seem to know how to read his edifying myth as a musical analogy for God's relation to the world, rather than as an accurate account of an open heaven. Maybe there is no difference between Tolkien and von Speyr? Dare we hope that there is? Sutton may be poised to deliver an account.

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Understanding Interreligious Relations. Edited by David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas. London: Oxford University Press, 2013. 464 pages. \$35.00 (paper).

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The last sentence of this collection summarizes its motivation and purpose: "Religions ignore each other at their ultimate peril; understanding the future of religion amounts to understanding the present reality, and the immediate prospects, of interreligious relations" (401). Convinced, therefore, that the study of religion must proceed interreligiously, the three male editors have assembled eighteen essays in two broadly titled parts: part 1, "Religions and the Religious Others," and part 2, "Themes and Issues in Interreligious Relations." "Interreligious" does not seem to include intergender or

intercultural: only four of the contributors are women; all of them are based in the West.

In a rather ponderous introductory essay, David Cheetham tries to remove the roadblocks that postmodern intellectuals usually throw up to any conversation between religions. As academic correctness seems to require, he first disavows any resemblance to “the pluralistic agenda of liberal moderns” (18), but then goes on to make a “realist” (also a pluralist) assertion that universal truth claims (metanarratives) are “an integral and fundamental part of *religious truth*” (20). Therefore, differences between religions are to be not only “cherished” but “engaged.” They are not incommensurable.

If collections of solicited essays are notoriously mixed bags of varying quality and unity, such a verdict does not apply at all to part 1 of this book. Its six essays provide a splendid compendium of clearly diverse, but surprisingly analogous, efforts by contemporary Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim scholars to work out what might be called a “theology of religious diversity” for their respective traditions. Each of them follows a similar structure: a historical overview of how the tradition has understood and engaged the religious other, noting a diversity that shifts between so-called exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist perspectives, and concluding with contemporary efforts to craft a more dialogical, cooperative approach.

Each of the essays sparkles with particular historical facts or provocative insights. Jeffery D. Long makes a convincing case that contemporary Hinduism is a creature of interreligious exchange and “might well be seen as a hybrid of Brahmanical and Śramaṇic [Buddhist and Jain] religious thought and practice” (44)—a reality that today’s Hindu “Nationalists” might well keep in mind (55 f.). Ed Kessler urges his fellow Jews to embrace a “*memoria futuri*” (a “memory of the future”) and to engage other religious traditions on the basis of a “Jewish covenantal pluralism” (83). In Buddhist approaches to others, Elizabeth Harris notes a tension between the conviction that “believing only oneself to be right leads away from enlightenment,” on the one hand and, on the other, the recurrent affirmation that “Buddhist teaching supersedes other systems” (117). She sees hope in the way the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Rita Gross are creatively struggling with this tension. The biblical ambiguity, the long-standing historical exclusivity, the revolutionary openness of the Second Vatican Council, and the contemporary polemics among Christian theologians of religions are all succinctly and insightfully reviewed by Perry Schmidt-Leukel. After a nuanced historical review of how Muslims have engaged other religions, David Thomas concludes that most of these efforts (including the recent *Common Word*) do not move beyond inclusivist or fulfillment attitudes. But he argues intriguingly that the Qur’an itself provides the best resources for crafting more dialogical viewpoints.

The quality and complementarity of the essays in part 1 would be reason enough to purchase this book—despite the decidedly mixed-bag/grab-bag content of part 2. It is not clear whether the editors had any guidelines in selecting the “themes and issues” of these eleven essays. Each has relevance in itself, but there is nothing that links them or gives them heuristic structure. Four of these essays, by Marianne Moyaert, Peter Phan and Jonathan Y. Tan, Catherine Cornille, and Paul Weller, stand out for their clarity and insight. Moyaert offers an engaging review of the nature, the need, and the necessary norms for interreligious dialogue, stressing the importance for both fidelity to, yet criticism of, one’s own tradition. All such dialogical engagements, Phan and Tan warn us, are profoundly, though often subtly, affected by power differentials between majority-home religions and minority-migrant newcomers; Roman Catholics themselves, they boldly accuse Vatican pastoral initiatives of being camouflaged tactics for evangelization. When interreligious relations become intimate and take the form of “multiple belonging,” Cornille admonishes, things become dangerously complex but, she admits, also potentially enriching. Weller shifts from the theoretical to the concrete and offers a thick description of why the British Interfaith Network can serve as a model for creating trust and collaboration among diverse communities.

Other entries in part 2 offer basic content for their scattered topics: conversion, fundamentalism, peace-building, religion and the public sphere, and social justice, but they could have used more editorial rigor in assuring clarity of style (less academic jargon) and a focus on a topic within each essay, and less repetition among them.

In a rather rambling final essay, the editors seek to identify the “trends” for “the future of engagement.” They conclude that the “one single issue around which the future of interreligious relations is likely to swing” is “religious diversity” (397), and that “the future of religion lies in dedicated interreligious engagement” (401). These are hardly revelatory conclusions. Still, their book is another solid, though limited, contribution toward realizing such a future.

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In 1993, Delores S. Williams authored the seminal book *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. This groundbreaking