These reservations do not substantially diminish the book's achievement. *Origen of Alexandria and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* is a serious and persuasive study. It combines philological caution, doctrinal sensitivity, and historical discipline. For specialists in Origen, it will become a standard point of reference in work on pneumatology and trinitarian theology. For students of early Christianity more broadly, it offers a model of how to read a major patristic author across the whole surviving corpus, within the author's own intellectual and doctrinal context, and without surrendering either historical precision or theological acuity.

In sum, Miller has not merely filled a lacuna in scholarship; he has provided a persuasive framework for understanding the Holy Spirit in Origen as a coherent and scripturally grounded theological topic. The book deserves a wide readership among scholars of patristics, historical theology, and early Christian biblical interpretation. It is a book of real value, and it will likely shape future discussion of Origen's pneumatology for some time.

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REVIEW 2

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Alister McGrath, *Why We Believe: Finding Meaning in Uncertain Times* (London: OneWorld Publications, 2025), 272 pp., £18.99, hardback (ISBN 9780861549214).

This book sets out to argue "for the recalibration of the notion of 'belief', and a more nuanced understanding of the positive role this plays in the lives of individuals and communities" (p.6). In doing so he hopes to defend the importance of the notion of belief and its prevailing relevance in our modern world. He is largely successful as he succinctly explores different aspects of beliefs ranging from scientific to religious. Yet, a more nuanced, grounded and expanded comparison of the various beliefs would have benefitted the book.

The book's central focus is the innate human aim to find both certainty and meaning in life. Alister McGrath explains how the natural human capacity to search for answers to the big questions of life, those related to the meanings and aims of a good life, exists simultaneously with the human want for certainty and clarity (p. 11). However, as McGrath stresses throughout the book, it is impossible to find definitive responses to the meaningful questions in life (p.15). In the conclusion, McGrath draws on John Keats to note that the fact we cannot find certain

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proof in answer to existential questions is incredibly relevant, as it is precisely this openness that leaves space in human life for belief (p. 105). McGrath stresses that it is important for this uncertainty to remain as a system of belief should not be taken as hard and fast fact. Rather, it should be treated as a method of building purpose and significance into one's everyday life. Therefore, certainty, coming from evidential proof, is not possible in response to these questions of meaning. Instead, these questions can only be addressed through the application of systems of belief which formulate one's "big picture" worldview (p. 18). A "big picture" worldview can be defined as an individual's entire way of perceiving and interacting with the world that they are a part of. It is composed of the full range of beliefs one holds, all in dialogue, relation and interplay with each other. Namely, these beliefs can be used to address, although not to solve, the human quest for meaning and certainty.

Throughout the book, McGrath aptly compares a range of different beliefs which are used by individuals in their "big picture" worldviews. He draws heavily on Mary Midgley's strategy of "multiple maps" arguing that for a worldview to be successful it must be made up of multiple narratives or systems of belief (p. 28). This is because there is so much complexity present in human life that one sole system would not be sufficient to tackle all of life's questions. McGrath illustrates this complexity by referring to the question of the purpose of life and the question of the existence of gravity each of which require their own basis to be approached from. One must have multiple maps, each map being a different method or system of belief, to tackle the different areas of complexity. These maps come together to form each person's big picture worldview (p. 29). McGrath explores how different "big picture" worldviews lead to different interpretations and explanations of the world by aptly comparing a range of scientific, philosophical and religious beliefs.

The belief in focus throughout the book is Christianity and McGrath is careful to highlight that this is where his expertise lies, and so is attentive not to draw overly generalized points on religions or cultures less familiar to him (p. 34). Thus, McGrath moves through the different elements of the theoretical concept of belief, paying particular attention in the later chapters to the issues that can arise from belief. He explores the conflict and tensions that can exist within belief systems, specifically from the intersection of tradition and reform. He supports this with a brief examination of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in 20th century China (p. 79). He also explores dogmatism and the issues of the polarization of belief, topics which are incredibly relevant in the modern world (p. 82). McGrath's treatment of the conflict that can arise from intersections or clashing of different beliefs is judicious: it leaves a reader wanting more. For example, the discussion on how to deal with contrasting beliefs would have

been strongly supported by an analysis of the place of religious language, language from the perspective of belief, in the public sphere. Disappointingly, this is a theme that is only very briefly touched on in the next chapter. Overall, this contributes to the overall argument that McGrath fails to go into the relevant level of detail to fully articulate and support his positions.

While McGrath often references or touches on a wide range of beliefs and belief frameworks, he often moves past them too quickly, leaving his arguments feeling unfinished. This can be evidenced in his discussion of Midgley's theory of maps, where he does not define these maps practically or tangibly as a reader would hope, leaving the theory dangerously abstract. One might argue that this is a running theme throughout the book: as McGrath attempts not to exclude any forms of belief, or on the other hand to prioritize any, he instead reduces all belief into almost meaningless conceptuality. McGrath's care not to expand too deeply on topics he feels he lacks knowledge of is justified. However, even with this in mind the content related to non-Christian modes of thought is convincing and when applied the reader is greatly aided in accessing a fully contextualized picture of the concept of belief; although this often leaves one wanting more discussion. For example, in chapter three the subject of colonial labelling of native cultural practices as religious belief, such as in the case of Hinduism, is an important aspect that would have been deeply compelling, had he discussed it further (p. 32).

To conclude, McGrath convincingly highlights the importance and centrality of belief in human life. He articulates how belief is both necessary and intrinsic, stating "my position is this: believing is not only intellectually defensible but existentially necessary" (p. 102). However, the book feels that it lacks the adequate detail and comparison to be convincingly informative, and it would have been worthwhile to discuss comparative cultural conceptions of belief across the world in greater detail. The impression that McGrath is labouring the same points while still providing them with little development leaves the reader feeling frustrated once they reach the conclusion.

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