

appropriation of the Reformed tradition contributes overall to her proposals. Neither am I sure why she is arguing specifically for a *process*-pantheism, when pantheism is a broad category capable of including many variations within its parameters. The argument that process thought resists the opposition of God and the world appears to mark it as unique in this respect, while the work of other theologians, such as Colin Gunton, who have argued for similar priorities from more conventional angles that eschew both process thinking and pantheism, is neglected.

Thirdly, the ethical implications of Case-Winters's argument are commonplace, relying on the human emulation of God's own stance towards the natural order. Also, the trinitarian pattern Case-Winters employs seems little more than an attempt to elucidate ethical human action by reference to the three persons of the Trinity, without providing an account either of how the actions of these three persons constitute the action of the one, triune God, or of how humans actively participate in this action rather than merely mimicking it.

One final word: this book is in dire need of competent proof-reading; the abundance of typographical errors is burdensome. Nonetheless, if these are passed over, and if the analysis particularly is allowed to soothe the aching caused by previous intellectual failings, Case-Winters offers some welcome relief.

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Dennis W. Jowers, *Karl Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom: 'The Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and Vice Versa'*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006, 263pp. \$109.95

The main stream of contemporary trinitarian theology has been impelled by Karl Rahner's thesis that God's threefold presence in salvation history is identical with God's own inner triunity. This axiom, that 'the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa', has been called Rahner's Rule, and it has been 'accepted by practically all contemporary theologians', as one prestigious dictionary says. Therefore when Dennis W. Jowers calls Karl Rahner's trinitarian axiom into question in this monograph, he is placing himself in direct opposition to the dominant paradigm of trinitarian theology in the second half of the twentieth century. Only a few thinkers in these decades have subjected Rahner's Rule to serious critique, and not until about 1999 could anything like a backlash movement be discerned. Any book-length attempt at a responsible dismantling of Rahner's trinitarian axiom is thus a rare and welcome opportunity to examine the fundamental presuppositions of a widespread trend in modern theology.

A handful of theologians, then, have recently tried to buck the trend of the new trinitarianism, but *Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom* does not repeat or rehash any of their criticisms. Instead, Jowers focuses his attention on an element of Rahner's

trinitarianism which is as crucial as it is unaccountably neglected: his notion of revelation. He reminds us that Rahner is so committed to revelation as a transcendental phenomenon, in which God is known by creatures only as he imparts himself to them, that as a corollary Rahner rejects any direct verbal self-revelation of God. Refusing to countenance any verbal, propositional, or at least cognitive revelation of the Trinity, which he thinks of as necessarily extrinsic and requiring the most crassly interventionist sort of miracle, Rahner is almost forced to posit his axiom in order to underwrite any knowledge of the Trinity. Rahner's project requires that the economic Trinity must be God's self-revelation through deeds, and this revelation must be clear and distinct enough to serve as the sole foundation for the entire edifice of traditional orthodox trinitarianism in at least its broad outlines.

Jowers' insight about Rahner's view of revelation is simple enough, and quite obvious once he draws our attention to it: Rahner's anti-propositionalism is a pervasive and consistent theme in his work. But no previous author has identified this problem so sharply nor traced its implications for Rahner's trinitarian axiom. Jowers has indeed tapped a rich vein that runs straight through Rahner's trinitarian theology. With precise and insistent argumentation, Jowers highlights what enthusiastic followers of Rahner's trinitarian axiom have overlooked for decades, which is the self-imposed poverty of a trinitarian theology which avails itself only of the events of salvation history. Again, this runs counter to the intuitions of most practitioners of contemporary trinitarian theology, who think of Rahner's trinitarian axiom as the key to a storehouse of salvation-historical insight into the Trinity. But Jowers has put his finger on a real problem, and he pursues it doggedly in a way that must challenge any theologian who would like to continue operating under Rahner's rubric. If the economy is our sole source of knowledge of the Trinity, how are we to interpret the diversity of economic trinitarian configurations in which, for instance, sometimes the Spirit brings the Son, while sometimes the Son sends the Spirit? To highlight the tensions and antinomies which Rahner's axiom places theology under, Jowers gives a detailed reading of the problematic locus of the anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit.

Jowers writes with scholarly reserve and the humility of a thinker who has learned much from the major theologians he has come to disagree with. He is appropriately tentative in advancing criticisms, and repeatedly rejects overly-facile dismissals of Karl Rahner's project. He does, however, have a high view of the binding obligation placed on theologians by logical demonstration and consistency, and when he subjects a position to *reduction ad absurdum* or disables one of the premises in the implied syllogism of an argument, he expects that a refutation will be recognized as a refutation. And it is a refutation, a documentable take-down, which Jowers attempts here, as a later section of the book argues for 'the impossibility of a non-verbal, non-conceptual revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity other than the beatific vision'. He is careful to limit his arguments to presuppositions which are shared by his interlocutors, and is well versed in the scholastic, magisterial and

philosophical reference points by which Rahner himself oriented his work. Thus he undertakes to win his decisive point not by importing his own constructive arguments, or by speaking for an alternative school of thought, but through immanent critique. Jowers may have much to say in his own theological voice, but in *Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom* he has instead chosen to stick very close to his text. He has apparently decided that an immanent critique is the most economical critique, and vice versa.

*Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom* is an important contribution to contemporary trinitarian theology. By its narrow focus, it accomplishes much. It would be instructive to see Jowers elaborate his own position on the central issue, the mode of revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity. It would be especially helpful to see him strive for balance between God's self-revelation in deed (the economy of salvation) and in verbal-cognitive disclosures (scripture). *Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom*, however, is a work of commentary and criticism, not yet of construction. Furthermore, it would obviously be premature to ask for balance from the only author who has managed to register a telling protest against the way Rahner's Rule has nearly driven contemporary trinitarian theology into the cul-de-sac of demanding that salvation history function as the sole, silent witness to the Triune God.

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Donald Wood, *Barth's Theology of Interpretation*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, vii + 189pp. £50.00

A significant shift is occurring in Barth studies as scholars recognize the importance of his early academic work, including the expository lectures on the Bible in Göttingen and Münster. The semester-length exegetical courses on Philippians, First Corinthians, and the Gospel of John, once regarded as a mere footnote to Barth's dogmatics, are proving to be far more valuable than once thought – both for understanding Barth and for assessing the value of his theological exegesis for constructive work.

An analogous shift occurred in Calvin studies with Thomas Torrance's 1995 study of Calvin's hermeneutics and new interest in the biblical commentaries. A somewhat different Calvin emerges there. The polemics, which figure so prominently the *Institutes*, are in the background when Calvin turns his attention to the exposition of the biblical text. Indeed, he frequently acknowledges his debt to previous interpreters, even when he disagrees with them on particular points of exegesis. More importantly, we now have a new appreciation for how Calvin understood his métier, namely, to expound holy scripture. He always intended the *Institutes* as a guide for the study of the Bible, not an end in itself. In Barth's case, the *Church Dogmatics* will always overshadow his biblical commentaries. That