

transforming action as he relates the redeemed to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The differences between the divine Persons in the service of their consubstantiality, are, for Adrienne – and Schumacher finds in this the one utterly certain element in her putative legacy to Balthasar – continuously relevant to the resolution of the various ‘tensions’ concerned. The sympathetic reader is struck by the ingenuity and profundity whereby Adrienne von Speyr winkles out from the historic revelation what Balthasar terms in the Epilogue to his Trilogy (aesthetics, dramatics, logic) ‘traces and images of the intra-divine difference’ that issue from God’s own quite gratuitous self-revelation. Such traces are not deducible, then, ‘from below’, moving analogically from worldly being to its Origin, yet they can plausibly be presented ‘katalogically’, when seen ‘from above’.

But what of the unsympathetic reader of this material? Schumacher seeks to reassure those who do not care for the ‘penal substitution’ element in the von Speyrian-Balthasarian theology of the Atonement by the drastic surgery of amputation. But within a multifaceted theology of the redemption such as theirs, it has a proper – albeit not super-ordinate – place. It is a rendering of the ancient theology of Christ’s death as sacrifice which, seen against the background of the sin-offerings and guilt-offerings of the Hebrew Bible, means precisely the substitution of a precious victim for the offerer’s self. The entirety of Chapter 7, ‘A Critical Appraisal’, is given over to the more distinctively Thomist criticisms, concerned as these are with issues of ontology: divine immutability, the inter-relation of the divine and human natures in Christ, and the possibility of extending to the entire divine Trinity some version or versions of the *kenosis* ascribed to the Son in the celebrated *Philippians* hymn. Schumacher’s judicious discussion prepares the way for her ‘General Conclusion’. Here she calls for the further contextualising of Adrienne von Speyr’s ‘Trinitarian anthropology’ in the wider tradition (a work begun by Balthasar but by no means completed by him). Not at the expense, however, of losing the powerful language with which Adrienne re-expressed the classical themes of consubstantiality and circumincession and the vocation of human beings to be ‘intimately associated with the processions of the Divine Persons’ and thus come to ‘share in the bliss of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity’. Words not of von Speyr but of Pius XII.

AIDAN NICHOLS OP

**FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY: A PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE**, by Matthew L. Becker, *Bloomsbury*, London, 2015, pp. xxvii+571, £24.99, pbk

To practise theology, even at the most introductory level, is always already to make some theological claim, however inchoate that might

be. Matthew Becker's *Fundamental Theology* offers a synoptic survey of approaches to the 'theology of theology' from a Protestant perspective, attempting to stimulate undergraduate students to reflect more deeply on the nature and purpose of theology's distinctive task. Although Becker selects and orders his material to suit the needs of students in the North American Liberal Arts sector, by isolating the major issues of theological prolegomena, his work develops as a useful narrative from which the distinctive voices of major theologians can emerge, as if within a dialogue across the centuries, and into which the students can interpolate their own emerging theological intuitions.

Part I is concerned to 'locate' contemporary university-based theology within the context of World Christianities (Chapter 2) and an historical consciousness of the origins of theology's distinctive task, including its self-understanding in relation to pre-Christian philosophy (Chapter 3). Chapter 3 is a relentless *tour de force* that demonstrates the author's mastery, moving from Aquinas to Bultmann in ten pages, taking in Feuerbach and Hildegard von Bingen, *inter alios*, along the way (pp. 72–82). The skill with which Becker moves from one thinker to another gives the impression of an enormous hidden theological 'ballast' that enables his conceptual ship to remain upright as he steers the reader through choppy historical waters. Embedded within this historical framework, however, the working definition of theology proposed in Chapter 4 ('critical and self-critical reflection on the revelation of God' that allows the student 'to appropriate the truth and wisdom in witness' (p. 103) connects most directly with Chapter 1's exploration of how theological activity arises from diverse human experiences.

The establishment of God's self-revelation as a 'key presupposition of Christian theology' (p. 111), however, inscribes an essentially Kantian paradigm into the definition of theology. Given the bedevilment of contemporary theological prolegomena by idealism's transcendental turn, the condensation of Kant's thought into a single paragraph on p. 78 (about the same amount of space that is given to both Johann Semler and Jonathan Edwards, and about 20% of that devoted to Schleiermacher) perhaps fails to capture the significance of Kant's influence, and could have been usefully expanded. Nonetheless, Becker returns to Kant elsewhere in the book, and the paragraph is an example of the author's impressive ability to synthesise and summarise, offering a précis that is succinct and accessible without major compromise or caricature.

Indeed, the depth of Kant's influence is evident in Part II, which is devoted to the problem of God-talk. Chapter 5 locates this contemporary problematic within post-Shoah post-modernity, highlighting the metaphysical and phenomenological problems of religious language within contemporary intellectual culture. Chapter 6 evaluates the possibility of a 'natural' knowledge of God (or 'general revelation') embedded within the created constitution of the human person. The definition of

philosophical theology deployed here (*cf.* p. 514) may, however, unduly exclude the possibility of philosophical engagement of revelation (exemplified by the analytical theology movement, which is understandably omitted in such a necessarily truncated account). The theme of human rationality is developed by the subsequent chapter's exploration of classical arguments for the 'reality of God' (p. 185, a form of words vastly to be preferred to the usual phrase 'existence of God'). The emphasis on Aquinas's *quinque viae* as helping 'one find the God that one already knows in some other fashion [and not as] proofs *per se*, but [...] attempts at giving reasons for the faith [...] one] already has' (p. 195) is notably refreshing.

Chapter 8's presentation of a typology of approaches to 'special revelation', drawing on the work of Avery Dulles, perhaps feels a little late, given the centrality of the category of God's self-revelation to the author's working definition of theology, but is well coupled with Chapter 9's account of the central themes of the witness of special revelation (where, perhaps, slightly more could be said about 'covenant' as a unifying biblical theme, of particular importance in disputes between dispensationalists and federalists. Likewise, Chapter 10 (on the sources of theology) and Chapter 11 (on biblical hermeneutics) are well paired, establishing the need for a distinctive way of reading scripture as the supreme authority, without compromising its relationship to subordinate sources, including religious experience. Whilst Becker rightly leaves much to be treated by specialist courses in exegesis and hermeneutics, more could be said about both reader-response approaches and contextual criticism, including post-colonial and feminist readings, as well as the move from structuralism to post-structuralism. Before we reach the bible, there are unanswered questions about meaning: what is it, and where is it to be metaphysically located? To expect an answer is clearly too much, but biblical interpretation must be more adequately related to broader patterns of reading and philosophical reflection on language.

Part III returns to theology's location as an academic discipline, and to an awareness of theology's role in crafting the university and its evolution as a discipline with its own shape and sub-disciplinary structure (Chapter 12), as well as its interdisciplinary relations with the humanities (Chapter 13) and sciences (Chapter 14). Students are introduced to the shape of their future theological studies at the same time as they are inducted into the task of delicately balancing theology's distinctive sovereignty with theologically justified interdisciplinarity. More could be said about models of interdisciplinary reflection, and particularly about theology's relationship to literature and the creative arts, but these chapters are already robust and well-developed. A concluding glossary of names and theological themes will undoubtedly be of considerable use to undergraduate readers, who, nonetheless, will need to go well beyond the brief orientating summaries that they offer.

Any introductory textbook will inevitably be marked by omissions and simplifications. Whilst there is a certain Lutheran bias to the Protestant perspective (acknowledged by the author), any omissions or simplifications are appropriate and fair. The book enables neophyte theologians to orientate themselves to a vast conceptual topography, whilst simultaneously stimulating reflective discussion (particularly through the questions provided with each chapter), and indicating future directions for study. Two suggestions are offered, although some might suspect that their inclusion would compromise the Protestant perspective that is the book's greatest asset: first, a more sustained philosophical reflection on the latent impact of Kantian idealism and students' 'congenital Cartesianism'; secondly, an inclusion of ecclesiology within the ambit of fundamental theology, allowing for an account of theology as formation in holiness. Taken together, these additions stress theology as an embodied activity of sanctification that finds necessary liturgical expression as part of the theologian's personal intellectual ascent to beatifying communion in God's triune life.

OLIVER JAMES KEENAN OP

**KNOWING THE NATURAL LAW: FROM PRECEPTS AND INCLINATIONS TO DERIVING OUGHTS** by Steven J. Jensen, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 2015, pp. ix + 238, \$34.95, pbk.*

The Catholic Church claims that its teaching about sex rests upon natural law. Germain Grisez, and his follower John Finnis, have developed a theory of natural law which supports that teaching and which they say is in Aquinas. In this book Steven Jensen challenges their work. He argues that they misinterpret Aquinas and that the theory they attribute to him is untenable in itself. It pretends to show that we can derive moral rules from certain precepts of natural law that are themselves derived neither from divine commands nor from theoretical knowledge, but which are self-evident to practical reason, known to be right independently of any other knowledge; and Jensen argues that the attempt fails. He does not explore the implications of his criticism for the Magisterium's sexual teaching, and though he attributes to Aquinas an alternative theory that enables us to derive moral judgments from theoretical knowledge of human nature, he leaves it to his readers to decide whether this alternative theory rules out contraception and other kinds of sexual activity *contra naturam*.

Jensen's scholarship in dealing with Aquinas is impeccable, and he backs his interpretations by an abundance of quotations in both English and Latin not only from the two *Summae* but from other works which are less widely known like the *De Malo* and *De Veritate*. This alone would make his book valuable. His argument against Grisez is *ad hominem* in