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Book review: Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation by Wallace, Mark I.

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whatever confers abundance?). The third principle of "seeing-as" is planted on both sides of the water and yet (pace H.) it still remains difficult to distinguish from Wittgensteinian noncognitivism.

Readers unsympathetic with naturalism may be surprised by the force of H.'s argumentation and the degree to which his argument anticipates and circumvents possible objections. Moreover, his "valuational" approach to theology has clear historical precedents in such authors as Augustine, Luther, Ritschl, and H. Richard Niebuhr. Those disagreeing with H.'s premises will benefit from his well-crafted presentations of grace (115–57), Christology (209–53), and eschatology (254–87). Those agreeing with H. on the failure of traditional theism will be provoked to consider just how far theology can and should go in dispensing with a personal God altogether. Given H.'s own appeals for candor and clarity, it seems fitting though to underscore a question that he poses but never quite answers: "How . . . can such central Christian notions as 'forgiveness' and 'justification' be rendered without a personal God?" If "only a personal God, it would seem, can carry the religious centrality of love in Christianity" (14), then how can Christian thinkers embrace H.'s naturalistic program for theology without throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater?

In the history of Christian theology, it has often been the radicals who forced liberals and conservatives alike to redefine their agendas. So with D. F. Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach, Arthur Drews, and Thomas Altizer. If H.'s book precipitates a reassessment of basic theological issues, then it will become for all an "event of grace" indeed.

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MICHAEL J. McCLYMOND

FRAGMENTS OF THE SPIRIT: NATURE, VIOLENCE, AND THE RENEWAL OF CREATION. By Mark I. Wallace. New York: Continuum, 1996. Pp. xii + 237. \$29.95.

Wallace here presents "a postmetaphysical model of the Spirit" (171). While his first concern is the ecological crisis, he focuses not on the details of an immanent ecological collapse but on the construction of a pneumatology that can allow for the kind of other-centered concern that W. considers the only remedy to ecological disaster and the concomitant violence wrought by anthropocentric understandings of creation.

W.'s postmodern position comes into relief in his rejection of both the "assurance of knowledge" offered by metaphysics (Ogden) and the "thoroughgoing historicism" of neopragmatism (Rorty). He proposes the "wager of belief," recognizing that this wager is based on fragmented intimations of hope rather than on philosophical or narrative foundations. Wittgenstein's performative notion of truth serves here in its constructive emphasis on provisional positions which demonstrate an "agapic utility." Similarly, W.'s Reformed commitment to Scripture leads him to a "postmodern *ad fontes* theology," in which theology is

understood more along the lines of a rhetorical art than a philosophical discipline. This position, he argues, best engages the “heterogeneity and instability” of Scripture, as it privileges the lens of “wisdom” rather than the lens of “narrative.”

The approach of rhetoric/wisdom is particularly helpful for W. as he addresses the intersection of sacrifice and violence as it is legitimized in a religion characterized by the dialectic of mimesis-violence described by Girard. A text that moves from the story of Abraham and Isaac to the account of the death visited on those who deceive the Spirit in Acts cannot be adequately confronted, according to W., by the homogenizing theology of foundationalist theodicies based on metaphysics (Swinburne) or narrative (Thiemann).

W. thus constructs a pneumatology that highlights the classical tradition’s understanding of the Spirit as the bond of love uniting the first two persons of the Trinity. This enabling of perichoretic unity is exploited by W. in a presentation of the Spirit as the bond of life between human and nonhuman, between all things and their “other” (Lévinas). The Spirit functions as both “personal agent” and “inanimate force,” making transparent the distinction between “thou” and “it” and thus allowing for a genuine community of life among all forms of creation. Indeed, W.’s insistence that the Spirit is “a natural being” in a work that also discusses the Spirit’s role in the immanent Trinity almost seems to suggest the postulation of a created hypostasis, albeit this time a nonanthropological one. His argument that theology should be pneumatocentric rather than christocentric is seen in his emphasis on biblical texts that portray Jesus (“Christ” is not used) as leaving the stage to make way for the Spirit: the anthropological focus yields to (nay, is superseded by) the biophilic.

W.’s project leaves several intriguing loose ends for Christian theology, though whether he intends to make an explicitly “Christian” case is an open question. He rejects McFague’s panentheism as less than fully earth-centered in its maintenance of a God who transcends creation, describing his approach, against McFague’s “Christian paganism,” as a “revisionary paganism.” This seems inconsistent with his attention to Scripture, in which God is seen as intimately involved with, yet author of, all life. (It goes without saying that he finds a notion such as providence to be “untenable.”) Also unclear is how a project that insists on the heterogeneity of the portrayal of the Spirit (particularly as regards violence) in Scripture can finally argue for the Spirit to be understood in a “nonsacrificial” manner. Finally, W.’s turn to modern theodicy in the face of violence and evil seems to neglect that this is a fairly recent category that is not universally embraced by Christian theologians, who turn to *theology* when philosophical and narrative strategies fail.

These questions, however, merely point to the complex texture of W.’s constructive reflections on the Spirit, reflections well grounded in his compact presentation of postmodernity. This is an excellent piece of

work, lucid to the point of luminosity, delivering clarity without sacrificing the *fascinans*. By his careful engagement with the contemporary mind (indeed, by his attentive analysis of his own doubts), W. has produced a book that is both intellectually stimulating and religiously compelling.

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NANCY A. DALLAVALLE

THE SPIRITUAL QUEST: TRANSCENDENCE IN MYTH, RELIGION AND SCIENCE. By Robert M. Torrance. Berkeley: University of California, 1995. Pp. xvii + 367.

The "spiritual quest" of the title is considered the culminating expression of a universal activity by which humanity is defined, in large part, as human. The quest is viewed as a formative activity which finds many and varied expressions. Torrance examines this activity from its essential foundations or preconditions, its social, biological, psychological, and linguistic bases. This grounding in the structure of human nature, of course, accounts for its presence in every part of the world, and hence prompts T. to examine religious and "quest" behavior in ritual and myth, spirit possession, shamanism, and visions. He surveys cultural areas as diverse as Australia, Eurasia, Africa, and native America. Parts 1 and 6 examine the preconditions of the quest and close with considerations toward a theory or synoptic vision of its nature and structure. In between, the major portion of the book looks at the various expressions that the quest has taken in different times and places, mainly but not exclusively in tribal societies.

Religion is one source of the spiritual quest, but T. does not identify the two. The quest, from his perspective, is more fundamental. The individual's search is grounded in the biological, psychological, and linguistic conditions of human life and culture, without which society and religions would themselves be inconceivable. T. ranges far and wide in dialogue with thinkers who may have something to say about the development of the self (Kant, Darwin, Monod, Freud, Piaget) or of human speech (Saussure, Chomsky, Peirce), and in some ways the very breadth and selectivity of the survey leaves the reader with the sense that T. has painted a persuasive picture but not a very sharp one. He argues, for example, that the spiritual quest is "the creative process par excellence," that "we are at best homo sapiens not in the flesh but in the spirit, that is in unrealized potentiality." Hard to disagree with, but hard to know what to make of it.

Part 6 tells us what to make of it and this section should engage the theologian more fully than Part 1; in the former, in "A Ternary Process" and "The Reality of Transcendence," T. puts together a theory of quest. Two of the principal characteristics of the quest are its variety and open-ended nature; and the tripartite structure of the rite of passage (Van Gennep's separation, transition, and incorporation) can help us understand the quest, especially since the results of, say, a vision



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