

of Holy Communion as modelled on Jesus eating with the impure and the outcasts. Throughout *Speaking Christian*, there is much to challenge easy theological assumptions and narrow definitions.

Taken individually, many of these chapters could profitably be used in churches as catalysts for serious discussion about what we do and why we do it. Taken as a whole, *Speaking Christian* will challenge all who preach and teach to consider more deeply the language we use as Christians, and what precisely we mean by it.

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***Imaginative Apologetics: Theology, Philosophy, and the Catholic Tradition***, edited by Andrew Davison, London: SCM Press, 2011, pp. xxviii, 169, ISBN 978-0334043522. £19.99

*My starting point was that God is being increasingly pushed out of a world come of age, from the realm of our knowledge and life and, since Kant, has only occupied the ground beyond the world of experience. On the one hand, theology has resisted this development with apologetics and taken up arms – in vain – against Darwinism and so on; on the other hand, it has resigned itself to the way things have gone and allowed God to function only as deus ex machina in the so-called ultimate questions, that is, God becomes the answer to life’s questions, a solution to life’s needs and conflicts.*

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*  
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, volume 8, 2010), p. 450.

So writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer in 1944. As *Imaginative Apologetics* affirms, the task of apologetics has been around for a long time, and never did run smoothly. In the earliest Christian incarnations, apologetics were part of a battle for recognition in a world where

hostility was expressed very concretely. However, in recent years the word ‘apologetics’ has become almost synonymous with ripostes to a particularly aggressive kind of atheism – although this can be a brand of preaching to the converted. Thus the audience for apologetics tends to be a subset of a subset: those Christians who feel obliged to react to the arguments of a vocal atheist minority within society.

By contrast, the aim of *Imaginative Apologetics* is not to rehash previous arguments about the nature of reason, religion and scientific investigation, but to engage the whole spectrum of human thought in the consideration of Christianity as fulfilling both the rational and the aesthetic urges of humanity. This collection of essays strives to set forth a vision of apologetics that speaks to the entire mind of humanity – not just to the rational, logical side, but also to the imagination, and to the human drive towards community and progress.

The book aims to do this by drawing on the entirety of Western philosophical thought and tradition, both intellectual and creative. Perhaps drawing on such a long tradition is the reason that the essays in the book, whilst well presented and grouped, sometimes do not speak to the book’s stated purpose. For example, the first two essays deal once again with the old definitions of faith and reason, and despite trying thereafter to move the debate away from science and religion, the final essay in the book by Alister McGrath is on that very subject.

Furthermore, as the subtitle indicates, the contributions are skewed towards Catholicism and High Anglicanism, with a strong showing from proponents of Radical Orthodoxy: the book has a foreword written by John Milbank, and the ten essays include contributions from Graham Ward, Alison Milbank, and David Cunningham. The emphasis on mystery and sacrament within the Catholic tradition lends itself to the focus on imagination, and the book provides a welcome balance to the apologetic writing which has come from the more evangelical side of the Christian tradition. The (debatable) reason given by Andrew Davison for this Catholic emphasis is that this particular tradition has the closest links with the theologies and philosophies that have informed and shaped the apologetic tradition.

This book contains some very interesting and apt essays, such as the section on “Being Imaginative about Christian Apologetics”, in which the two contributions by Stephen Bullivant and Craig Hovey

respectively are notable for their avoidance of the old arguments and for the new ground they strike. However, other parts are less impressive. The last section on “Situating Christian Apologetics” is rather impenetrable, and ends with the aforementioned reiteration of apologetics as engaging with science – although admittedly, it would be odd to have a book on apologetics that does not touch on the familiar ground of faith, reason and science. This is perhaps a strength of the book: that it acknowledges the limitations of the apologetic genre, whilst working within it to draw out new and interesting variations on the themes.

Nevertheless, there is a clear thread throughout *Imaginative Apologetics*, which means that all the various themes are linked up and presented as a coherent whole. Furthermore, this is a more accessible book than its academic credentials might suggest, and a more ecumenical one than the subtitle seems to indicate. The emphasis on the Catholic tradition is largely due to the links that that tradition has with philosophical and theological thought, which in many cases is being ignored or misappropriated within the sphere of the recent debates. All in all, this is an interesting and constructive book, in which in some of the contributions will prove more useful to the debate than others.

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***Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650: From Late Medieval Classic to Early Modern Bestseller*** (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History), Maximilian von Habsburg, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 364, ISBN 978-0754667650. £70

This scholarly work hales from the ‘other side’ of South Street to St Mary’s College in St Andrews, coming from Andrew Pettegree’s Reformation Studies Institute. It is a rewarding tribute to the growing belief that spirituality is not peripheral to the study of religion, but is