

extreme and exceptional situation has become a normal one (p. 207). A new word I learned in this book was “re-reception”: there is a good deal about how older doctrines might be “re-received” in the light of later developments, and there is a belief that the claims for papal primacy made at Vatican I need to be “re-received” in light of the comments on collegiality to be found in the documents of Vatican II. In one of the finest chapters, Hervé Legrand quotes Congar’s comments on how “the reception of the ideas of the Second Vatican Council had run up against the reality of the institutions resulting from the First”. Despite the fact that Vatican II’s vote in favour of collegiality was the “backbone” of the entire Council and its “centre of gravity”, the actual situation forty years on is that the bishop has technically become a “functionary of the pope” – a view reinforced by the “revised” Canon Law of 1983. Legrand draws the logical conclusion that research into the *institutional implications of agreements* will be needed to support ecumenical dialogue in the future (p. 393).

But what emerges most strongly from this volume is that what is needed if the ecumenical movement is to bear fruit is not only the overcoming of practical difficulties but growth in holiness, meaning *wholeness*, and conversion to Christ by the power of the Spirit. Here once more Kasper’s observations on “Spirit Christology” and “Ecclesiology as a function of Pneumatology”, a subject on which the West has much to learn from the East, point the way forward: institutional changes are needed but they must be based on sound theological developments. That is where “the Call to Catholic Learning” comes in.

No one reading this book will be left in any doubt about the obstacles and difficulties that lie in the path of ecumenical progress – several contributors refer to the current “ecumenical winter”. But the book also heartens by pointing to the progress already made, remarkable in so many ways, and also by furnishing conceptual tools and spiritual principles and ideals that need to stand at the heart (a good word) of ecumenical practice if Christians are going to take it seriously. As these varied contributions make clear, there are so many riches waiting to be received, if only we have the will and spiritual capacity to receive them.

JOSEPH FITZPATRICK

**CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS: DISPUTED QUESTIONS IN THE THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS** by Gavin D’Costa (*Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009*) Pp. xiv + 232, £17.99 pbk

Gavin D’Costa, arguably Britain’s most distinguished Catholic theologian of religions, here applies two decades’ experience and expertise to four separate if (generally) related *quaestiones disputatae*. These are drawn from both the perennial topics of his field (how should Christianity view the other religions? how might a member of these religions be saved?) and urgent contemporary debates surrounding the role of religion(s) in the contemporary west (what, if anything, may religious voices bring to the public square?). Since so much hangs, in terms of plausibility and perhaps even survival, on how Christianity relates to the world religions, D’Costa makes a plausible case that ‘it is difficult to think of a more important question facing Christianity in the twenty-first century’ (p. x). The book is divided into four parts, of two chapters each. While the parts do link up, each diptych can effectively stand alone. Uniting them all, however, is D’Costa’s personal theological vision – one impressively, and indeed provocatively, outlined in 2005’s *Theology in the Public Square* (important aspects of which are extended and developed in Parts II and III of the present volume).

Part I begins with the question ‘what *is* the theology of religions?’ (p. 3). D’Costa answers with a critical survey of the various schools populating his

discipline, structured around certain broadly representative figures. Chapter 1 takes up the classic 'pluralist-inclusivist-exclusivist' typology, while emphasizing the differences even within each category. John Hick, Raimundo Panikkar and Paul Knitter, for example, represent *unitary*, *pluriform* and *ethical* pluralism respectively. Furthermore, exclusivism is revealed to be an extraordinarily broad designation indeed: ranging from the hardline Calvinist *restrictive-access* variety of Carl Henry, to the post-mortem *universal-access* schemas of the Catholic Joseph DiNoia and the postliberal Lutheran George Lindbeck. Indeed, so ironically 'inclusive' a term is it, that it is later powerfully argued that both pluralism and inclusivism, in their myriad guises, are both properly speaking forms of exclusivism (p. 35). For this reason, and several others, in chapter 2 D'Costa suggests a more nuanced, sevenfold typology to replace the classic threefold one – in the process of which 'we helpfully lose the rhetorical and polemical heat from the terms pluralist, inclusivist, and exclusivist (as if the first were generous with God's salvation, the second more grudgingly so, and the last plain mean)' (p. 36). The rest of the chapter consists of an insightful overview of a number of more recent 'maps' of the terrain: specifically comparative theology (e.g., Francis Clooney, David Burrell) and the postmodern postliberalisms of ethical deconstructionism (Henrique Pinto) and Radical Orthodoxy (John Milbank).

Parts II and III are located at the interface, or rather faultline, between religion and 'the secular'. The former consists of two, intentionally contradictory narratives. Chapter 3 rehearses modernity's own familiar account of the history and significance of religion(s), from the European religious wars to the post-Enlightenment construction of 'religion' located in personal preference and piety, which while tolerated and respected, is to be excluded from the properly secular, 'neutral' public square. By contrast, chapter 4 tells a parallel tale focusing on the nation state and the 'secular construction of the sacred' (p. 74). Briefly put, D'Costa argues that secular modernity cannot recognize or uphold a genuine plurality of religions, since it admits only those which conform to its own imperialistic and enervating definition: 'Modernity, both in its politics and in its allied academic rendering of religions, fails to engage with religion's otherness, but neutralizes it for the sake of control' (p. 91). Relatedly attacking religious studies' 'spurious claim of neutral objectivity', he defends the utility of what he has elsewhere recently termed a 'theological religious studies': 'From a theological viewpoint, [religious studies] fails to tell the full truth about the phenomenon in question – the full truth meaning speaking in the light of the triune God who is the fullness of truth. Only from this theological narrative can other religions be truly understood, simple because Christianity is true' (p. 91). Part III expands upon the practical ramifications of these ideas with regard to religions' public roles. Chapter 5 further critiques the exaltation 'of secular discourse to the status of a new authoritarian religion' (pp. xii–xiii) – as evidenced in, for example, the 2004 erasing of 1600 years of Christian history from the preamble to the European constitution. Chapter 6 offers an illuminating case study of how both Catholicism and certain forms of Islam can challenge secular western hegemony, thereby furthering the common good.

Part IV – taking up a theme left hanging from Part I – is a true high point, not only of this book, but of *all* postconciliar theologizing regarding the salvation of non-Christians. *Lumen Gentium* 14 reiterates the Church's traditional teaching on the salvific necessity of faith, baptism and the mediation of the Church. Yet *LG* 16 affirms that those who have, through no fault of their own, 'not yet received the Gospel', are not thereby excluded from the possibility of salvation. Hitherto, the typical way of reconciling these principles has been to impute an 'implicit', 'unconscious', or 'anonymous' faith to the righteous (and thus merely apparent) unbeliever. This is a pseudo-solution that D'Costa, quite rightly in my view, rejects. His own account (the richness and complexity of which cannot adequately

be conveyed here) centres on Christ's descent into hell, and builds primarily on certain patristic understandings of Christ's proclamation 'to the spirits in prison' (1 Peter 3.18). Very briefly put: just as the righteous of the Old Testament were brought to the necessary 'epistemological relationship to Christ' in the *limbus patrum* prior to attaining the beatific vision in heaven – either by Christ himself, or (in the case of righteous gentiles according to Clement of Alexandria) by the apostles upon their own deaths – so too may a similar solution be hypothesized for the potentially billions of (inculpably) unevangelized non-Christians ever since. In addition to the many virtues which D'Costa himself identifies in this schema, probably the strongest argument in its favour is its very close adherence to the linguistic subtleties of the letter of *LG*. The text consistently speaks of those who 'have not yet [*nondum*] received the Gospel', or who 'have not yet [*nondum*] arrived at an express recognition of God'. Yet there is no suggestion whatsoever that this will occur in their earthly lives. Indeed, it would be absurd if there was: *LG* 16 would merely be stating that converts can be saved. Vatican II itself, therefore, would seem to point to a post-mortem solution such as D'Costa supplies in chapter 7.

Admittedly, as it currently stands, D'Costa's account is *not yet* (*nondum!*) perfect. No sustained exposition is given, for instance, of the qualification that rings like a refrain throughout the Council's pronouncements on the salvation of non-Christians: *sine culpa* ('without fault/blame'). *Only* those who are 'without fault, ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and his Church' are able to be saved. Yet D'Costa, following the Council Fathers, passes no comment on what this might mean. Elsewhere he errs in attributing a particular interpretation of 1 Peter 3.18, central to his argument, to Augustine rather than to Robert Bellarmine (cf. pp. 172–73). Doubts might also be raised against his interpretation of Clement's mention of 'the saving and disciplinary punishments' meted out in Hades (p. 169). These do not, however, affect the cogency and power of D'Costa's argument. (Nor, needless to say, does the book's near-consistent misspelling of *votum ecclesiae* – which, except on one occasion, is missing its final letter.) Finally, in chapter 8, D'Costa helpfully distinguishes his post-mortem account of salvation, from that of other major theologians, including Joseph DiNoia (to whose purgatorial schema he owes a great deal) and Hans Urs von Balthasar. In the latter case, D'Costa weighs in on the burgeoning controversy in Balthasarian studies, occasioned by Alyssa Lyra Pitstick's *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (2007) and its *de facto* charge of heresy. Generally speaking, he sides with Pitstick.

*Christianity and World Religions* is a significant and timely work. On at least one issue (and perhaps several others upon which I am not qualified to pass judgement) it makes a remarkable, and probably enduring, contribution. For this, as indeed for several other reasons, it is very highly to be recommended.

STEPHEN BULLIVANT

**THE KINDNESS OF GOD: METAPHOR, GENDER AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE** by Janet Martin Soskice (*Oxford University Press* 2007) Pp. 224, £23

Janet Soskice has long-standing interests in the philosophy of religious language and in feminism. This volume of essays focuses on the vocabulary of kinship between God and humanity, attempting to reawaken our sense of its daringness, and to link it with the dynamic movement of the Christian life, from birth to our eschatological fulfilment. 'Kinship imagery', she writes, 'is both compelled and resisted by the Hebrew scriptures, compelled for reasons of intimacy, and resisted