

**D**arren SARISKY (ed.), *Theologies of Retrieval: An Exploration and Appraisal*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017, 320 pp.

During the twentieth and twenty – first century, theologies of retrieval have had considerable impact within theological discussions. One of the most significant trends in academic theology today, which emerges within Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox points of view, is the growing interest in theologies of retrieval. This mode of thinking puts a special stress upon subjecting classic theological texts to a close reading, with a view toward using the resources that they provide to understand and address contemporary theological issues. In its broad significance, theology of retrieval can be described as one of the two main ways in which a Christian theologian might respond to the conditions of the present: to commit to correlate elements of the Christian tradition with aspects of modern culture and to secure the plausibility of Christian theology by means of establishing similarities to presently influential ideas. Theologies of retrieval are less taken up with the conditions of the possibility of Christian theology in the present than they are absorbed by the material content of theology. Theologies of retrieval are works in attempts to dig into a past era in order to open up new vistas for today.

The present volume, *Theologies of Retrieval: An Exploration and Appraisal*, edited by Darren Sarisky<sup>1</sup>, is divided into seven parts. *Part*

---

<sup>1</sup> Darren Sarisky is Tutor in Doctrine and Ministry at Wycliffe Hall and member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford, UK. After completing a PhD at the University of Aberdeen in 2009, Dr Sarisky became a Teaching Associate in Doctrine within the Divinity Faculty at the University of Cambridge. Then in 2010, Dr Sarisky received a Junior Research Fellowship at Homerton College, Cambridge. During this three-year fellowship, he undertook a wide variety of teaching duties, among both undergraduate and postgraduate students, published a revised version of his doctoral thesis, and began his second major research project. Prior to coming to Wycliffe Hall, Dr Sarisky served as a Fixed-term lecturer in Systematic Theology at King's College London. His most important works are *Scriptural Interpretation: A Theological Exploration, Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) and *Theology, History, and Biblical Interpretation: Modern Readings* (T. & T. Clark, 2015).

Darren SARISKY (ed.), *Theologies of Retrieval: An Exploration and Appraisal*

*Part 1*, “Genealogies of Modernity: Reflections on the Role of Intellectual – Historical Judgments” (chapters 1 – 2), is a discourse that at least hangs in the background for retrieval works. In the first study of part 1, John Milbank explores the problems with and promise of the present moment for theology by reflecting on the work of Charles Péguy (1873 – 1914). The other essay in this section, from Stanley Hauerwas, delineates some complexities in any simple narrative that depicts “theological liberalism” as having no place for a notion of tradition. He also challenges the idea that all postliberal theologies represent a clean break from a more obviously “liberal” outlook that they seek to displace.

*Part 2*, “Different Inflections to Retrieval: Confessional Approaches” (chapters 3 – 5), examines the different ways in which theologians’ confessional allegiances can influence how they approach the task of retrieval. There is one study from an Orthodox perspective (Andrew Louth), a second from Protestant (Michel Allen) and third on Roman Catholicism (Jennifer N. Martin). These essays provide a combination of analytical historical work, interpreting major developments that have already taken place and constructive proposals for how the work of retrieval ought to proceed.

*Part 3*, “Twentieth – Century Figures” (chapters 6 – 8), concentrates on a sampling of major figures from the recent history of Christian theology. The essays focus on the contribution made by a single theologian from each tradition (Georges Florovsky by Paul Gavrilyuk, Karl Barth by Kenneth Oakes and Henri de Lubac by David Grumett), concentrating on how their theological outlooks were shaped by the most important sources they appropriated.

*Part 4*, “Theological Sources” (chapters 9 – 11), focuses on the primary sources of retrieval: Scripture and Tradition. For Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Scripture is of the utmost importance as a text that forms theological discourse and exercises a normative function within it.

*Part 5*, “Major Doctrines” (chapters 12 – 14), takes up a few doctrinal ones that are especially significant for retrieval projects because of the work that these notions do within these outlooks. These doctrines (the Trinity, creation and ecclesiology as it connects with anthropology), are highly developed in the sorts of theology that are in focus in this volume. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity is often proffered as the distinctively Christian way

Darren SARISKY (ed.), *Theologies of Retrieval: An Exploration and Appraisal*

to identify God. After surveying recent efforts to retrieve a doctrine of the Trinity, the studies of this topic proposes that there are several ways in which articulating a doctrine of the Trinity ought to involve a more throughgoing retrieval than one often finds in the supposed renaissance within contemporary Trinitarianism.

*Part 6*, “A Broadening Conversation” (chapters 15 – 17), speaks about race, gender and the world religions. There are now theologies with a focus on all these crucially important contemporary issues that can fairly be said to evince an orientation to retrieval, though in the cases of race and gender, these theologies have a special sensitivity to the possibility that the Christian theological tradition has systematically excluded and marginalized the voices of nonwhites and women. The critical issues surrounding the definition of retrieval in these cases are sufficiently complex to defy easy summary. However, these studies represent test cases in the meaning of retrieval as well as important theological treatments in their own right of race and gender.

*Part 7*, “Critical Appraisals” (chapters 18 – 19), the final section of this volume, deals with two different types of objections. The essays in the previous six parts explore in detail and from many different angles what it means to do theologies of retrieval. The first study in part 7 deals with an especially significant objection to this whole way of operating. The other essay in the concluding part is not an objection against theologies of retrieval *per se*, but a critique of one concrete case of retrieval, a particular sort of charismatic healing ministry operating in the West that claims to retrieve biblical resources.

All in all, the overall goal of this volume is to gather contributions that further develop and refine theologies of retrieval. The essays answer important questions that already existing work raises, expand on suggestions that have not already been developed fully, summarize ideas in order to highlight themes that are relevant to the topic of this volume and air critiques that should spur further debate.

In conclusion, theologies of retrieval is by no means the name of a monolithic system, neither should it be seen as well – defined school of thinking, it is a set of overlapping concerns and substantive commitments shared by some of today’s most important Christian theologies.

**Rev. Traian NOJEA**