

marked by peace/peaceableness: response, activity, disposition, and *telos*. Such performance is intrinsically improvisational. Furthermore, bearing faithful witness to the work of God in Jesus Christ means at least this: the church ought *not* to respond to war and violence as those must who remain in bondage to the fear of death. Thus, about the horror of the events of September 11, 2001, Hauerwas writes: “Our response is to continue living in a manner that the world was not changed on September 11, 2001. The world was changed during the celebration of the Passover in 33 A.D.” (p. 209).

It is this fundamental axiological realignment in accord with God’s Ways that makes Hauerwas’ work incisive and unsettling, prophetically so. Herein also lies his kinship with Bonhoeffer’s theological ethics and consequent politics. The engagement with Bonhoeffer serves to emphasize the particularity and the attending ‘visibility’ of the church, a particularity that renders imperative, for Hauerwas, the utterance of the truth as only the church can say it. The demarcation of the world, the varied contexts in which the church finds herself, ought to be disclosed by the truthfulness of the church, according to Hauerwas: “the church gives no gift to the worlds in which it finds itself more politically important than the formation of a people constituted by the virtues necessary to endure the struggle to hear and speak truthfully to one another” (p. 15).

Accordingly, a people thus formed—implicated as they are in the very “worlds” from which they have been ecclesially reconstituted and misunderstood as they might be because they disclose the violent rupture of God’s order—cannot but say what they must: “God has given us life-forming practices that enable us to live without seeking false comforts in a world of contingency we do not and cannot control” (p. 128). In this volume, Stanley Hauerwas articulates just that.

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### ***Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature***

By Sigurd Bergmann. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. 387 pp. \$38.00 paper.

Sigurd Bergmann is a theologian who teaches at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. *Creation Set Free*, a volume in Eerdmans’ *Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age* series, is Bergmann’s first major publication in English. It will seem to most of the Anglophone theological world that a new voice has just made itself heard in Christian doctrine, but Bergmann has in fact already authored a number of other books and essays. Indeed, a full ten years have passed since the publication of the original German edition on which this revised English translation is based.

The cosmos is enslaved by its alienation from God’s life of triune communion, and

it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring the world out of that enslavement and into relationship. That is probably the central idea of the book. I say “probably” because *Creation Set Free* is really not about a central idea, and readers who look here for something so straightforward will inevitably be frustrated a few dozen pages into this wide-ranging book (nearly 400 pages). The book is about connections, conversations, and whole constellations of ideas interacting with each other in dynamic complexes. The actual proposals emerge only as Bergmann moves around among the many influences and projects which are simultaneously at work in this book. For example, the thesis that the enslaved cosmos is freed by the Spirit represents the convergence of three fields: liberation theology, ecotheology, and pneumatology. Bergmann calls his work “an ecotheology of liberation,” and devotes one chapter to reviewing the literature on “The Ecological Challenge to Theology,” one chapter to “Considerations from the Perspective of Liberation Theology,” and one chapter to “Methodological Considerations,” exploring his method of correlation and the construction of local theologies. As Bergmann enters each of these conversations, he reports the views of other writers and then develops his own position with considerable nuance.

To develop an “ecotheology of liberation” with such attentiveness to dialogue partners may seem like quite enough for one book, but the above summary does not even mention Bergmann’s major dialogue partner, the fourth-century Cappadocian father Gregory of Nazianus. This book is an instance of retrieving the theology of one ancient Christian thinker and bringing him into conversation with contemporary theology. The sub-title of the original German edition of *Creation Set Free* was “The Trinitarian Cosmology of Gregory of Nazianus in the Horizon of an Ecological Theology of Liberation.” Bergmann provides a careful and substantive reading of Gregory’s theology, especially the richness of his account of the relationship between the triune God and the created world which in all its dimensions is connected to and dependent on the creator from whom it is radically distinct. Straddling late antiquity (Cappadocian trinitarian cosmology) and late modernity (Western ecotheology of liberation), Bergmann succeeds, page after page, in presenting Gregory of Nazianus as a theologian who deserves our most attentive listening, even though he’s dead. It is difficult to think of another recent theologian who submits himself so rigorously to the humble task of putting himself at the service of an ancient thinker and developing, from ancient texts, categories for doing contemporary theology.

The guiding categories which Bergmann develops from Gregory are four: sociality, movement, suffering, and spirit. These provide the framework for Bergmann to elaborate the thesis that the cosmos is enslaved by its alienation (suffering) from God’s life of triune communion (sociality), and it is the work of the Holy Spirit (spirit) to bring the world out (movement) of that enslavement and into relationship (sociality again, but also movement and spirit). Bergmann handles each category almost as an image in a poem, working it for its associative powers and bringing as many things as possible into connection with it. To take one example, the theme of movement is elaborated in these areas: movement

as a divine attribute; eternal movement of the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Spirit; the movement of God creating; movement within differentiated localities in creation; human thought and emotion as movement; movement toward good or evil; the movement of redemptive history; correspondence between God's own movement and the movement of creation's liberation; and the modern scientific reduction of movement to quantitative change within space. Bergmann handles each of the four themes with equal expansiveness, always setting his own views over against other positions.

The best approach to *Creation Set Free* is not to try to locate its central claims or to extract its arguments. Rather, the most profitable way to read this book is to scan it for little epiphanies scattered throughout, and for hints at subjects for further reflection. I set the book down filled with new (and unanswered) questions. It makes a kind of sense that, as Bergmann insists, creation is not simply a stage on which human redemption takes place, but is itself a subject of redemption. But all the key questions open up just here: for one thing, how is human creation (with its personhood and ethical accountability) to be related to the rest of creation, and how are their interconnected redemptions correlated? Apparently aware of these questions, Bergmann devotes pages to contrasting anthropocentrism and cosmocentrism, but it never became any clearer (to this reader, at least) why St. Francis preached to the birds. About such things it is possible now to wonder at a deeper level and with more complexity. If that kind of experience is satisfying to you, you are likely to profit from this book.

Like Jürgen Moltmann (who writes the foreword), Bergmann's intellectual style produces a book that may be more stimulating and suggestive than definitive or conclusive. Often when a major section of the book is coming to an end, Bergmann politely declines to offer a final word on the subject, instead providing an abrupt transition to hurry the reader along to the next topic. The last seven pages of the book, however, contain twenty-eight "Summary Theses" of a few sentences each, which brings the reader a welcome promise of conciseness and focus. The fact that there are twenty-eight of them, however, and that they are relatively long as summary theses go, is indicative of that fact that for Bergmann, the point is not to boil things down to the essential. The point, apparently, is to cast the net as widely as possible and to drag in a host of dialogue partners. Judged by those criteria, Bergmann succeeds (both here and in his subsequent work) at bringing to the theological table some unlikely and unconventional conversationalists: ecological scientists, physicists, bio-ethicists, modern art critics, architects and city planners, and so on. As provoker of interdisciplinary conversations, Bergmann is uniquely gifted and must be perfectly suited for his post at a University of Science and Technology. As a systematic theologian, Bergmann is a great connector and, less obviously, also a great worrier. He is alert to dangers on all sides, suspicious of the naivety and dilettantism on the part of theologians entering these conversations, and as jealous as a postliberal about guarding the distinctly Christian theological voice in the midst of cultural

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encounters. Without stinting on expansiveness, Bergmann is surprisingly and self-consciously conservative about a range of issues. Not for a moment does he veer in the direction of collapsing the Holy Spirit into human spirit or an immanent force of nature, which is an error so pervasive in ecotheology as to be almost a defining mark of the discipline. He makes a major contribution to the methodology of contextual theologies when he sketches a way for tradition to serve as a criterion for the “series of local theologies” that constitute the history of doctrine: Bergmann goes beyond merely insisting on the recognition of tradition, by re-describing tradition as “the social memory in which the communities of saints remember the series of local theologies.”

*Creation Set Free* may sprawl and even sometimes wander, but that is because it contains such a wealth of ideas and insights. Not every book of contemporary theology should be like this—I look forward to reading some shorter books by Bergmann in the future, with fewer trailheads and more recognizable endpoints—but certainly some should be.

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***Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross:  
Contemporary Images of the Atonement***

By Mark D. Baker. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. 204 pp. \$16.99 paper.

The globalization phenomenon in today's culture raises a variety of concerns over the need for effective contextualization of Christian concepts that speak not only to the global demographic shifts of the faith, but also to the postmodern issues of multicultural diversity. Not the least of these concerns centers on the traditional Christian interpretations of Christ's work of salvation. While a variety of metaphors have been used effectively throughout Christian history to speak to the profound symphony of meanings in the atonement, more recent evangelicalism has tended to focus on the penal substitutionary model as the lone instrument in the orchestra. A significant number of evangelical scholars have raised concerns about this exclusive focus in recent years. Not the least of these has been the voice of Mark Baker, associate professor of mission and theology at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. Along with Joel Green, Professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, Baker co-authored *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* several years ago. Calling for a recovery of the diversity of nuance contained in the atonement doctrine, they raised significant pastoral and missional concerns related to the exclusive focus on penal substitution as the only orthodox evangelical portrayal of Christ's work. Numerous other voices have recently been added to that discussion, and the subsequent controversy has served not only to raise the pitch of the discussion several octaves, but to



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