



Reviews



Francesca Aran Murphy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 670, ISBN 978-0199641901. £95.00

Francesca Aran Murphy set high goals for this volume. While she acknowledges in the introduction that ‘Handbooks are made to be used, not merely contemplated for pleasure’, she adds her hope that this particular handbook will be ‘a classic, comprehensive textbook on Christology’ (p. 1). Such an outcome seems likely given the quality contributions that this volume contains. The handbook is divided into seven parts, mostly arranged in historical sequence.

The first part, “The Bible”, is not only concerned with the account of Christ presented *in* Scripture, but the relation of Christ *to* Scripture. Paul Mankowski opens the volume with a stimulating treatment of the mediation of divine truth – with all its creative and redemptive power – through the channel of human language and imagery (pp. 9–20). ‘The human capacity of speech’ is implicated in the ‘flesh’ which the Word assumed, and Mankowski is nervous about varieties of ‘linguistic docetism’ which fail to fully appreciate ‘the condescension of the *logos* into human language’ (pp. 15, 19). In the next chapter, Olivier-Thomas Venard provides an excellent defence for a Christological Old Testament hermeneutic by surveying the ways in which Christ is formatively present in the Hebrew Scriptures. Along the way, he challenges what he sees as varieties of Marcionism and agnosticism in many modernist perspectives on the Old Testament.

Gregory Glazov opposes supersessionism in the third chapter, which centres upon a new reading of Romans 9–11 as patterned after Paul’s personal experiences as an Israelite. His exegesis is thought-provoking, but this reviewer wonders if his conclusions – placing Israel and Christ side by side as two bodies, each suffering ‘vicariously for the world’ (p. 46) – undermine a soteriology of the sufficiency of Christ’s work.

In the fourth chapter, Richard Bauckham provides a new defence of his persuasive thesis that ‘the Jesus of [eyewitness] testimony’ is

presented in the Gospels. Michael Gorman follows with a survey of Christ's work and its effects in the New Testament. Finally in this section, Markus Bockmuehl covers what the Gospels have to say about Christ's post-ascension presence.

The second part of the book focuses on "Patristic Christology". Khaled Anatolios contributes a characteristically excellent chapter on "Christology in the Fourth Century". In particular, he highlights a 'vision of Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation and enactment of divine goodness' as 'the legacy of fourth-century Christology' (p. 105). In Chapter Eight, Brain E. Daley helpfully clarifies similarities and distinctions between Antiochene and Alexandrian Christologies, challenging some misleading narratives along the way. Andrew Louth provides an informative account of Christological controversies in the centuries immediately following the Council of Chalcedon. In Chapter Ten, Norman Russell draws out key components of the work of Christ as it is presented in patristic theology. In particular, he discusses Christ's recapitulation of all humanity in his flesh, his restoration of the *imago Dei*, his victory over evil powers, his drawing Christians into participation with the divine nature by grace, and our deification by participation in Christ's relation to the Godhead.

In the next part, we move into "Mediaeval Christology". Aidan Nichols gives an account of the Second Council of Nicaea, 'the council of the icon'. He draws out how arguments in favour of iconography were provided with a Christological basis. In the incarnation, the invisible Word took on 'visible imageability' (p. 172). The chapter includes brief discussions of the image Christologies of Germanus of Constantinople, John of Damascus, Theodore of Stoudios, and Nicephorus of Constantinople. In the twelfth chapter, Gabriel Said Reynolds provides a great overview of Islamic teachings about Christ. Reynolds argues that one of the chief concerns of the Qur'an's Christology is that of 'religious apologetics', an attempt to undermine the Christian account of his divinity and resurrection. The next chapter, written by David S. Hogg, explores the idea that Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* might in turn be an apologetic not only against Jewish but also Muslim misunderstandings of the atoning work of Christ. Hogg shows that Anselm opposed the First Crusade, and suggests that Anselm 'was neither ignorant nor uninterested in developments and interactions

between Christians and Muslims' (p. 207). Alison Milbank follows with a chapter on depictions of the crucifixion in Western medieval art.

In a valuable summary of the Christology provided in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* III, qq. 1–59, Joseph Wawrykow explores Christ's instrumental human nature and briefly addresses concerns regarding Aquinas' belief that Christ possessed the beatific vision from his conception. This chapter will be of benefit to students attempting to navigate Aquinas' complex and nuanced thought on Christ's humanity. In Chapter Sixteen, Rik Van Nieuwenhove surveys late medieval atonement theologies, covering a good deal of territory in a short space.

Reformation Christologies are addressed in the fourth part of the handbook. Martin Luther's Christology is not a secondary but rather a distributed theme throughout his work, argues Brian Lugioyo. In particular, the Eucharistic controversies into which Luther became entangled were formative for his Christology, which was 'about worshipping a God who had come near and stayed near' (p. 268). Randall C. Zachman examines John Calvin's Christology, in relation to three key thematic couplets: God's self-revelation as creator and redeemer; Christ's self-revelation in Law and Gospel; and our knowledge of God and of ourselves. Of particular interest is Zachman's treatment of penal substitutionary atonement in Calvin's thought, which he specifies is not 'Christ paying God the price of our satisfaction to appease God's wrath [...] but rather [...] God laying on Christ all the evil things which we have brought upon ourselves, in order to free us from them' (p. 292). In Chapter Nineteen, Mark W. Elliott briefly surveys seventeenth-century Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic Christologies. The chapter is a nice resource, but one wishes the handbook had lingered to explore this timespan a bit more fully. Kevin Hector then provides a strikingly clear and helpful account of Kant's moral philosophy, the Christology implicit in it, and of post-Kantian Christologies shaped by their interaction with it. The latter category is treated in short but illuminating subsections on Friedrich Schleiermacher and G. W. F. Hegel. In the next chapter, Philip Ziegler surveys the historical-critical interpretations of Jesus found in the work of David Friedrich Strauss, Adolf von Harnack, Ernst Troeltsch,

as well as the kerygmatic Christologies of Martin Kähler, Wilhelm Herrmann, and Rudolf Bultmann.

Leading off the fifth part, “Modern and Postmodern Christology”, Troy A. Stefano discusses “Christology from Lessing to Schleiermacher”. Raymond Gawronski’s contribution explores the relationship between Christology and spirituality (‘what is it to know Jesus Christ?’) from the New Testament era to the present day. The chapter sets the stage for the rest of this section, which largely deals with different unique cultural experiences which have impacted modern Christology.

In Chapter Twenty-five, K. K. Yeo shows how historic cultural typologies have shaped Chinese Christologies. ‘Two examples of *constructive* Chinese Christologies’ are offered at the end of the chapter, one of *dao* (Word, *logos*), ‘demonstrating that both Christology and language need each other’, and one of *renren*, which emphasizes the Christological restoration of the *imago Dei* (p. 401). In the following chapter, Michele M. Schumacher interacts with “Feminist Christologies”. Central to the discussion is the question of Christ’s maleness and how it ought to be interpreted. Schumacher argues that the ancient affirmation, whatever Christ has not assumed he has not healed, ought not be interpreted apart from the New Testament metaphor of Christ’s body/bride. All humanity becomes one with Christ and thus both male and female share together in the salvific significance of the incarnation. Diane B. Stinton examines the extent to which recent African Christologies derive from and are consistent with historic Christian teachings. The last contribution to this section is an analysis of kenotic Christologies by Bruce McCormack. He notes various historic proposals regarding the self-emptying of the eternal Son, as well as the critiques that these proposals were unable to overcome. He concludes by gesturing toward ‘a new kenotic theory’ in which ‘the man Jesus acts and the Logos receives those acts as his own’ (p. 455). It is precisely this receptivity, positively construed as a divine decision to ‘act humanly’, that explicates the ‘self-emptying’ imagery of Philippians 2:6–11. McCormack suggests that the old criticisms leveled against previous kenotic views pose no threat to this new proposal.

The sixth part of the handbook, titled “Imagining the Son of

God in Modernity”, addresses a variety of artistic presentations of Christ. Calvin Stapert leads off with a treatment of Christologically significant musical compositions after the Enlightenment. In Chapter Thirty, Robert Barron analyses Christ figures in the films *Babette’s Feast*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, and *Gran Torino*. In turn, Rowan Williams examines Christ figures in works of literature, covering a variety of works. Lastly, Lawrence S. Cunningham serves as our guide to “Christ in Art from the Baroque to the Present”.

The final part of the handbook shifts the focus from the predominantly historical and cultural to the theological. Robert J. Woźniak argues that Christology ought to be the methodological principle of theology, providing its grammar and organisation. First, Woźniak presents a narrative of Christological decline. In his interpretation, the church fathers viewed Christology not merely as an epistemological entry-point into theology, but also as determinative of its material shape. However, in scholastic works such as Aquinas’ *Summa*, ontological priority determined material order, with the doctrine of the Trinity at the head of Christian doctrine and Christological content withheld until the treatment of salvation. It is not clear to me that, as Woźniak suggests, Aquinas’ ordering is generative of a later divorce between the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ. He finds such a fallout in the subsequent tradition until the restoration of Christology to its proper place and function in the work of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Woźniak concludes with a brief defence of a theological methodology that is not merely ‘Christo-centric’ but more appropriately ‘Christo-formic’ (p. 528).

Simon Gathercole, using Paul’s summary of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 as a rubric, shows that the accounts of Christ offered in the apocryphal gospels do not hold a candle to the accounts of the apostolic, canonical gospel. In Chapter Thirty-five, Thomas G. Weinandy analyzes the Christological principles of the Councils of Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. Kenneth Oakes explores key presuppositions which have been normative for Protestant Christologies. In turn, Gilbert Narcisse defines ‘what makes a Christology Catholic’. Gavin D’Costa then discusses the relation between the exclusive claims of orthodox Christology and the world religions into which it has come into contact. The final chapter of

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the handbook, written by the late John Webster, offers a constructive account of “The Place of Christology in Systematic Theology”. Webster argues that ‘the formative status and specifying function of Christology in relation to the other topics of Christian teaching [...] arise from the governance of the entire body of Christian divinity by teaching about the triune God’ (p. 612). Following Aquinas, Webster identifies the object of theology as the Triune God and all things in relation to God. Christology functions as a ‘distributed doctrine’, treated both in the context of theology proper (God’s inner life) and the economy (God’s outer works).

Christology is a wide and varied field, well represented here by these contributions. One might wish now and then that a theme or period were given more extensive treatment, but these can only be minor grumbles given the overall quality and depth of the material here. This reviewer read the handbook chapter by chapter, but almost any essay would make a fine entry-point (I would recommend Webster’s essay as first to be read, in fact).

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Ephraim Radner, *A Time to Keep: Theology, Mortality, and the Shape of a Human Life* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2016), pp. xiii + 290, ISBN 978-1481305068. £34.99

Some works are genius because they epitomise a genre, others because they push its boundaries. Ephraim Radner’s *A Time to Keep: Theology, Mortality, and the Shape of a Human Life* exemplifies the latter. Its content draws upon the biblical, theological, historical, sociological, and philosophical alike. Its style is of a rigorous academic variety, yet breaks free in almost lyrical prose. ‘Academic ode’, perhaps, could serve as an apt name for this type of work, and it is an ode to the ordinary and finite mode of creaturely existence which God has ordained for his people on their journey back to him.