



Oliver D. Crisp, James M. Arcadi and Jordan Wessling, eds., *Love, Divine and Human: Contemporary Essays in Systematic and Philosophical Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), pp. viii + 260, ISBN 978-0567687739. £95.00

Love, Divine and Human is the product of a John Templeton Foundation grant, ‘Analytic Theology for Theological Formation’, hosted by Fuller Theological Seminary, from 2015 to 2018. The philosophy of love sees a small but consistent stream of publications each year; theology of love less so. *Love, Divine and Human* looks to meet both needs. It stands out from recent offerings in two regards. Most obviously from the title, it centres around the nature of divine love – where the divinity under consideration is the Christian God. Second, with only a few exceptions (Vanhoozer, Dufault-Hunter), contributors approach their subject from the tradition of analytic theology, broadly considered. Let me say a little more about this second feature.

Stylistically, each chapter in *Love* clearly identifies its main idea(s) up front, and quickly gets to work making its case. Prose are crisp – even terse at times – and the reader is hard pressed to find repetitive or otherwise superfluous material. Chapters are well organized and flow logically from thesis to necessary background, then to support, objections, and conclusion. Regarding content, many chapters are theological reflections on pressing questions in the philosophy of religion, such as the problems of evil and of divine hiddenness; I will say more about this below.

The volume’s fourteen chapters cover a lot of thematic ground. You can view Jordan Wessling’s summary of the chapters on the book’s Amazon webpage, so I will focus on more general moves the volume makes. The first ten chapters focus on divine love, with the remainder discussing human love. Several chapters dip into traditional waters, arguing for Scholastic retrieval (such as Vanhoozer and Vidu’s chapters) or explicitly against medieval conclusions (such as Mullins’). Aside from the central issue of love, the strongest theme among the essays is a couplet of problems, namely, the problems of evil (POE) and of divine hiddenness (PODH). Seven of the chapters include discussion of POE, PODH, or both. Several chapters take one or both issues as their primary source of departure.

Depending on the reader’s aims and interests, the heavy attention to POE and PODH might make or break interest in the volume. The problems of evil and divine hiddenness are actively debated in contemporary Anglo-



American philosophy. That they are pressing concerns for philosophers shows through especially in chapters by Oord, Rea, Yadav, and Adams. Oord in particular is motivated to craft his theology of love specifically to address the problem of evil. Like Oord, some thinkers believe this is the only way to construct an adequate theology, much less one attractive to people today. Some readers will share Oord's sensitivity to contemporary sensibilities and support the emphasis on POE and PODH. For other readers, approaching the theology of love – or a theology of almost anything, for that matter – looks like a case of the tail wagging the dog.

In any event, these seven chapters highlight the centrality of POE and PODH to analytic philosophers and their thinking about divine love. Put bluntly: whether you are involved in the conversations or not, this is something a lot of people are talking about. Readers wanting an introduction to these themes and how they overlap with love will find the discussions useful. Almost every essay gives attention to exegetical and systematic considerations, though often this attention is heavily truncated.

This brings me to an issue I found with *Love, Divine and Human* which seems must accompany any edited volume with similar aims. In almost all instances I finished a chapter wishing the author had said more. A difficulty for authors seeking to integrate biblical, systematic, moral, and metaphysical issues (among others) is that there is simply so much ground to cover. The risk is attempting too much and not doing the whole thing well.

Fortunately, most chapters limit the scope of their inquiry and thus mitigate the risk. Even when left wanting more, I cannot say I was left unsatisfied. This for two reasons. First, many contributors are well published, and so the interested reader may continue her study further. Second, the authors tackle some of the biggest theological and philosophical questions, and they work to construct answers in an integrated way. Such a project is not only laudable, but rare: particularly so when thinking about love. Thus, many essays should be thought of as initial steps along a research trajectory, or snapshots of a larger research trajectory. More than anything, the questions being addressed matter. I get the sense that contributors choose their target issue not because it is interesting (though it is that, too), but rather because the issue *matters* to people, inside of the church and out.

In sum, the *Love, Divine and Human* is not only cutting-edge theology, it also meets a need in contemporary thinking about love. Undergraduate readers in a philosophical theology class could surely work through most



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essays. However, the volume will really shine in graduate seminars, where one or two essays per meeting promises to motivate plenty of discussion. Further, because of the inter-disciplinary nature of the chapters, there are plenty of places from which the instructor can launch into more focused lessons or lectures.

Dennis P. Bray,

PhD candidate, Logos Institute for Analytic and Exegetical Theology
St Mary's College, University of St Andrews
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Nico Vorster, *The Brightest Mirror of God's Works: John Calvin's Theological Anthropology* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2019), pp. vii + 190, ISBN 978-1532660245. £20.00

This slender volume by Nico Vorster, Professor of Systematic Theology at the North-West University, South Africa, offers the most comprehensive and cumulative exposition of John Calvin's theological anthropology to date. This is a noteworthy achievement given that Calvin scholarship, while recognizing the lasting significance of Torrance's classic study *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (1949), has recognized the need for an up-to-date treatment of Calvin's anthropology. Vorster's monograph offers just this, combining the enduring facets of Calvin's anthropology, long recognized in the field, with the newer contributions of recent scholarship that address Calvin's attitude toward women and his theology of human society. The result is an impressively succinct but trustworthy introduction to Calvin's theological anthropology which will be of benefit to both experienced scholars and beginning students of Calvin and Reformed theology.

Vorster's book is broken into six chapters which consistently and clearly argue defensible and convincing theses relating to Calvin himself, and then relate these findings to constructive theological issues. Chapter One addresses Calvin's prelapsarian understanding of the human being, that is, humans before Adam's fall. Vorster explores Calvin's dynamic anthropology which understands humans primarily theocentrically, that is, deriving their being in relation to God, a relation that 'decenters the human

