

# Reviews



**PAUL: A JEW ON THE MARGINS**, by Calvin J. Roetzel. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003. Pp. 116. \$14.95 (paper).

Books, seemingly without end, continue to be written about Paul, his thought and theology. With a plethora of materials available and limited time for the busy pastor to read and reflect, here is a book that provides a good introduction to some of the current issues surrounding Paul as well as a faithful guide to understanding the person and work of this still controversial apostle. Calvin Roetzel, longtime professor of religious studies at Macalester College, St. Paul, knows his material well and writes in a clear and engaging manner. This book is a collection of six essays, four of which have appeared previously; two are new.

In the opening two chapters, which were written for this collection, Roetzel presents a portrait of Paul that highlights the two parts of the book's title: Paul who lives on the margins, and Paul who was and remained a Jew.

In contrast to the prevailing emphasis on the discontinuities between Paul and Judaism, Roetzel says that Paul did not abandon his native faith in confessing Jesus as Lord. Paul is steadfast in claiming his identity as a Jew throughout his career. Paul's experience on the road to Damascus is not to be understood as a conversion *from* Judaism to Christianity, but as a call and commission after the pattern of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

What is changed? In the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul is given a new perspective from which to view and evaluate that faith. Paul's scriptures were the holy writings of Israel, and his letters are commentaries on the Old Testament as he thinks through the implications of the apocalyptic gospel he preaches.

It is tempting for interpreters to charac-

terize Paul's opposition as coming from the rival Hellenistic Jewish "super-apostles" on one side and the critics from Jerusalem on the other. The flaw in that thinking, as Roetzel points out, is that it places Paul at the center. Roetzel makes the case that Paul's rivals have pushed him to the margin by portraying Paul, who embraced Jesus as the crucified Messiah and proclaimed the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's covenant people, as "a dangerous innovator whose gospel was an outrageous novelty" (38). Paul is marginalized—in one degree or another—culturally, religiously, socially, and even politically, as an attempt to suppress his influence, protect the status quo, and discredit his thinking as wrong or even evil.

"Paul not only recognized his marginal status, but he embraced it as a venue of dramatic, even revolutionary possibility" (4). It is from the margins that Paul was able to see the collision of two worlds: the overlapping of the present age and the age to come, the now and not yet, the hidden and revealed. It was from the margins that Paul was able to express a realism and dynamism that was lacking in the triumphalistic and exclusivistic tendencies of the early church.

I found the final chapter, "The Grammar of Election," to be of special interest. Roetzel believes that Paul did not begin his ministry with a fully developed theology waiting to be applied to the varied situations he encountered. Paul's theology was not the result of quiet, reflective thought, but one born through fierce and even heated exchanges as he was forced to think through the implication of his thought:

Even while his thinking was shaped by the story of Israel that he inhabited and by the traditions about Messiah Jesus that he had lately come to know, his collision with new challenges required fresh theo-

logical thinking....I am eager to capture some of the humanity of Paul who, like us, often did not know what he thought about a given issue until he was forced by a challenge. The portrait of him as a theological colossus governed by a consistent and even systematic theology is a post facto creation. The Paul of the letters was something else entirely—a person bedeviled by doubts and anxiety, troubled by false charges and slander, and distressed by the painful memory of his persecution of the church and by the rejection of Jesus as Messiah by most of his kin....[Here] I will attempt to show how this Paul in his encounters with concrete realities shaped a multifaceted view of election that included Gentiles even while affirming the validity of God's promises to Israel. (67)

Roetzel then proceeds to go through Paul's letters to reveal the development of his view of election that included Gentiles while affirming the validity of God's promises to Israel. I especially appreciated Roetzel's careful attention to the biblical text and its context.

Paul's message has always been marginal and remains so today. The surface appeal of triumphalism and all other theologies of glory continues to cast aspersions on the viability of Paul's message of the cross. But the witness of Paul continues to be heard and that thin strand of tradition continues to be preached from the margins. As Roetzel says, "Paul's convictions and fertile mind combined to exploit that location to articulate a vision that was so daring and so demanding that it was soon compromised, and yet it remained in these seven occasional letters to subvert the very compromises made" (88).

Roetzel is to be thanked for helping us to see again the radical thought and message that Paul forged on the margins. This reviewer is one preacher who welcomes this subversive message and the help it affords in grasping again a hearty theology of the cross.

Irving L. Sandberg  
Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Washburn, Iowa

**CHRIST ON TRIAL: HOW THE GOSPEL UNSETTLES OUR JUDGEMENT**, by Rowan Williams. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 2003. Pp. xvi + 141. \$16.00 (paper).

Depictions of Jesus interrogated and judged by Jewish and Roman authorities serve as pivotal moments in the gospels. Most obviously, these climactic accounts offer explanations of how Jesus' life ends on an imperial cross, exposing people and structures determined to annihilate an alleged king because of threats he poses to them. The trials also serve as critical bridges within the narrative and theological worlds of each gospel, for these stories spotlight Jesus' identity and authority as chief concerns of the powers arrayed against him. As pivots, these passages implicitly promise to connect, on one hand, Jesus' public ministry of teaching and healing and, on the other hand, his ignominious death as King of the Jews. In the end, however, these chaotic scenes about people judging Jesus' identity and message yield fragmentary answers that raise additional questions.

In *Christ on Trial* (published in England in 2000; now released in North America), Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, ponders the questions and declarations concerning Jesus' identity that appear in the trial texts. Williams aims, not to flesh out unexpressed or obscured historical details, but to usher us into the textual worlds as seekers with devotional or meditative interests. The author's chief claim is that Jesus' trials illustrate our defining encounters with Christ through faith and reveal ways of describing the presence and work of God in the world. The narratives summon us to consider our own identities and roles in the suffering and destruction of the Christ, as well as our insecurities about embracing Jesus in our thought systems and everyday life. Jesus is not the only one on trial; these texts interrogate and expose us readers.

Each of the first four chapters addresses a gospel, beginning with a brief overview of the pace and tenor of the entire narrative, followed by comments about the character-

istics of that gospel's trial scenes. Williams narrows his exegetical focus drastically, in each chapter directing the bulk of his attention to statements that the interrogated Jesus utters. These statements tell the truth about God's ways of encountering the powers and wisdom of the world.

- In Mark, Jesus' "I am" (14:62) before the high priest (who has already made up his mind about the outcome of the hearing) declares the sovereignty of God as something utterly different from human power. If this pitiable, cornered prisoner is really God, then the trial upends our expectations concerning God; "[t]ranscendence meets us, and surprises us, when we are shown simply that the way of this world is not the final and exclusive truth" (15). Jesus promises another realm, but only if we meet him in his powerlessness amid our violent, hostile world.
- In Matthew, Jesus' "You have said so" (26:64) counters Caiaphas's demand—"tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!"—as if to say that the high priest himself should know. By condemning Jesus with religious traditions that actually testify about him, the interrogator renders them hollow and ineffective. For us, siding with Jesus requires us to deny that doctrinal systems ensure religious security. Instead, doctrine and tradition create space to encounter the living Christ, who might yet unexpectedly infiltrate that space from the outside or as one despised.
- In Luke, Jesus' "If I tell you, you will not believe" (22:67) aligns him with those whose voices are unable or unwelcome to shape this world. Jesus' declaration leads us to consider occasions when we refuse to open ourselves to others and ignore Jesus' presence among the world's powerless.
- In John, Jesus' discourse with Pilate concerning authority, truth, and the

world (18:33–38) exposes the paradox of Jesus' presence in this world. This presence calls us to a commitment to this world, since God makes the world the arena of God's activity, and simultaneously to a refusal of ideologies and systems that purport to make sense of human existence.

Williams peppers these chapters with illustrations from recent literary works and numerous reflections on related issues in Christian ministry, including inclusive language in worship, people with physical and mental impairments, children, and the environment.

Rehashing and contemporizing themes from earlier chapters, the fifth chapter compares stories of Christian martyrs to Christ's martyrdom, arguing that such narratives likewise reveal encounters between the ways of God and the ways of the world, encounters between two different *kinds* of power. Today, believers' daily living proclaims a martyrdom-like witness, if we abide as though "belonging in and to the world as God made it, not to a particular order of earthly authority" (111). As refusals to conform to the status quo, martyrdom and Christian living both proclaim Christians' obedience to a new truth. Williams's concluding chapter, through choppy retellings of two fictional stories about Jesus' judges—Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor (*The Brothers Karamazov*) and Bulgakov's Pilate (*The Master and Margarita*)—considers how dangerous and self-revealing is the encounter with this new truth, which we glimpse in Jesus' trials.

Williams is most engaging in the first four chapters, especially when discussing how the trial accounts resonate with themes woven throughout the broader narratives. Most of his statements about the unsettling ways that the gospel impacts our world—especially the radical dissymmetry between worldly and divine expressions of power, Christ's opposition to world systems and ideologies, and God's affinity with the oppressed and silenced—could easily and more persuasively find bases in other biblical texts. Yet by approaching these ideas via

Jesus' trial scenes, with all the injustice and disarray that permeate these passages, Williams effectively accentuates the sheer "riskiness of Jesus' presence" (83) in the world—a presence that unmask and judges the ways of the world even as it is crushed by them.

Although many of Williams's conclusions strike me as attractive and sound, I find his exegetical strategy limited and distracting. By focusing so intensely on limited, brief exchanges spoken by Jesus and his interrogators, the book renders trivial many other dimensions of the trials. The trial scenes offer much more to be explored—settings, other characters, and numerous dynamics and relationships that give an important sense of the narratives' political and juridical climates. A trial scene is much more than a transcript of dialogue. By not taking seriously other key dimensions of the trials, the book finally fails to lead readers *into* the biblical *narratives* as primary contexts for our own deliberations about Jesus' identity or our encounters with the divine. The political discourse that so interests Williams certainly imbues every aspect of the gospels' trial scenes—in characters' actions, postures, and silences, as well as in their spoken questions and confessions. Without delving into deeper and broader exploration of this material, Williams's conclusions about the trials threaten to drift toward tenuousness.

The book's brevity belies its density. Although its format invites its use for group study (perfunctory reflection questions follow every chapter), Williams's tendency toward abstraction may make it rough going for some readers.

Matthew L. Skinner  
Luther Seminary  
Saint Paul, Minnesota

**BETWEEN CROSS AND RESURRECTION: A THEOLOGY OF HOLY SATURDAY**, by Alan E. Lewis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Pp. xiii + 477. \$30.00 (hardcover); \$25.00 (paper).

The Three Days are the heart of the Christian faith. Holy Saturday is the center of The Three Days. Theologian Alan E. Lewis, only months before his death from cancer, was able to complete an exploration of this alien-yet-familiar territory in the *magnum opus* of his academic career. Lewis uses a narrative strategy to guide us through this landscape. He compares his study to reading a mystery: there is the first time you read a murder mystery and then every reading thereafter. The first reading is the one the author intends—the reading she has in mind while she writes the novel. She depends upon your not knowing what will happen next. The story makes sense in a unique (and unrepeatably) way when read the first time.

What does the story of The Three Days look like if we try to do a "first reading" of it? This is the starting point of part one of Lewis's book. Without a foreknowledge of Easter, says Lewis, Jesus is absolutely discredited by his cross. His preaching of God's reign, justice, and compassion for the poor and powerless becomes a cruel mockery. The cross declares, "This is what happens to those who place their trust in divine compassion." But if Jesus is discredited by the cross, so is the God whom Jesus proclaims. From this "first reading" perspective Holy Saturday is a day of dizzying despair—a day to reflect upon the failure of divine love.

As deep as the despair of Holy Saturday, so exhilarating is the shock of Easter from a "first reading" perspective. The jolt of the empty tomb reveals that everything Jesus had said was absolutely true. But beyond that, Jesus' resurrection also exonerates and rehabilitates the God whom Jesus proclaimed. This God does indeed show mercy, seeks justice, pities the poor and powerless even by raising the helpless one from the dead! In the light of Easter morning we

come to see that Jesus is absolutely congruent with the will and being of God.

After Lewis conducts this first reading of the *triduum* he immediately undertakes a second reading, traveling through the narrative again, always keeping the entire story in view. We might imagine that a second reading would be less traumatic than the first, but Lewis convincingly argues that just the opposite is true. In a second reading we know that the one who is crucified is none other than the beloved Son of God. On Easter we are aware that the Risen One is the crucified Son whose death the Father willed.

In part two, "Thinking the Story," Lewis asks us to reflect theologically upon this narrative. He affirms the classic Christian conviction that because Jesus is the Word incarnate the narrative of The Three Days means that the entire experience of this story has been taken into God's very being. This is the early, orthodox conviction of the death of God implied in the paschal mystery. Lewis argues convincingly that this paschal story leads directly to the doctrine of the Trinity. The triune nature of God is the necessary structure to hold together divine reality: the Son obeys the Father's will; the Father wills the Son's death; the Spirit holds the Father and the Son together in unity so that the tensions of this narrative do not demolish the oneness of God. Furthermore, if Jesus is God incarnate, then God is united with the buried one. Christians must reflect on what it means for God to be present in a corpse. Throughout this section, Lewis refuses to flinch. He relies heavily on gutsy early Christian reflection and shows how this daring theology is recovered by the likes of Luther and, in our own time, by the theology of the cross as developed by Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann and Eberhard Jüngel.

In part three, "Living the Story," Lewis draws out the implications of this theology. In chapter eight he uses Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and Chernobyl as test cases of what it means to live the story of Holy Saturday on the stage of world history. Christian ethics is never a flight from the godlessness of the world but rather an en-

counter with it, for God is now to be found in a God-forsaken cross. The politics of Easter Saturday demand from us critical solidarity with those who may seem alien and different from us, yet united with us in our mortality and fallen nature (see page 312). In chapter nine Lewis explores Holy Saturday as a paradigm for life in community. He creates an ecclesiology in which the church both models and invites a community reflecting the new community-in-God. The final chapter, "Living the Story in Personal Life," describes the piety that emerges from this narrative. Lewis dares to speak personally about his struggle with cancer. His own journey infuses his entire work with a deep, moving integrity. He speaks as one who knows the inner dynamics of Holy Saturday.

This book is a challenging read. Lewis's prose is both eloquent and complex. His academic analysis is contained in massive footnotes that sometimes use over half the page. (Eerdmans has auspiciously placed these notes on the page below the text, which is exactly where they belong.) The intellectual labor that this book demands, however, is well worth the effort. I used the book as the centerpiece for our congregation's midweek Lenten disciplines last year. This is not the kind of book you could assign as a class reading for an adult forum, but there is more than enough insightful theology here to propel a pastor through at least one Lent and Holy Week. Sincere thanks goes to Eerdmans and those who completed Alan Lewis's work so that his voice could speak to us from the void of his own Holy Saturday. Here is God's good news for a world in which easy answers do not last.

Ronald W. Roschke  
Grace Lutheran Church  
Boulder, Colorado

**THE POLITICS OF THE CROSS: THE THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ETHICS OF JOHN HOWARD YODER**, by Craig A. Carter. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001. Pp. 254. \$18.99 (paper).

Like me, you might begin reading this review for the sake of balance, to listen at least for a little while to the voice of a pacifist sectarian whose theology, though interesting and admirable, is also eccentric and unrealistic. You, as a reader, therefore begin with the assumption that Yoder sits on the edge of orthodox, mainstream Christian thought, lifting up a de-centering minority critique that is important, yet still on the edge.

Craig Carter in his *The Politics of the Cross* wants to disabuse us of this notion. In a discussion of the historical context of Yoder's thought, he announces that "the ecumenical significance of Yoder's work is not that he articulates a peace witness on behalf of a small denomination but rather that he presents a strong case for peace being at the heart of the biblical gospel as it is enshrined in the creeds of orthodox Christianity" (49). Earlier, Carter states, "I want to show that, for Yoder, pacifism is not the point; Jesus is the point. Not only is Jesus the point, but protecting, declaring, and unpacking the claims of classical Christology is what Yoder is about" (17). For Carter, Yoder is a minority voice situated at the center of the Christian tradition crying out to the rest of us, "Come home!"

Carter begins by analyzing Yoder's historical context. Part one is a lengthy working out of the proposition that Yoder's theology represents a recovery of the Anabaptist vision, and a faithful continuation, even a fulfillment, of Karl Barth's method. He "creatively unites aspects of his Anabaptist theological heritage with the theological method and major themes of Karl Barth's thought to create a distinctive postliberal alternative to Christian Realism, liberation theology, and privatized evangelical religion" (23).

As a result of his Anabaptist heritage, Yoder develops a biblically based, high

Christology, understands ethics as obedience, defines the church's mission as witness, and understands this witness occurring through the church's distinctiveness from the world, particularly in its pacifism. From Barth, Yoder learns a narrative approach to Scripture, rejects natural theology, and adopts the Barthian dictum that dogmatics is ethics and vice versa, so that social ethics and theology are inextricably intermixed.

Of course, Yoder also moves beyond these categories in creative ways, so much so that Carter can exclaim, together with Stanley Hauerwas, that "a century from now, Yoder's work will be seen as a new beginning" (225). Piling up adjectives (as well as a few adverbs) to indicate how Yoder is a new beginning, Carter labels Yoder a Barthian, Anabaptist, postliberal, theologically orthodox, radical, nonfoundationalist, non-relativist, evangelical, Jewish, Christian, christocentric, Trinitarian social ethicist. Much of Carter's work in the book is focused on unpacking these labels.

The central section of Carter's book (parts two, three, and four) presents a systematic fleshing out of Yoder's thought—Christology as the *source*, eschatology as the *context*, and ecclesiology as the *shape* of Yoder's social ethics. It is a fascinating and helpful project. Because much of Yoder's writing is conversational and *ad hoc*, the gift of systematic reflections on these traditional areas of Christian thought is a great guide to future readings of Yoder.

Carter's most challenging and illuminating reading of Yoder is in part three. Here Carter observes that "Yoder developed a christocentric eschatology using his Barthian method of relating all doctrinal statements to their true center—Jesus Christ as he is attested in Scripture—and the result was the clarification of the true status and character of Constantinianism as an eschatological heresy" (140). For Yoder, there are eight distinguishing points at which Constantinianism distorts or denies biblical eschatology. These are worth hearing in full, given recent currents in United States policy and Christian thought.

First, Constantinianism denies Christ's

lordship by placing human rulers in the place of Jesus. For example, "when the modern nation-state drafts Christians into the army and commands them to kill Christians from another nation-state" (157), then the state has supplanted the lordship of Christ. Second, Constantinianism eases the already/not-yet tension of the two ages, by relegating the new age to the past, to the future, to the ideal, or by fusing the new age with the old. Third, Constantinianism denies Christ's victory over the powers, sometimes by compromising with them in the name of realism, other times by failing to acknowledge that the powers in fact are fallen and in need of a redeemer. Fourth, and most blasphemous, Constantinianism identifies a human kingdom directly with the kingdom of God. The present human kingdom performs redemptive, salvific acts; it itself operates with "Infinite Justice."

The list continues. Fifth, "in Constantinianism, the church is no longer a body of people who have a different lifestyle; rather it is merely an aspect of society...the church is the service station for the 'crisis experiences' and for the 'depth dimensions' of life" (159). In short, the church is no longer a people but a religion. Sixth, Constantinianism does not distinguish between the church and the world. In uniting the two, the church can no longer function as a distinctive witness to the world. Seventh, Constantinianism operates as if Jesus did not fundamentally alter history and its meaning. Instead, and eighth in our list, the state itself "becomes the bearer of the meaning of history and thus takes the place of the church eschatologically" (162).

In light of this heresy, Yoder proposes some options for Christian thought. First, a Christian will not expect redemption from the state. Furthermore, Yoder argues that there is no such thing as "the state as such," and thus Christians cannot legitimize the state by developing a Christian theory of it, nor can they uphold the positivist option, that "whatever is, is good" (163). Instead, following a close reading of Rom 13, Yoder proposes subjection to the existing state,

but obedience only when the commands of the state do not contradict the will of God. Christians can disobey. They may not rebel.

Following this extensive discussion of Constantinianism, Carter presents what is either an incredibly clever theory, or an exceedingly strange historical conjecture. Based on a remark of Yoder's that "Judaism through the Middle Ages demonstrated the sociological viability of the ethic of Jesus" (168), Carter wonders whether this fact has anything to do with Christendom's anti-Semitism. That is, is the anti-Semitism present at a social level in Constantinian Christianity a larger manifestation of the personal, sometimes vitriolic, vehemence experienced by outspoken pacifists when they mention their pacifism to non-pacifist Christians?

Although Carter's book represents an admirable attempt at a constructive synthesis of Yoder's thought, it will also leave many readers hungry. Carter portrays Yoder as an ecumenical and catholic thinker, but I imagine, given his believer's church ecclesiology, that Roman Catholic and Orthodox thinkers (not to mention Lutherans and other "liturgical" Protestants) would find his approach to baptism (and the sacraments generally) something of a hurdle. The lack of references to thinkers from these traditions does little to dispel this suspicion. Furthermore, since Yoder is most famous for his sustained defense of pacifism, Carter's work would benefit from greater concentration on the topic, especially on Yoder's distinctive understanding of pacifism as presented in *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism*, and his sustained critique of the just-war tradition in *When War Is Unjust: Being Honest In Just-War Theory*.

On the other hand, Carter's clear exposition of Christian social ethics as applying primarily to Christians *for the sake of witness* to the watching world is superb, and his presentation of a cross-conditioned correspondence theory of Christian discipleship is challenging in the extreme. "Only at one point, only on one subject—but then consistently, universally—is Jesus our example:

in his cross" (78). For calling us in this direction, and for calling us back to a closer reading of Yoder as a theologian of the highest order, we can give hearty thanks.

Clint Schnekloth  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
Oregon, Wisconsin

#### **EVOLUTION FROM CREATION TO NEW CREATION: CONFLICT, CON- VERSATION AND CONVERGENCE,**

by Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett.  
Nashville: Abingdon, 2003. Pp. 213.  
\$20.00 (paper).

At the heart of any conception of God is our understanding of God the Creator. The Bible begins with a lofty creation-hymn to the majestic Lawgiver who speaks order and life into the chaos. Moving from our understanding of God and creation in Scripture to the world we see all around us has never been a simple task for the church. Yet preaching and teaching from the Bible week in and week out, as thoughtful people who live precisely in the midst of the world, our scientific culture is bound to raise sharply the question of how we bring the revelation of God in Scripture into conversation with the sciences. For most American Christians a major question is the right understanding of biological evolution from a Christian point of view. How does evolution fit with the biblical witness to God as Creator?

In this helpful and authoritative overview, the Lutheran theologian Ted Peters and the Catholic biologist Martinez Hewlett team up to cover the main approaches to biological evolution from a Christian perspective. In seven well-written and informative chapters, Peters and Hewlett cover various models for the interaction of science and religion: Darwin and Darwinism, Social Darwinism and Sociobiology, Scientific Creationism, Intelligent Design, and Theistic Evolution. The first chapter concerns larger issues of how theology and science relate to each other. The wisdom found in this work draws upon years of experience in the debates about faith and biol-

ogy. For example, the authors realize that biological evolution is not “neutral” with respect to religion in popular culture. They rightly point out that “evolution comes shrink-wrapped in an ideology that appears to be an anti-Christian religion of its own,” while also holding that “the serious theologian reveres genuine science, of course” (19). They place the evolution debate in the larger theological context of creation, providence, and divine action, even going so far as to produce a “divine action spectrum,” which puts the major options on a continuum from atheism to scientific creationism. The next chapter is an excellent introduction to Darwin and Darwinism, which puts evolutionary biology in historical perspective, moving from evolutionary thought before Charles Darwin to the recent synthesis of evolution and genetics. Once again, this is a very helpful overview of basic scientific concepts and larger historical, religious and philosophical issues. For example, they insist that Darwinian evolution as science needs to be distinguished from Darwinism as a philosophy in order to properly discuss and evaluate each. In their third chapter, they spell out the social and psychological dimensions of evolutionary thought, from the time of Herbert Spencer (the philosopher who wrote on evolution before Darwin did) and Social Darwinism, to modern movements like sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. Evolution is more than biology. It invokes much larger philosophical issues, in diverse areas of human understanding, from economics to sociology and epistemology. The theologian who wishes to discuss just the biological theory alone often has difficulty in getting to just that, and avoiding all the other associations and larger connections.

The central chapters of this work provide a sensitive overview of theories that the authors do not accept, ones that either reject or modify standard biological understandings of the evolution of life. Scientific Creationism, they point out, rejects the scientific theory of speciation, that is, descent with modification. They distinguish between fundamentalism and scientific crea-

tionism, and point out that the latter seeks to be a scientific paradigm, not a religious theology. The debate with them should start with the scientific evidence for evolution, therefore. Peters insists that this is not a conflict between religion and science (as most scholars of science and religion would assume, following the work of Ian Barbour). I found Peters’s argument to be persuasive, and it will change the way I teach about scientific creationism in the future. The short chapter on Intelligent Design places this movement into a larger historical framework (including Thomas Aquinas and William Paley), with a discussion of the major players in this newer perspective: Phil Johnson, Michael Behe, and William Dembski. Their thoughtful critique of ID does not make the mistake of lumping it together with creationism.

The last two chapters of the book set forward the authors’ preferred interpretation, theistic evolution. Evolution is the means by which God has elected to bring life, including intelligent life, into being in our cosmos as a whole, and our planet in particular. They refuse to duck the tough theological questions this option raises, from issues of deep time to the problem of evil and divine providence. In the larger discussion, they distinguish theistic from deistic evolution: “To establish *theistic* evolution in distinction from mere *deistic* evolution, we must believe that God acts in or through or under evolutionary creativity” (130, their emphasis). A number of modern scientists and theologians who argue for theistic evolution are discussed, with particular attention to the way they deal with the theodicy issue in theistic evolution. Of particular interest to readers of *Word & World* will be the regular reference to the theology of the cross in this section.

While a complete response to this fine book is not possible in a short review, there is space for one quick comment. For many years Ted Peters has followed Pannenberg in holding that “God creates from the future, not the past. God starts with redemption and then draws creation toward it” (160). This particular “proleptic” view of

creation I have never found convincing (except to point out that God is not yet done with creation), yet it pops up from time to time in this book. In particular, the authors rely upon it in discussing their own response to the issue of suffering and death in evolution, a reliance that weakens their response to the theodicy problem. The problem of evil is about why there is suffering, death, and evil in the first place, at the very foundations of nature and humanity. It is a question about basic choices at the basis of all creation. The history of redemption and the future of God's promises do nothing to answer the original question, namely, why did God create the world this way in the first place?

To return to the book overall, it can be recommended to anyone interested in the current debate surrounding evolution and Christian faith. The authors have done a superb job of covering the scientific and theological issues in a clear and well-written introduction that should serve both the academy and the larger reading public.

Alan G. Padgett  
Luther Seminary  
Saint Paul, Minnesota

**A WOUNDED INNOCENCE: SKETCHES FOR A THEOLOGY OF ART**, by Alejandro R. García-Rivera. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003. Pp. xiii + 139. \$14.95 (paper).

One of life's persistent questions for Alejandro García-Rivera, one raised throughout his book, is "Why should theologians take the arts seriously?" (vii). While he addresses that question from a number of perspectives in this short book, he concludes that art, like language, should excite wonder and touch the human heart (119). García-Rivera's point is well taken, for it is not common for theology to take art seriously. And, although it may be desirable, the language of theology, alas, does not always excite wonder or touch the human heart.

By assuming the visual as a serious con-

cern for theology, the author paints a canvas that tries to discern the elements of a theology of art. Further, he offers insights and encouragement for artists and the church to produce works of art. He claims that taking the visual arts seriously may help with such knotty doctrinal issues such as justification. And from his Latin American and Hispanic background, García-Rivera attempts to broaden the scope for symbols, imagery, and music. It is a huge task for a small book; and, while the author doesn't quite pull it off, he manages to offer a conceptual framework for further study and conversation.

The key lies in the title of the book, a key that rattles in the lock on almost every page. "A theology of art concerns a *wounded innocence*" (xi). "Art at its religious best transforms a disobedient arrogance into a *wounded innocence*" (19). "The aesthetics of justification, in other words, is a *wounded innocence*" (115). While this metaphor plays throughout the book like a *cantus firmus*, in the end the author himself is not altogether certain he has succeeded in clarifying what he means by the term. In the final chapter he admits that a reader of the manuscript found the term *wounded innocence* fascinating; but that person nonetheless asked the author, "Can you tell me exactly what a wounded innocence means?" (119).

In response García-Rivera does what he had been doing throughout the book. He points to a work of art and uses it to illustrate what he means. In previous chapters (which he calls *sketches*; hence the subtitle for the book) he engages in conversation with such works as The Wounded Hunter from the Caves of Lascaux or *The Analogical Window* of St.-Denis. In response to his friend's query García-Rivera invokes Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of St. Thomas*. By considering what he sees as the profound surprise of Thomas as he thrusts his finger deep into Jesus' wound, the author rests his case. "Caravaggio has masterfully captured through the hands of Jesus and Thomas the dynamics of a wounded innocence" (121). The case is compelling even if it is not entirely convincing. Where García-Rivera sees

profound surprise on the face of Thomas, others see (and for this I did a little survey) curiosity, shock, annoyance, even a medical examiner's probing.

Each chapter, or sketch, concerns itself with a work of art that addresses and elucidates the central theme. The matter of human freedom and artistic creativity, for instance, is illustrated by *Christmas Sky at the Hermitage*, a work by a Camaldolese monk, Father Arthur Poulin. The work itself (unfortunately reproduced in black and white) suggests the swirling sky of the van Gogh painting, *Starry Night*. In Poulin's painting, however, the author discerns the theological dimension of a work that "encompasses both the religious and the spiritual dimensions by giving religious insight into the need and way of salvation" (44). Earlier in the book García-Rivera used Duchamp's *Fountain* (a urinal signed "Mr. R. Mutt") to discuss aesthetic nominalism, a destructive way of thinking that depends on novelty, commodification, and elitism, which leads to the end of art.

Because García-Rivera's background is Roman Catholic and Hispanic American, he speaks with a particular bias and passion. In his sketch "The Human Aspect of Atonement," he discusses popular religious art. He recognizes that such a work as *St. Martin de Porres, the Dog, the Cat, and the Mouse* is regarded by many as *kitsch*. But García-Rivera makes the case that such a popular image can contain great spiritual power. The author considers the life story of the saint and links it to liberation theology on the one hand and to the symbolism of animals on the other. He concludes that the "culmination of imitating Christ becomes visually accessible to us in the image of St. Martin feeding the dog, the cat, and the mouse. Such wounded innocence becomes a Latin American way to speak of the Atonement" (92).

In considering each of the seven sketches readers will have to decide how convincing García-Rivera's argument is. Indeed, for many the image of St. Martin de Porres (like that of Christ in the paintings by Warner Sallman) will never rise above the level of

*kitsch*, while for others it may and will inspire religious devotion. Some may or may not see an epiphany of the human soul (12) or the religious experience that resides in the art of the Lascaux Caves (14). Doubtless many will wrestle with the author's linkage of Maya Lin's *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* and Martin Luther's doctrine of justification. This discussion is particularly provocative because García-Rivera expresses strong reservations about the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," claiming that it is not an agreement at all. When he insists on moving beyond the language of justification and sanctification and toward the notion of *creativity*, he makes a move that ought to provoke further thought. And his observation that "art may help theology overcome a doctrinal dispute in which language has failed" (105) should inspire considerable discussion.

*A Wounded Innocence* is a short book, though it seems longer than it really is. Dense in spots and stretching the language of image and innocence all the way, it contains a fascination for anyone interested in art, aesthetics, and theology. It is odd that such a discussion would not once cite Frank Burch Brown's influential work *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste*. It is also odd that all the works of art discussed by García-Rivera are illustrated except the important work by "Mr. R. Mutt." But the ground for a theology of art is doggedly churned up in these sketches. Anyone who aspires to be a wounded healer would profit from a reading of *A Wounded Innocence*.

Robert Brusic  
Luther Seminary  
Saint Paul, Minnesota