

Book Reviews

Professional Chaplaincy and Clinical Pastoral Education Should Become More Scientific: Yes and No, by Larry Vandecreek. New York: Howarth Press, 2002. 256pp. Paper, \$30.00, ISBN 9780789022387.

The debate about professionalism and chaplaincy is one that is current and very much alive at the moment. The changing context of practice—whether in healthcare, education, prisons, the armed forces, or any other of our social institutions in which chaplaincy has, either historically or by contemporary practice, had a part to play—has meant a re-assessment and re-evaluation of the aims, practices and goals of chaplaincy, not least by chaplains themselves.

Although Larry Vandecreek's book is rooted firmly in the context of the American healthcare system, as well as the American model of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), despite the cultural, and economic, differences that this involves, the questions that the book raises are ones that are both pertinent, and being asked, on each side of the Atlantic.

At one level, this debate is not a new one. With the emergence of counselling as a discrete discipline in the middle years of the twentieth century, for example, the role of the clergy generally and of chaplains in particular became subject to scrutiny. Some felt that the two roles were, and ever should remain, distinct, and that the professional codes and practices of the new, emerging disciplines had little or nothing to say to the very different roles and relationships exercised by Chaplains and other clergy. Others felt differently. In a changing social, political and economic climate, old patterns of working had to be re-evaluated and re-assessed, and change ought to be embraced rather than resisted, as offering opportunities for growth, both personal and professional, rather than posing threats or imposing restrictions.

Professional Chaplaincy and Clinical Pastoral Education Should Become More Scientific both reflects this long-standing debate and enables us to engage with some of its key questions. After “setting out the stall” in the first two chapters—the “Yes” and “No” approaches to the question posed

by the title—the book then draws on the experience and wisdom of a wide range of experienced pastoral and educational practitioners, inviting them to respond to the opposing positions set out in those early chapters.

Although a quarter of respondents see the question as too polarized to be answered in such a stark way, the overwhelming view of those who write is (at the danger of spoiling the ending!) Yes—both professional chaplaincy and CPE *should* become more scientific.

The book reflects, however, the wide-ranging nature of the debate and contains excellent chapters on spirituality, chaplains and science, research and its aims, professional accountability, philosophy, mystery and wonder, and identity, to name but a few.

The role of editor is always a crucial one and in this book Larry Vandecreek has worked well to offer us a work that manages to maintain a broad span without sacrificing depth. This is a book that deserves to be read by students, educators, practitioners and policy-makers alike, since, despite its cultural specificity, it offers a real contribution to an on-going debate.

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Pious Pro-family Rhetoric, by Jay Newman. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

202pp., hardback, € 56.60/\$67.95/£39.60 ISBN 9780820486673.

Jay Newman is a man with a mission and this does not involve a straightforward discussion about the different arguments surrounding the moral status of the family.

Certainly those arguments are considered in two chapters. In arguments supporting the family Newman looks at the conservative pro-family agendas, the Catholic perspective, the biblical defence and utilitarian arguments supporting traditional family values. Ranged against these are progressive alternatives to the pro-family arguments. Like the pro-family arguments the usual suspects are set out, from liberal values, to utilitarian defence of non-traditional families, to the strengths of diversity in living arrangements. In engaging the pro-family lobby Newman notes strong feminist contributions who argue from history that the family in America has always been of changeable form.

Interestingly, in none of these chapters or in the book as a whole does

Newman give space for developing a theological understanding of love, or for developing an anthropology that might underpin either view. This is because Newman is a man with a mission whose primary purpose is to study the rhetoric as distinct from the arguments of the pro-family lobby in the US. Hence, the most penetrating theological critique that he musters is not about any views of the family as such, but more about the nature of Biblical evidence and what the pro-family lobby claims for it. In this chapter he paints a picture of pro-family use of the Bible that seeks to make the issue a debate about faith, not about issues. A strong Biblical perspective is contrasted with the more nebulous musings of Tillich or Daly who base their views on sociology and ethics. Newman is careful not to demonize the pro-family lobby, noting the efforts of several biblically based groups to be conciliatory. However, the thrust of his argument remains that the core pro-family approach in the US is based in rhetoric and that the rhetoric emphasizes a polarized picture: the Bible against secular social science, or worse, faith against rationality, absolute truth against partial truth. It is precisely in such a world that arguments *ad hominem* become prominent, because the real battle is not so much about the issue as such, but about the identity of the faithful. This is what is being defended.

Much of the book then is about an analysis of the rhetoric used to get this view across, and the dynamics of the arguments rather than their content. This is very useful, as far as it goes, but I have three problems with this analysis. First, as hard as Newman tries to remain objective and not be drawn into an *ad hominem* spiral, he consistently reveals his annoyance with a movement based on "cant." I think he might have been more successful in his analysis had he made use of writers such as James Fowler to explain and place in perspective the faith that the pro-family movement is defending and to explore the theological arguments for a more complex view of faith that can handle ambiguity. Secondly, the dynamic he highlights is hardly news. Thirdly, I am not clear what Newman's ultimate aim is. Is he trying to unmask the pious pro-family lobby or is he trying to find a way of talking to them? Much of the dynamic that he outlines is broadly of a cult variety that seeks to confirm the group's identity through the defence of a faith position. This is precisely the kind of dynamic that puts rational dialogue out of court, because rationality ushers in ambiguity and uncertainty. Hence, any attempt to set up dialogue with such a position has to focus on the underlying affective dynamic, and not simply on the importance of rationality. Rationality itself is seen as a threat. In which case perhaps more careful dialogue around the Biblical material, demonstrating

a respect for the source, might help to build up trust and over time build up a rational appreciation of the material.

I share Newman's uneasiness with the pious pro-family rhetoric. However, I am clear that it is important to engage it and to find ways of taking the affective dimension seriously. One of the most important reasons for this is that the same dynamic and same complexity can be found in debates about the family in other religions, not least Islam. If we are to be serious about interfaith dialogue and understanding, then we have to listen hard to the anxieties underlying any rhetoric, and to respond to them. If we offer that courtesy to members of other faiths then we must offer the same to our own.

This then is an interesting book with a limited mission, focused on the dynamic of a debate in the US. It succeeds within those limitations but raises questions for me about how such a "debate" might proceed.

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The Deities are Many: A Polytheistic Theology, by Jordan Paper. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. 155pp., paper, \$16.95, ISBN 9780791463888; hardback, \$49.50, ISBN 9780791463871.

As theologies of religious pluralism multiply in unprecedented proportions, this book draws attention to yet another experience and perception. It is based on the experience and intellectual wanderings and studies of an unusual person. With Jewish roots, the author has travelled through the bewildering forest of a variety of religious traditions, ranging from the monotheistic religion of "the People of the Book" to Chinese folklore and popular cults.

It is a strange coincidence that Hindutva proponents in India argue that monotheism was brought into India by the invaders, i.e. Muslims and Christians, as an ideological weapon to subjugate the multi-cultural and polytheistic traditions of the sub-continent. Indologists have tried to show a progression from polytheism to monism, through henotheism and monotheism, with side rooms even for agnosticism and atheism. Neo-Ve-

dantins have argued that the experience of oneness with the Supreme Reality is the culmination of a spiritual journey which proceeds past all other lower categories. However, now, when modern thinking and globalization exercise indirect pressure on the Hindu intelligentsia, revivalist Hindu scholars have mustered courage and confidence to proclaim as authentic the experience of several deities existing simultaneously.

Paper identifies varieties of polytheism. He thinks that the commonalities between the monotheistic traditions represented by a sizeable world population is minimal, if not nil. Of course this is questionable, particularly if we take the case of the three Abrahamic faiths, which have much in common. But for him polytheistic religions seem to share in common certain features that contrast them with the monotheistic traditions. "Firstly, the polytheistic traditions are invariably experiential, although this is also true for aspects of each of the Religions of the Book" (13). "Second, the relationships with the deities are reciprocal. There are no *prima facie* obligations on either side of the relationships" (14). Here, whether the covenantal relationship between the deity and devotees, as evident in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is taken seriously, is questionable.

Paper points out how the monotheistic traditions are as poorly prepared to understand the polytheistic ones, as they are at variance from them. While there are many references to Native American and Chinese traditions, and some reference to African, African Brazilian and Chinese traditions, he leaves it to people from these traditions to speak for them theologically. Then the writer admits, "I am but professing my own individual perceptions, based on my experiences within certain polytheistic traditions, for whatever use that may be to others" (17).

Following the introductory chapter, five chapters delineate major themes: the cosmic couple of mother earth and father sky, with reference to circumpolar rebirth rituals, Chinese imperial sacrifices, mythological perceptions of sun, moon, stars, mountains and streams, and personal relationships with cosmic powers; the numinous nature of animals, plants and minerals, with illustrations; the deified ancestral spirits and modes of communication, as evident mainly in the Chinese traditions; divine ghosts as functional deities, with a special focus on the anthropomorphizing of the divine and modes of interaction; and the semi-numinous, including numinous beings unconnected with rituals, tricksters, humorous deities, and culture-heroes as quasi-deities, with implications of the idea of re-creation as opposed to only one creation.

The next chapter deals with the problem of one and/or many, pointing

to monotheists' misperceptions with particular definitions, without recognizing the primitive versions of one reality such as the native American Great Spirit and Master of Heaven and Creator. Western colonialists have failed to see them, as they judged all non-monotheistic beliefs to be inferior and superstitious. The author points out how the western impact on dynasty changes in China caused the subjugation of the Taiping religion and its resurrection in the form of the Unification Church in South Korea, which projects one single couple as "holy parent" and comes close to female deities or consorts of male deities, which were disdained by the western monotheists.

Monotheism, the writer points out, is associated with patriarchy, fanaticism and the suppression of plurality. He also shows that some semi-monotheistic beliefs and practices are akin to the veneration of saints in Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, and singles out the Protestant tradition as promoting a crude monotheism. He illustrates this with the fact that "polytheistic deities tend to be more companionable than a single, absolute and monarchical deity," and with whom one can dialogue and who can be made accountable for tragic happenings in nature.

This book is fascinating reading, with a fresh analysis. Of course its description of the numinous in different cultures, both primitive and modern, is not new and one can read more extensive details in the works of anthropologists, starting from Frazer, and phenomenologists, such as van der Leeuw who identified *mana* (power) as the essence of the phenomenal variety of religion. Whether there is a single essence in the often contradictory variety is an ongoing question in the theologies of religious pluralism. This book does not claim to solve the problem, but it brings a new perception and experience into the discussion.

There are, however, at least three shortcomings in the book. First, the author, having Jewish roots, a Chinese wife, and living in America, claims to have personal experience of the numinous in nature and of having conversations with his ancestors. He also points out the unitive experience of polytheists through ecstatic acts, which is not very different from that of some mystics of the Christian tradition. He also points to *bhakti* as a common experience in the different devotional experiences within Hinduism. But he has not raised questions about distinguishing between authentic and non-authentic experiences with the tools available in the scientific study of religion, particularly in the psychology of religion and mysticism, however limited they may be.

Second, he makes a sweeping statement about polytheism in general,

based on his limited observation of deities in certain traditions. “What needed to be understood,” he says, “is that all of these can be numinous simultaneously, without contradiction and without conflict; this is the essence of polytheism” (5). When he mentions the Hindu experience, in passing, he does not recognize the warring conflicts between the gods themselves, and between gods and goddesses, for primacy or to avoid subjugation, in the Hindu pantheon. In fact, sectarian animosity is not eschewed even in devotional experience, as is evident in the Saiva and Vashnava bhakti literature.

Third, his representative Christianity is one-sided. While nobody can deny the traditional idea of monotheism as inextricably associated with monarchy and patriarchy, in response to the challenges posed by the feminist movement, “sexing the trinity” is an important discussion in recent times. Also theologians have tried to interpret trinity as presenting a social being and a divine commune, which defines unity and plurality within, balancing a crude monotheism and a conflicting polytheism. It is unfortunate that the author echoes the Qur’anic view of trinity, when he notes in his conclusion, “I would not advise being close without a special relationship. Similarly in Christianity, people are far more comfortable with Mary than with the Father, or even Jesus”(143). This seems to be the exact opposite of monotheism’s judgement of polytheism.

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Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1100—1125, by Susan Boynton. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. 289 pp., hardback, \$45.00/£22.42/€32.49, ISBN 9780801443817.

Contemporary religious researchers often overlook the significance of brilliant medieval scholarship which unravels the deep interconnections between social actors, the mechanisms of power, theology, and the liturgical rituals of a distant past. This is regrettable since such studies often offer theoretical insights into the role of religion in societies and groups—insights which open more general portals of inquiry into the vast array

of religious beliefs and practices that bind people together while shaping and responding to social forces imposed by a geo-political context. *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1100—1125* by Columbia University musicologist Susan Boynton represents one such punctilious and penetrating scholarly work.

Boynton positions the Abbey of Farfa, located about thirty miles north of Rome, as among the most important, influential, and powerful religious institutions of the medieval period. It was the first of Italy's self-governing monasteries, exempted by Charlemagne from the control of local bishops in 775. The exemption and the abbey's autonomous elections remained in effect until 1122, when its relationship to the papacy and empire were reversed under the decrees of the Concordat of Worms. Between 775 and 1122, the Abbey of Farfa thus enjoyed unusual centripetal influence and a privileged position, maintaining an identity as an imperial abbey while simultaneously finding favor with the papacy.

Boynton selects the time period immediately preceding and following the reversal of Farfa's unique position. She uses documents pertaining to Farfa's properties, narratives of political intrigue, architecture and other artifacts, but especially the music and liturgy, to illuminate the networks of power and changing circumstances of the abbey and its leadership, and to document her central thesis: "the manifold forms of corporate identity that existed within the monastic community at Farfa in the eleventh and twelfth centuries can be adequately perceived only by taking into consideration the centrality of liturgical performance in reflecting and shaping these identities" (Boynton, 2006: 3).

The writings of Gregory of Catino provided Boynton with a central witness, not unlike the single informant in the anthropological tradition, and valid as a source for the same reasons that inform the social science tradition. Chapter One analyzes these texts to show how Gregory's textual production shaped, reshaped, and consolidated Farfa's archival memory through several types of documents: the *Register*, *Liber largitoris*, *Chronicle*, *Liber floriger*, and *Collectio canonum*. The latter two were produced by Gregory at the age of 70, and thus offer a window into the lifeworld of Farfa in historical time and Gregory's changing vision, as both the latter and the institution were shaped and reshaped by events internal and external to Farfa.

Liturgy was deeply embedded in Gregory's thinking, most clearly manifest perhaps in connections in the *Chronicle* linking the Abbey's founding by Lawrence of Syria and the dedication of the altars—temporally remote

events were drawn together by him through “liturgical resonances” with the feast of Lawrence. Boynton notes that just as Gregory’s foundation narratives were informed by liturgy, so liturgical pieces were reworked and refashioned to commemorate saints important to Farfa’s history. These pieces borrowed from and recast texts into new forms, building on existing hymns through troping, a form of innovation perhaps aided by the use of neumes, that is, written in approximate musical notation in graphic form. Special attention to the exemplar, *Radix Iesse*, highlights the origins of the text in a sixth century poem by Fortunatus, which was rearranged to fit the structure and melody of an existing hymn, thereby updating the Farfa liturgy to incorporate widely diffused and central medieval theological ideas: the postpartum virginity of Mary and the Christological emphasis on the royal lineage of Jesus.

Especially helpful to the non-musicological scholar is Chapter Two, in which Boynton describes and illustrates the varieties of monastic liturgy, with examples from the Farfa repertory. This is coupled with an explanation of the ubiquity of the psalms and psalm performance among the medieval literati, as well as examples of private prayers at Farfa, transmitted through *libelli precum* (prayer booklets). In Chapter Three Boynton provides a careful analysis of the influence of Cluny’s influence on Farfa, a complex and difficult project, given the scarcity of liturgical resources. Influences included both customs growing out of the reform initiated by Abbot Hugh of Farfa, and liturgical services, such as Farfa’s death ritual, which borrowed from Cluny’s *Liber tramitis*. In Chapter Four she analyzes the patterns of influence and effects of patronage on liturgy, showing how the bond between donor and the institution were manifested in several ways. Ritual commemorations, for example, created a virtual presence of absent patrons; and gifts were frequently endowed with symbolic significance, creating a metonymic displacement that linked the donor to a gift, thus implying their presence during services. Donors, motivated by the promise of salvation, provided gifts which ensured their perpetual presence in the liturgical community of the monastery, while the monastery, in turn, was provided with long-term insurance for its upkeep. Similarly, in Chapter Five, Boynton shows the influence of ideas and events originating in internal politics with respect to the liturgy, largely through the commemoration of saints, in the form of new music for old saints, often stressing Farfa’s collection of relics.

Farfa’s history was replete with internal factionalization and strife with neighbors, both of which resulted in the creation of new texts, often trans-

mited through the lens of Gregory. Among the most significant and important contributions of the book is Boynton's depiction of the generational conflict brought about by a new musical style often called "Benedicamus songs," described by the elders as theatrical.

The fact that the older monks were saddened by things they "heard or saw" shows that musical style was a crucial element of Farfa's tradition, violated by the new style of singing associated with the younger monks. As instigators of musical disorder in opposition to their seniors, the younger monks not only broke with liturgical tradition but also defied the hierarchies of seniority that governed life in a Benedictine monastery.

(Boynton 2006, 218)

This, among the many other details impeccably brought together in the book, corroborates the thesis of the centrality of liturgy in reflecting and shaping Farfa's corporate identity. Susan Boynton's book will stand among the great analyses and interpretations of liturgy in her generation and will quickly become required reading for any serious scholar of medieval liturgy.

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Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends,

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007. Edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson and Michael J. Sleasman. 287pp., paper, \$23.99, ISBN 9780801031670.

The opening sentence informs the reader that this is a "book about everyday theology, written by everyday theologians for everyday theologians." But the term "everyday theology" is an ambiguous one. Used here, it is equivalent neither to my notion of "ordinary theology" (the theological reflections of those who have received no academic training in theology), nor to the term "everyday religion" (defined by the sociologist of religion, Nancy Ammerman, as "the ways in which non-experts experience religion" as it is interwoven with their own lives). Rather, everyday theology is *our* attempt to think theologically about the everyday world.

The first chapter of the book offers a very readable introduction to the

theme of reading culture, together with an apologia directed towards Christians to encourage them to “read the signs” of their own times by engaging in this activity. It is written by Kevin Vanhoozer, research professor in systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. The aim of this project, Vanhoozer argues, is not just cultural literacy, but reading culture *theologically*—and not just its explicit messages but also its “implicit moods.” Vanhoozer provides a first-rate, brief exposition of the notion of culture and the importance of a thick description of it that attends to its context, its many dimensions and its diverse levels of significance; and in particular to the invitations that cultural texts offer to view reality in a certain way—in a word, what faith they express. In response to this, “everyday theology is ... the attempt to understand everyday life: to see it as God sees it and ... to be an agent of redemptive change.”

This is all good stuff. The workmanlike essays that follow are from a variety of authors working mainly in the States, plus some from other locations such as Aberdeen and India. These offer analyses and theological reflections on a diverse range of cultural texts and trends, from “the Gospel according to Safeway” and a “Theological Account of Eminem,” through the “Business of Busyness” and “Fantasy Funerals,” to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I regret to say that the conceptuality of implicit religion, and the work of Edward Bailey and others working in this field in Britain, is not acknowledged in this text, despite the obvious close parallels.

The authors of these essays mostly adopt a construal of the central concerns of Christian theology that is dominated by biblical themes, and often represent a Reformed (Calvinist) tradition. While many will be quite happy with this, some would have welcomed the inclusion of wider theological perspectives. I fear that this rather narrow viewpoint could restrict the usefulness of the book. It would be unfortunate, however, if that put anyone off the book entirely; for the overall agenda and methodology of *Everyday Theology* possesses a very wide-ranging significance. I would therefore wish to recommend the book warmly, especially to readers of this journal.

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An Emerging Cosmotheandric Religion? Raimon Panikkar's Pluralistic Theology of Religions, by Jyri Komulainen. *Studies in Christian Mission*, vol. 30. Leiden: Brill, 2005. 238pp., hardback, €108.00/\$161.00, ISBN 9789004138933.

This is a superb, but by no means exhaustive, study of Panikkar's large *oeuvre*, whose well-known works cover such wide-ranging perspectives in theology, philosophy and the comparative study of religions that no single author could possibly do justice to them. Who could capture all the facets of the daring vision of this foremost intercultural and inter-religious thinker, who has been writing in several European languages for over fifty years? Some good studies on particular aspects of Panikkar's thought exist, but this is one of the most comprehensive and best. Its main focus is the theology of religions and the nature of inter-religious dialogue, but it touches on many other topics in Panikkar's work and critically discusses them within the larger context of a dialogue of cultures and civilizations and the challenges of pluralism.

This substantial study is carefully crafted, well argued and marked by critical discernment; its arguments are supported by ample evidence, supplied in profuse footnotes and a large bibliography, from which anyone interested in Panikkar and religious pluralism can learn an immense amount.

Many prominent figures in inter-religious dialogue have been either Indian or associated with India. Panikkar is a thinker bridging many different worlds, given his Indian and Spanish parental background, his education in different countries, his research in several areas (including a doctorate in chemistry in 1958), and his teaching, travels and life experience in Europe, America and India.

The Finnish author, Komulainen, initially undertook the research for this book for a PhD in the Department of Systematic Theology at the University of Helsinki, where he decided to focus on Indian Christian theology. This led him to a 10 months' stay at the United Theological College in Bangalore, and also at the University of Hamburg. He only met Panikkar once, in 1999, during a visit to his Spanish home. One wonders whether this brief encounter is really enough, even to begin to grasp the Indian and universal dimensions of the thought of this great man? Especially when Komulainen simply sums up his experience with the words: "Meeting this very intelligent and generous elderly gentleman face to face was a crucial hermeneutical experience for me, and many questions were cleared up during our discussion" (viii). Many of Panikkar's friends and

disciples who have known him intimately for years would probably choose different aspects in describing this most unusual, luminous and visionary human being. But this is an academic study, not a biographical narrative trying to capture flesh and blood, or the fire of spirit.

Among several possible approaches to inter-religious dialogue Komulainen analyses Panikkar's independent and even idiosyncratic views primarily within the context of recent debates on the pluralistic theology of religions. In fact, Panikkar moved from an earlier position of inclusivism to that of a radical pluralism, and Komulainen recognizes correctly that the threefold typology of inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism, often attributed to Alan Race, was originally first formulated by Panikkar in 1978. (I discovered, similarly, that the distinction of different dimensions of religion, usually connected with the works of Ninian Smart, was first introduced in an earlier book by Panikkar published in 1964 in Italian and in 1965 in German, but never translated into English. Panikkar confirmed in a letter to me that Smart had personally acknowledged this to him; but it is never mentioned in Smart's writings.)

Komulainen places the pluralistic turn of Panikkar's thinking at the end of the 1960s or the very beginning of the 1970s, a turn which is evident in the transition from the first edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* in 1964 to the second in 1981. The book reviewed here therefore analyses publications that appeared between 1970–2000, that is to say, during 30 out of the 50 years that Panikkar has been writing. The discussion is selective and emphasizes recent material, especially since Panikkar's pluralism has radicalized over the years and his thinking keeps moving. The sources of this study are limited to those available in English and German, and do not include his works in Italian and Spanish. The author recognizes Panikkar's intellectual humility in his acknowledging that his particular kind of pluralism is only one among several others. Yet it tries to avoid the weaknesses of many other pluralists and is based on a deep theological vision of "cosmotheandrim." This must be elucidated, but is difficult to define since Panikkar's way of thinking is notoriously elusive, hybrid and multi-religious. I am not entirely convinced that the author, in spite of his detailed discussion, has fathomed all the multi-layered meanings of "cosmotheandrim," and this is not the place to attempt its further exploration. I gloss its meaning here simply as an interweaving of the cosmic, divine and human, and agree with Komulainen that Panikkar can be seen as being rooted in the tradition of wisdom theology. In his subtle, discerning way of analysing his singular significance, Komulainen emphasizes that Panikkar does not primarily write to disseminate ideas, but

that writing is meditation for him. It is, “in his own words, ‘intellectual life,’ which is in turn ‘spiritual existence’ and as such participation in the life of the universe.” Panikkar even describes writing as “a religious undertaking” and his understanding of “his intellectual vocation is ultimately mystic and is to be seen in intimate connection with his understanding of words and the Holy Scriptures”(29).

Panikkar uses a framework of relativity (might this not be more appropriately called “relationality”?) and perspectivism in his approach to different cultures and religions. In emphasizing the “*sangam*”—the intersection or even confluence—of different religious traditions, he resists the contemporary inclination of speaking about a “global perspective” (which he considers a monocultural way of thinking) since he wants to champion pluralism and the plural interactions of different religious traditions. Such pluralism calls for the will to dialogue, a “genuinely dialogical dialogue” which can never be “the medium of the will for power or proselytism.” In such dialogue “the other is seen as an authentic source of understanding, even as ‘revelatory experience’” (67).

Komulainen also points to a certain dissonance in Panikkar’s radical pluralism, an intrinsic tension between dialogue and pluralism in that “dialogue” conceptualizes Panikkar’s “endeavor to build bridges between different human positions, whereas ‘pluralism’ describes the unbridgeable character of these positions” (89).

Interested readers will find in this book an in-depth examination of Panikkar’s theology of religions, his understanding of pluralism and dialogue, and a critical analysis of the principles behind Panikkar’s theology. These include his notion of “Christophany,” as a new and more adequate form of Christology; Indian spirituality as a corrective for western thinking; ecosophy as a new cosmological vision, and cosmotheandricism as a form of Trinitarian metaphysics. Several parts of the book mention the strong resemblance of Panikkar’s thinking to Teilhard de Chardin’s. Without asserting a direct or indirect influence of Teilhard’s writings on Panikkar, Komulainen notes “the striking similarity of the basic orientation of these two thinkers” and “a certain Teilhardian flavor in Panikkar’s vision”(123). In some respects it seems to fulfill “Teilhard’s desire for a new mysticism that takes account of the complementary insights of other religions and finds unity through tension, instead of reducing the multiple to a common ground” (122).

The book’s title bears a question mark since its author wonders at the end whether the vision of “cosmotheandricism” does not ultimately represent an anthropological reduction of religions. This vision is the culmination of Pan-

ikkar's thinking which offers "a new myth that could provide a basis for dialogue and make religions mutually comprehensible" (197). It gives room to many of his vital concerns, such as "holism, relativity, harmony, dynamics, and spontaneity" (197) and aims at synthesizing all the different religious traditions and spiritualities, but by so doing, does it not ultimately finish up being just one vision among many, thereby increasing the existing diversity of world views? The reader is left to ponder this dilemma. However, unlike most other pluralists, Panikkar does not found his theology on the Enlightenment tradition, but on "his idiosyncratic cosmotheandric vision," which draws from primordial traditions that predate modern thinking. On the other hand, Panikkar also takes into account the contemporary world and makes room for secularity. But because of this, Kolmainen sees Panikkar's theology "at risk of resulting in existentialist-anthropological reduction of religiosity. It seems that human experience is a sort of upper concept in his thinking" (206).

The novelty of Panikkar's cosmotheandric vision—which goes far beyond the traditional understanding of "*cosmos-theos-anthropos*"—implies also that a significant mutation has occurred in spirituality which has revealed "the holiness of the secular." Panikkar acknowledges that he stands at the confluence of "the Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and Secular traditions" (193f.), but unfortunately Kolumainen does not provide us with a detailed analysis of what implications secularity has for the practice of contemporary spirituality. Coming to the end of reading his book, one is almost left with the impression that the author is somewhat hesitant, if not afraid, of the vulnerable openness and creative religious possibilities with which Panikkar's daring vision challenges traditional religious, and especially conservative Christian, perspectives.

This is a very important book that can stimulate much creative debate on religious pluralism and encourage further constructive work in the theology of religions.

The only irritating detail is the unfortunate listing of Panikkar's works by their chronological date of publication (printed after their title) with the titles' abbreviations given first, without being ordered alphabetically. This means that the profuse use of these abbreviations in the main text and notes imposes a lot of detective work on the reader to find the relevant title in a long bibliography.

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Theology Goes To The Movies: An Introduction to Critical Christian Thinking, by Clive Marsh. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. 192pp., paper, \$34.95, ISBN 9780415380126; hardback, \$120.00. ISBN 9780415380119.

Following the success of his previous book *Cinema and Sentiment: Film's Challenge to Theology*, and charting similar ground to his co-edited work with Gaye Ortiz entitled *Explorations in Theology and Film*, Clive Marsh's *Theology Goes To The Movies: An Introduction to Critical Christian Thinking* introduces readers to a range of theological issues by encouraging them to grapple with these matters through their examination of numerous cinematic productions. Some of the topics headlining these sections include: a critical analysis of viewpoints that speak to the character and image of God; this conversation sits alongside an investigation into the meaning and purpose of being a "Human being;" then definitions underpinning the roles of the "Spirit," are posited next to a discussion centring on portrayals of "Redemption" in film.

Primarily stemming from the American and British film industry, these celluloid narratives cover a variety of human experiences. Marsh treats these mainstream movies and art films as legitimate forms of discourse that allows for an engagement with an assortment of theological perspectives. Underscoring his approach to the study of film, Marsh suggests that many moviegoers enter into a religious encounter when they watch movies. Although not referencing scholarship directly responding to the study of implicit religion, Marsh's observations fall in line with Edward Bailey's assertion that religious experiences and religious meaning can surface from environments and discourses not tied to, or emerging from, organized religious institutions. While his earlier work correlates with Bailey's findings, Marsh's *Theology Goes to the Movies* places greater emphasis on stressing how explicit theological praxes can be employed to consider the thematic and theological concerns arising out of the films under review.

Each chapter fuses an analysis of certain films with theological discourses, biblical narratives, scholarship originating from the sociology of religion, and writings taken from cultural studies. At the end of each chapter, Marsh presents a number of questions enabling students to consider the significance of these discourses for the study and interpretation of theology and film. These points of inquiry invite readers to contemplate the complex, and, one can argue, unresolved tensions underlining the themes and theological paradigms framing each section of Marsh's work. Overall,

Marsh embraces rather than shuns the multifaceted dimensions of the theological perspectives that he incorporates into his scholarship. From this standpoint, Marsh succeeds in complicating, rather than simplifying, any investigation into the relationship between film, theology, religious studies, and identity formation.

Much of the theological scholarship previewed in his book corresponds mostly with Anglo-European canonical doctrines. Augustine, Calvin, and Barth represent some of the leading theological thinkers shaping Marsh's discussion of the meaning and place theology can occupy in any conversation that critically dialogues with contemporary culture. Marsh does not stipulate the rationale behind selecting some theological thinkers over others. Neither does he flesh out why he chose certain films and themes to support his approach to the study of film and theology. Certainly, the categories headlining each chapter of Marsh's work present readers with a series of broad and highly complex theological issues. It would be virtually impossible to include the seemingly limitless array of theological perspectives in his scholarship. And yet, by establishing the rationale behind his choice of themes and selection of films, Marsh would have strengthened the theoretical reasoning behind the purpose and intention of his scholarship. Students may well have benefited from being introduced to a range of theological outlooks emerging from both canonical as well as non-canonical theological schools of thought. In addition, Marsh pays less attention to how a filmmaker's employment of sound, visual effects, costume design and camera angle—to name just a few cinematic strategies—can inform the religious meanings that audience members may obtain from these artisans' creative productions.

Still, regardless of these shortcomings, as a vehicle for critical discourse, Marsh's book invites further debate on how an individual's subjectivity motivates the privileging of certain theological opinions and films over others. Students can also examine the extent to which their choice of film and theological perspectives reflect their world-view. They can also scrutinize the influence their interpretation of biblical themes and characters can have on other people's perceptions of God. And although not stipulated as a point for reflection, Marsh's work fuels critical thinking around the need for an investigation into the theological ideas underlining and substantiating the study of implicit religion as it relates to an analysis of the religious meanings that film viewers attain from their cinema-going experience.

Marsh's research is a distinctly postmodernist work, in that he places greater emphasis on the reader to navigate how, and in what manner, they

should respond to the themes, films, theological ideas, and biblical passages presented in his book. His scholarship aims to challenge the un-examined assumptions students bring to the study of theology and film. At the same time he encourages students, not familiar with theology, to ask questions, to probe, and to investigate the texts in question. Through this process, they can become aware of “how individualized these patterns of meaning making have become” (22). Students are encouraged not to settle for one-dimensional readings of the films, biblical passages, and theoretical works they interface with. They are asked to consider the multiple layers and unresolved tensions that are present in the films they watch. Students are also given the space to critically engage and grapple with the biblical passages featured in the body of each chapter. Marsh is aware that “religious groups might not welcome this individualizing development, for it is a challenge to the coherence of religious traditions,” but he believes this process of exploration is necessary if scholars and practitioners of religious studies, and theologians of practical and systematic theology, are to understand the “ways in which religious traditions themselves are changing” (23).

Theology Goes To The Movies is a worthwhile, innovative and thought-provoking work of scholarship because it provides a useful pedagogical framework from which to study the relationship between film, religious studies, biblical studies, theology and cultural studies. Lecturers can build upon Marsh’s work by adding films to the repertoire of cinematic productions previewed in his book, or they can establish different categories matching with the theological issues that are pertinent to their course syllabus. Altogether, Marsh’s work advances critical debates surrounding how theology and manifestations of religious expression can converse with mediums of cultural production. His focus on canonical theological works sheds light on the contribution these canonical theological texts can make to the study of popular culture. In this respect, Marsh casts mainstream theology in a new light. Rather than view canonical theology as a mode of discourse promoting a staid, narrow-minded, and dogmatic agenda, Marsh presents a sensitive and multi-dimensional appreciation of the nuances, and sometimes conflicting issues, evolving out of theology’s interaction with popular culture. As Marsh notes:

how the texts from the history of theology can best be “accessed” is often an issue. They are not to be grasped in some cognitive or intellectual way, or located within a stream of thought, but “got inside” existentially. It is too easy to say that “you have to believe it to live it,” for theology can be

studied by those who stand outside a religious tradition. But the content of a theology *and* how it works for those who live by it will not be adequately grasped unless ways are found by which people can imaginatively and empathetically enter into the thought-and life-world of a religious believer. (161–162).

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Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation, by Ruth Haley Barton. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Books, 2006. 192pp., hardback, \$16.00, ISBN 13978830833337.

As the title suggests, this book is all about finding a rhythm in our lives, which includes taking care not only of the physical side of life but also the spiritual. The cover story tells of seven key disciplines which can be learnt to help individuals keep a sacred rhythm in their lives. However, before discussing these in more detail, it should be noted that this book acknowledges the existence and active presence of God, not only as a higher being but one who is essentially the Christian God. Many points are supported with Biblical references and stories from the Bible, particularly those about Jesus' life, although no claims are made for Jesus being the Son of God; rather, He is seen as a good model for living.

The starting position is that of Christian Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), which the author claims is causing many to leave the Christian Church, as they no longer have the energy to continue with church committees or even attending Sunday services. This book essentially develops a different approach to worship which does not require the Universal Church or corporate worship in order to gain spiritual refreshment. Instead, the individual generally is encouraged to seek spiritual exercises which enable him or her to grow closer to God through creating space in their lives in order to perform the exercises.

The seven practices discussed are fairly simple and will be known to leaders of (Christian) retreats; in this book, they are treated fairly basically, while at the same time giving sufficient detail for the reader to grow in each practice. The ordering of the chapters, each of which is devoted to

one of the seven disciplines, is logical; after two chapters of introduction about yearning to be transformed and the need for creating space to be with God in solitude, the first exercise looks to encounter God through the scriptures. For this, the *Lectio Divina* method has been chosen, so that God can “initiate with us” while the reader has “space ... to respond fully” (54). Prayer (Chapter Four) is seen as the means of gaining intimacy with God, not only through talking to Him naturally, but moving beyond actual words to that depth of fellowship with God which does not require actual words to commune. Physical health (Chapter Five) is seen as wholeness of body, beyond the desire to be well to a position of using exercise and rest so that through the Holy Spirit our bodies may be temples of prayer and worship (86).

Having achieved some measure of wholeness of body, Chapter Six discusses self-examination before God, while Chapter Seven focuses on discernment and recognising and responding to the presence of God. The author acknowledges that discernment is always a gift (116) but mentions three beliefs which are crucial for its right practice (116). These are a belief in the goodness of God, believing that love is our primary calling, and believing that God does communicate with us through the Holy Spirit which “is given to help us know the demands of love in our situation” (118). Clearly, this is traditional Christian teaching which reflects the author’s education in the Baptist Church.

Chapter 8, on the Sabbath, reflects the work of Wayne Muller in that there is a need to achieve a rhythm of rest and activity and the Sabbath is the day to rest. Suggestions include solitude with a lighted candle, or resting on a couch, or seeing close family or friends, but does not include attending corporate worship at the local church. This chapter seems to sum up the solution for CFS while trying to keep individuals God-focussed in their lives. Traditional Christians, who see the need for corporate worship as part of the Universal Church, may be troubled by this chapter; indeed, what this book does more generally, is to take elements of the Christian faith and use them selectively, while ignoring certain teachings (such as Jesus as the Son of God and the need to worship as part of the corporate Church). The book concludes with a chapter on cultivating the rhythms developed, while three appendices add practical detail.

This book will be useful for those who want to further their faith through a disciplined way of life and, as such, it is a helpful addition to the growing publications associated with spirituality. However, from a Christian viewpoint there are theological dangers inherent in the teaching in this

book which are totally ignored; these include the belief in Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, Risen Saviour, etc. which many Christians see as fundamental to the Christian faith. Another problem may be the lack of any regulation in worship which, as St Paul quickly found to his cost, can lead to the development of doctrines contrary to traditional (and Biblical) teaching. That said, used wisely, this book can help greatly in the spiritual development of people as they learn to come closer to God through the Holy Spirit.

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