

or the Brunner-Barth relationship are of interest, Gilland's work is unquestionably worthwhile, and I have little doubt that a re-read of Brunner himself will be requisite after engaging with it.

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Andrew Davison, *The Love of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians* (London: SCM Press, 2013), pp. xvii + 310. £25.00

The purpose of Andrew Davison's *The Love of Wisdom* is made plain in the subtitle: it is *An Introduction to Philosophy for Theologians*. More precisely, it is an introduction to *Western* philosophy for *Christian* theologians, and it succeeds admirably on those terms, arguing for the inescapably philosophical nature of Christian thought, and questioning easy distinctions between the deliverances of faith and reason.

The case for taking philosophy seriously is made in the Introduction: 'The Christian theologian will want his or her [philosophical] framework to reflect a Christian vision of the world' (p. ix). For professional philosophers, the theological tail is wagging the philosophical dog with this approach – one scorned by Bertrand Russell in connection with the thought of Thomas Aquinas, who, not incidentally, is the hero of this book – but it is entirely consistent with the book's stated aims. As understood by Davison, there is a sense in which 'every last person is a philosopher, and every last person has a philosophy' (p. ix). The philosophical enterprise is defined broadly because it is rooted in the common life of language users: 'We cannot take ourselves outside of philosophical tradition, if for no other reason than that we cannot get outside of language' (p. x). Despite his 'open borders' policy regarding entry to philosophical discourse, Davison follows the canon quite closely, although the usual suspects are interspersed with welcome chapters on the Bible, literary theory and postmodernism. Taking a historical and chronological approach,

Davison begins with a chapter “Before Plato” and ends on “Theology and Philosophy in the Present Day”; there are seventeen chapters in total, with very useful bibliographical guides at the end of each.

The chapter on the Bible marks this book out as one for Christian theologians: ‘the Bible is a text, or a collection of texts, and little is more philosophically charged than a text’ (p. 62). This is true, at least from the perspective of recent continental philosophy, but why the Bible is to be preferred over other religious texts – and the plurality of religions in general raises significant philosophical questions which have been wrestled with since antiquity – receives limited attention in this study. For some, this is one of the very ‘presumptions’ which stands in need of critical scrutiny by the philosophical theologian (p. ix). Nevertheless, the chapter provides a useful corrective to a notion (popular since the Reformation) that Christian theology, rooted in the Bible, was corrupted in the early centuries by believers who were in thrall to the philosophical culture of pagan antiquity. The chapter reminds readers that biblical texts were composed within cultures which already stood in critical and constructive relationship with the intellectual traditions of the surrounding pagan world.

Davison declares at the outset that ‘The thought of Thomas Aquinas will unashamedly provide the fulcrum of this book’ (p. xi). Davison is as good as his word, and when it comes to his chapter on the Angelic Doctor, he does not disappoint. With particular reference to the *Summa Theologiae*, Davison introduces the reader to the shape of Aquinas’ philosophical theology, while urging caution against approaching it as a complete and standalone system (*pace* Neo-Scholasticism). The Neo-Platonic as well as the more storied Aristotelian backdrop for Aquinas’s thought is clear, which coheres with themes explored earlier: Plato and Aristotle are treated to chapters of their own, with the question of ‘universals’ rightly to the fore.

Given the intermittent hostility towards philosophy by Christian thinkers, from Tertullian to Karl Barth, one might expect a sustained argument with such figures. Those voices are heard, but Davison leads more by example, telling a compelling story of the history of Christian thought (and its critics) in such a way that any attempt to unpick it in the name of ‘theology proper’ would feel like one were doing violence to the tradition. This is not to say that the book is without

arguments or controversies. Although Anselm is praised as a beacon of ‘monastic theology’, not least for his commitment to the ‘necessity of faith, or trust, as a precondition of knowledge’ (p. 106), Davison also recognises a rationalistic dimension to Anselm with which he is decidedly less enamoured. Anselm advances some of his positions while bracketing, for the sake of argument, certain orthodox Christian beliefs: arguing ‘as if’ we had no knowledge of Christ. In his remarks on the history of this thought experiment Davison moves rather quickly from Anselm’s ‘what if’ clause to the ‘three largest slaughters of the twentieth century, by the Chinese communists, the Soviet communists and the Nazis’ (p. 111). Rationalism is *not* presented by Davison as the *cause* of these atrocities; rather, they are cited as counter examples to the alleged superiority of a secular ‘system of international ethics and law [...] independent of any reference to God’, with its origins in the similar ‘what if’ theoretical moves of thinkers such as Hugo Grotius (p. 111). The well-read student of political and theological history should find ample evidence in their studies to furnish a robust skepticism concerning godless utopias. They should also be sufficiently cognisant with the history of politicized religious fanaticism not to be easily swayed into thinking that mention of that unholy trinity of twentieth-century barbarism was a knockdown argument against taking theology out of the frontline of domestic and international governance: the current geopolitical context is a warning against any easy revisionary histories along those lines; and for all the ills of Western societies, those living in such societies today arguably do so with greater freedom from violent peril than any time in history. In a religiously plural world, there is something to be said for attempting theological neutrality in some areas of public discourse. Might that not be a modern and non-apologetic version of the Thomist aim of using philosophical reason ‘in discussion with those who differ from us over how to think and understand the world’ (p. xii)?

In a book that covers so much historical and intellectual ground, Davison’s writing is remarkably even across the centuries. Methodologically, he is keenly aware of the subjective dimension of history, ‘never more so than when it comes to what we call a period or when we take it to begin or end’ (p. 161). In his chapter on the Enlightenment, Davison’s own subjectivity is in evidence. The

Enlightenment is reasonably characterised as marking a turn from ontology to epistemology as ‘first philosophy’ (p. 174), a theme which runs through his potted summaries of key thinkers. But we are also told that the Lisbon Earthquake (1755), or at least Voltaire’s response to it, ‘can be said to mark the beginning of modern atheism’ (p. 181) without a shred of evidence offered for this statement on intellectual beginnings. The theological typologies of ‘Orthodox Christianity’, ‘Pantheism’ and ‘Deism’ are really abstractions which seem designed to elevate Christianity rather than represent the complex ideas of individual writers who are very rarely identified with these labels (p. 187), forged as they often were by outsiders during polemic. One of the key figures in forging the image of the Enlightenment itself was Immanuel Kant, through his self-styled ‘critical’ philosophy and the intellectual mission statement contained in *Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784), and yet Kant is treated in the subsequent chapter, along with the Romantics and G. W. F. Hegel. The fact that Kant is set apart may be testimony to his distinctive place and pervasive influence (not all for the good according to Davison). The rise of analytic and continental styles of philosophy can be conceived as different responses to the Kantian legacy, and when Davison moves onto this terrain, he treats both traditions even-handedly and with good humour.

Writing from a theological perspective, Davison illuminates different aspects of thinkers and ideas, which would not be immediately recognisable to philosophers. For instance, William Ockham is indeed ‘widely known today [...] for his famous “razor”’, but this is not usually held in connection with his argument that ‘Nothing ought to be posited without a reason given, unless it is self-evident, or known by experience or proved by the authority of Sacred Scripture’ (p. 153). Ockham’s positive criteria for affirming the existence of things should be better known than it is, but in philosophy Ockham’s ‘razor’ (not his term) refers to the principle of ‘economy’ or ‘parsimony’ in explanation. It takes its name from Ockham because it chimes with some of his sentiments in *Summa totius logicae*, within the context of his discussion of intentionality and universals: ‘*Frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora*’ (It is folly to do with more what can be done with fewer). Elsewhere on the medieval period, students would have been better served with a more nuanced historical analysis of

disciplinary categories. For instance, Davison describes the reception of Aristotle's works as provoking a 'crisis' of 'science and theology' (p. 118), and parallels this with nineteenth- and twentieth-century challenges. But what we call 'theology' tended to be treated *as a science* in medieval Europe, certainly by Aquinas; by the nineteenth century, however, theology was losing that status, while the emerging *natural sciences* were extricating themselves from metaphysics, thereby setting the discipline apart from its medieval and early modern predecessor *natural philosophy*. Elsewhere, tucked away in the footnotes, Davison errs in a distinction which is crucial to modern epistemology, 'between synthetic knowledge, where the truth of what is said resides in the terms themselves, and analytic knowledge, where the truth of what is said rests on observation' (p. 203, n. 3). The reverse of that formulation is true. These points aside, Dr Davison is an erudite guide to the literature and the subject. I recommend his book for theology students and the general reader.

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J. Stephen Yuille, *Looking Unto Jesus: The Christ-Centered Piety of Seventeenth-Century Baptists* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014), pp. xxiv + 96. £10.00

After a period of relative quiescence, the past decade has witnessed surging scholarly interest in seventeenth-century Baptists in Britain and Ireland. Inaugurated by Stephen Wright's meticulous examination of *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (2006), this resurgence of interest has produced studies of many prominent Baptist leaders including Hanserd Knollys, Thomas Grantham, Benjamin Keach and William Kiffen. To this growing catalogue one may now add J. Stephen Yuille's *Looking Unto Jesus* (2014), a devotionally-oriented examination of two lesser-known early English Baptists. Yuille is the pastor of Grace Community Church in Glen Rose, Texas, and his ministerial background reveals itself here through regular