

between *Nostra Aetate*, *Dei Verbum*, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. And the theological conclusion is just not careful enough: 'It thus reflects the "single source" theory of revelation of *Dei Verbum*: the revelation of the Word of God, spoken definitively in Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing to fruition the 'seeds of the Word' in creation, represent together a single continuous action of God in the world.' (45) In other words, since revelation comes through the creation order, then, a fortiori, surely it comes through other religions, given the unity of God's action in the world. This is an 'open ecclesiocentric' model. He also seems a lot less traditional in his view that what matters is a pluralism of cultures in which the common theme, the core, the invisible 'religion' gets expressed. The end result of dialogue is practical not conceptual: Dialogue is not as a means to transcendence or some higher 'truth', but is in the practice of the conversation.

The crucial questions are thus 'not, in the first place, about salvation, Church and mission, but more fundamentally about what happens to Christian identity when the self encounters the other by crossing the threshold into another world' (23) – i.e., how the subject is shaped in dialogue. To this I would have to respond with a 'yes' and a 'no'. Yes, it may be that dialogue is not the proper place to work out what salvation means if the various traditions are too incompatible, except in a very broad sense, but no, dialogue is about these issues in that it serves to sharpen (e.g.) Christian minds in what the Christian faith is about, as well as what can be learned from other faiths.

To take one's orientation from *Nostra Aetate* means seeing Christian-Jewish relations as paradigmatic for Christian-other religions, but this overlooks the fact that surely Judaism's kinship with Christianity through 'the covenant' is uncontroversial compared with that of other religions.

The best part of the book is when Barnes helpfully introduces the contributions of Lévinas and Ricoeur (and behind them Heidegger and Husserl) to questions of self-hood and identity-formation through contact with the other. Yet it is not so clear how this is meant to apply to the case of dialogue with other religions. 'The ethical' means that which has a transforming impact on the self, but there then follows a chapter on *Dalit* theology which does not really take up these themes to any convincing extent. Inculturation, arriving at a celebrated messy 'broken middle' is represented by the early Jesuit missionary, de Nobili who saw his calling to be as an Indian holy man, whose example is followed by present-day Catholic ashramites. They do not give a neat synthesis, but stand self-consciously in no-man's land between religious traditions.

How far away from Hick's pluralism are we here? It is unashamedly 'inclusivist' even if that term is avoided. It is one thing to say that faith communities are to be themselves while being 'open' to the wisdom of other faiths ('seeds of the Word'), quite another to attempt

a theological rationale along the lines of the Trinity as a 'template' whereby faith corresponds to the Father, love to the Son and hope to the Spirit. But then the Logos is about salvation already assured and the Spirit about the fulfilling of this, drawing the whole human race into the Father's presence. Negative theology demands that there is more to know about God than what the Son has revealed, although this revelation remains crucial and valid as the foundation. More is yet to be said about God. Meanwhile The Trinity teaches us the interdependence of all things. The Trinity reminds us of the correct disposition and framework for liturgy which is basic; speculation of conceptual theology is to be avoided in favour of theology as doxology. Jesus' face eludes recognisability, which sounds dangerously like a programme for 'Do-It-Yourself' Christologies. Since Christ unites all people to God, Barnes claims we have to commit to 'belonging elsewhere' to all those who by the Ignatian principle have good will in them. With Evdokimov, we know where the Church is, not for us to judge where it is not. It is not about developing a multi-faith Christology, but about a community with virtues and qualities which listen and respond to the Spirit'.

The practice of 'interfaith common action' is given more a little more definition in the mention of a 'multi-faith celebration of Jesus'. This is not the pluralist paradigm, but the inclusivist one, and probably acceptable to only a few Muslims, Buddhists, etc, at least on anything other than a one-off basis. Can we not have cultural communication (and thus 'openness' with other communities) without having to relativise our theology, as the non-realist accounts of the Trinity and a liberal Christology herein contained seem too easily to do?

Mark W. Elliott, *Liverpool Hope*

### *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*

Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (eds.)

Cambridge: CUP, 2002. xii + 227pp, £35.00, hb.

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#### SUMMARY

There is a range of essays on the theme of negative theology in its relationship to mysticism and Christian revelation, especially in the Incarnation. The essays are generally of high quality and are provoke thought concerning some very fundamental issues for Christian faith and theology.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Sammelband bietet eine Anzahl von Aufsätzen zum Thema der negativen Theologie in ihrer Beziehung zur Mystik und zur christlichen Offenbarung, insbesondere zur Inkarnation. Die Aufsätze sind im Allgemeinen von guter Qualität regen zum Nachdenken über einige fundamentale Fragen des christlichen Glaubens und



der Theologie an.

## RÉSUMÉ

Ces essais sur la théologie négative, ses relations avec le mysticisme et avec la révélation chrétienne, notamment dans l'incarnation, sont généralement de grande qualité et stimulent la réflexion sur des questions fondamentales pour la foi et la théologie chrétiennes.

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As with all such collections, this is a mixed bag. But there are at least three essays which are brilliant, and none of them are bad. Denys Turner sets the tone by re-asserting his thesis that negative theology has changed from being a negation of experience in our talk about God into an experience of negation. The latter amounts to a nihilistic and individualistic theology that sits loose to churches and the liturgy. Rather, true negative theology is a negation of negation and is more radical than atheism because it denies even language-(in a way, say Derrida – as essays by Ward and Davies will affirm – does not). This means that positive and negative affirmations about God can be made, in the realisation that God as presence is beyond language. Or as Davies will put it, it is the excess of presence that makes him ineffable. After all, as with Duns Scotus, it is hard to love negations, and, here in agreement with Aquinas, the Incarnation gives us good reason to speak analogically of God's being.

Or, with Paul Fiddes in his essay, God is up so close to his creatures that he cannot be objectified and spoken of. His *hidden* presence allows Him to be there and yet not oppressively. God's suffering death means he is not dead (=irrelevant) to the world. We cannot really claim to know God in his infinity, for God in a no-place so near to us he can't be objectified, in contrast to Barth's positive (and positivistic?) view of revelation as sharing God's objective knowledge of himself. In the Trinity God himself is found in the 'spaces' between the Father, Son and Spirit. Janet Soskice argues that atheisms are shaped by the form of theism they are responding to, and favours the interpretation of the divine name in Exod 3:14 (the *Tetragrammaton*) as 'I will be effective' (Kasper), or 'really there' (Childs). Prayer makes language about God to be by God. The late Herbert McCabe uses Aquinas to insist that in God there is power: yes, but potentiality: no! With reference to creation 'we have a new thing to say about God, it is not a new thing about God we are saying.' 'The concept, remember, is not *what* is understood but *how* something is understood, what is produced, brought forth, conceived in the understanding of something. . . in understanding he conceives the concept, the *verbum mentis*.' (87) Bernard McGinn tells us that Luther's understanding of divine darkness was one in which we should be terrified by predestination so we can be all the more comforted by the revealed God. In other words, it is about fleeing from God to God. The *Deus nudus/absconditus* was preferred by Luther

to Dionysius' *Deus ignotus*. For Luther there was not enough sense of being damned in the Dionysian 'darkness'. Gregory the Great went to the opposite extreme, when on Job he majors on the fear of God which in a healthy spirituality *remains* the dominant chord.

There are fine essays by McIntosh on Newman, and Ford on silence after Auschwitz. I have some questions about the coherence of Graham Ward's essay, while Davies's conclusion is disappointing. (In it there is a short tour of OT texts which contains no mention of secondary literature and tries to fit the evidence of Scripture and tradition to a Procrustean bed of the Russian philosophical concepts of *tishina* and *molchanie*.)

We should perhaps not be surprised that the essay which stands out in this collection is the one by the incoming Archbishop of Canterbury. In modelling itself on the Trinity (following John of the Cross here) the self has desire which wants the other but without the closure of satisfaction, without the expectation of gratification. Perhaps this sounds a little too heroic or semi-Pelagian, even 'Buddhist' with all its talk of 'detachment', but it is certainly thought-provoking. What Williams is advocating is a non-mimetic desire (where we compete for something that other people want): it is not to do with a consumerist 'lack'. Yet in our theology we are turned from being spectators of a mystery to being participants and performers in it. It is worth quoting a passage: 'Like God, I cease to be an object or possible object in which desire can be once and for all terminated; I am freed from the supposition that I must be the final answer to someone else's question, that I have the right to expect a full stream of undeflected desire coming to rest with me. What will be properly lovable in me is my lovingness, my reality turned towards an other, not my reality turned upon itself.' (130f)

Mark W. Elliott, *Liverpool Hope*

## *Predigen lernen. Ein Lehrbuch für die Praxis,*

Achim Härtner; Holger Eschmann

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Autoren verstehen ihre Homiletik als einen Leitfaden für die Praxis. So setzt sich dieses Buch auch nur dort mit theologischen Grundlagenfragen auseinander, wo es um den Hörer und seine Welt geht. Die Fragen um den Hörer und die zeitgemäße Kommunikation mit ihm ist auch der deutliche Schwerpunkt dieser Arbeit. Für die Praxis ist das Buch äußerst hilfreich, denn es gibt einen guten Einblick in die Werkstatt der Predigtvorbereitung, gibt konkrete rhetorische Hilfen für den Predigtvortrag und zeigt einen praktikablen Weg der eigenen oder fremden Predigtbeurteilung. Fast ein Drittel des Buches ist Fragen der Kommunikationsforschung und Psychologie