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Graham Ward, *How The Light Gets In: Ethical Life I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. xv + 354. £30.00.

As far as recent systematic theologies go, Graham Ward's *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I* is surely one of the most fascinating and ambitious. Now, given that no one any longer writes systematic theologies, the fascination and ambition bar is admittedly low. In this theological day and age, undertaking the task of a multi-volume systematics as Ward begins here, and as Sarah Coakley began in *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'*, is itself fascinating and ambitious. Fascinating because people, for whatever reason, stopped reading systematics some decades ago, and ambitious because given theological conditions (those reasons people stopped reading the stuff) these new attempts will prove successful only insofar as their form and content are able to make the genre matter again. And like Coakley's, Ward's efforts prove remarkably successful.

By fancying his work a systematic theology Ward, who is Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford, simultaneously expands what is included in any theological system and shows 'systematic theology' to be too crude a term (too narrow, too wooden, too mechanical, too self-conscious) to quite capture what speaking of God entails, how much it involves, what it does and what it should hope to do. If systematics of the older dustier type took its task as filling standard traditional categories like revelation, Trinity, christology, ecclesiology and so on, and then relating those categories to one another, then what Ward does is expand that task far beyond what we thought any systematics should include. While revelation, Trinity, christology, ecclesiology and the like are certainly at play in *How the Light Gets In*, they are situated in a conceptual universe occupied by additional things like neurology, evolutionary biology, sociology, literature and, as to not put too fine a point on it, the popular horror film *The Blair Witch Project*. The rationale for the additions is not simply the exemplification of traditional loci (say, some novel filling out a point about Cappadocian christology); there is something much more, well, fascinating and ambitious going on, where Ward's additions stand in not for traditional concepts but for something like God. More than examples, Ward's additions serve as sacraments. Let me explain.

For Ward, the heavens declare the glory of God, and so do right brain cognitive processes and the particulars of animal DNA, and he takes it as his goal to show how this is so and why it matters so much. Presuming and only intermittently detailing an analogical framework (of the sort offered up in Erich Przywara's reading of Aquinas, analogy where proportional predication

relativises attributive predication), Ward envisages everything in our world, including those things we Christians for long stretches of history didn't think mattered (if we noticed them at all), participating in the life of God, where participation entails a panentheistic expressivity on the one hand and panentheistic deepening on the other. Everything declaring the glory of God then isn't a throwaway phrase, but intends something rigorous, something similar to what Maurice Merleau-Ponty meant phenomenologically when he wrote about human language: 'The predominance of vowels in one language, or of consonants in another, and constructional and syntactical systems, do not represent so many arbitrary conventions for the expression of one and the same idea, but several ways for the human body to sing the world's praises and in the last resort to live it.' To understand *How the Light Gets In*, simply substitute 'the trinitarian God' for 'the world' in that quote. In the same way that for Merleau-Ponty human conventions are, far from arbitrary, natural and fitting occurrences of *humanness*, so then is human right brain activity and animal DNA of *divinity* (one thinks often of Augustine's highly speculative *De Trinitate* when reading *How the Light Gets In*). And so for everything Christian tradition thinks about revelation, Trinity, christology and so on. Hence, the book starts off with three involved chapters on patristic, medieval and reformed theology that respectively exemplify what the rest of the book goes on to help us understand about the 'lived' and 'engaged' production of theological knowledge, setting up, as many promissory notes tell us, future volumes' engagements with revelation, Trinity, christology, etc. While Merleau-Ponty is given only short attention in the book (Hegel, as the subtitle 'Ethical Life' suggests, is its primary inspiration), Ward is surely working out of a phenomenological imagination where the God for whom and through whom everything exists saturates everything about everything as related to everything (Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology but, ultimately, a specification of Hegel's). Singing and living out the praises of God is the vocation of all creatures. And this vocation largely looks like cultivating capacities for wonder that the world is just so. Ward writes:

We can then recognize Christian proclamation as caught up within these economies of signification that speak the world to us and through us. Such proclamation is inseparable from seeking to read the world truly, and inseparable from articulating its song of praise. As such it is responding to a call written into the nature of things. It is caught up within the dialectics of receiving, reiterating, and relating... given the multiplicity of the communications between things, between people, between creator and creation, given that all things signal to each other in complex webs and systems that continually adapt to the receptions they receive and respond

to; then we can conceive of prayer as continually being rehearsed by creation—since the *theo-logos* is continually being spoken. (p. 190)

It is appropriate that *How the Light Gets In* ends with a reflection on Terrence Malick's film *The Tree of Life*, and not just because of Ward's oft used forest metaphors. Malick's movie and its deep resonances with the affecting philosophies of Martin Heidegger and Stanley Cavell does cinematically what Ward does rhetorically: portray the universe as top to bottom *theo*-logical. There are of course risks in taking on such endeavours. While many found *The Tree of Life* a revelation in film-making, others found it pretentious and nonsensical, with reports of patrons walking out and demanding refunds. For risking all that, *How the Light Gets In* proves not only remarkably successful in its endeavours (readable, learned, sharp) but also quite courageous.

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Thomas Albert Howard, *Remembering the Reformation: An Inquiry into the Meanings of Protestantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. xi + 189 with 20 figures. £25.

As we look forward to the quinquennial commemoration of the Protestant Reformation, a glance back to past celebrations of this event is very instructive. Thomas Albert Howard provides such a survey, beginning with the first commemoration in 1617 and leading the readers via 1717, 1817 and 1883 up to the commemorative events of the twentieth century, the so-called Reformation or Luther jubilees of 1917, 1933, 1946, 1967 and 1983. In all cases, the author has attempted to sum up insights provided by recent research, but for some of the events he has not been able to provide the necessary historical contextualisation. As regards 1617, for example, he fails to underscore the ways in which confessional camps were prepared to fight for ultimate supremacy. By contrast, a hundred years later, in 1717, the protagonists of the Protestant camp were well aware of past Catholic victories and made sure that the Catholic side was not provoked by any sort of Protestant triumphalism. Looking back on the commemorative activities of Protestants in 1817 and in 1883, the author is on much safer ground. He demonstrates that each of the different groups within Protestantism had its own view of the founder of their churches. Even though he is mainly interested in the celebrations within Germany, he also addresses Luther commemorations in the United States. Through this, he provides a very welcome comparative and international perspective.