

of scripture, the fundamentally objective nature of Christian truth, the total depravity of sinful human beings, and the need for christological atonement to ward off divine wrath. In my view, the author's investment in construing Kierkegaard as an advocate for Evangelical doctrine can sometimes lead him to give short shrift to what makes Kierkegaard's theological voice unique. If Kierkegaard is best described as part of the mainstream of Protestant orthodoxy, then why is his writing – with all its polyphony, indirection and irony – so different in form from that of the likes of Luther and Calvin and Barth, to say nothing of Evangelical theologians today?

The book is at its most speculative (and polemical) when it applies Kierkegaard to contemporary controversies. Edwards' reading yields confident pronouncements against post-modern theology, the emergent church movement, the 'new homiletics' of Fred Craddock, and even online worship. Interrogating what Kierkegaard's view of contemporary religious phenomena would be can be valuable as an intellectual exercise, but Edwards' applications of him seem unlikely to persuade many who do not already share Edwards' own views.

In the last chapter, Edwards develops a 'tentative Kierkegaardian ecclesiology' with a clear-eyed acknowledgement of Kierkegaard's negative comments about the institutional church (p. 157). He concludes that 'far from being anti-ecclesial... Kierkegaard's reflections remain vital to ecclesiological discussions in the twenty-first century' (p. 177). Reading this, I found myself torn between admiring the intrepidity of Edwards' against-the-grain analysis (which includes a nuanced and original account of the Kierkegaardian theme of the individual) and wondering why we need to look to Kierkegaard for ecclesiology at all. Given that he explicitly renounces systematicity, describes his work as a corrective rather than a norm, and characterises himself as one voice in a vast and diverse theological choir, might it be more 'Kierkegaardian' to accept that the theme of Christian community is deficient in his authorship and look for more fulsome and sympathetic treatments of it elsewhere? Surely one can affirm Kierkegaard's value as a living resource without being obligated to treat him as an authority on every aspect of theology.

Even if Kierkegaard's insights on the subject of the church are limited, however, this book succeeds in showing that he is worth engaging as a conversation partner on this score. Like Kierkegaard himself, the book is a resource even for those who, like me, do not agree with the author's every conclusion.

doi:10.1017/S0036930623000261

Mouchir Basile Aoun, *The Arab Christ: Towards an Arab Christian Theology of Conviviality*

trans. Sarah Patey (London: Gingko, 2022), pp. xv + 384. \$70.00

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Mouchir Aoun, the Lebanese Greek Orthodox theologian and philosopher, produced the first draft of this volume in Arabic twenty years ago. It appeared in French version

in 2016 under the title *La Christ arabe*, and now we have this French version published in English translation. The primary motivator of Aoun's book is his conviction of the constitutive status religion occupies in the Arab self-consciousness and worldview. When, however, we probe the place of religion within the intellectual awareness of the Arabs we discover, according to Aoun, 'an epistemological impasse in which... Arab theological thinking is stuck...[it is] prisoner of the *aporia* that has a general hold on the contemporary Arab thinking' (p. 100). He proposes in his book that the remedy for this crisis is *theological* in nature, specifically a '*Lebanese politico-contextual theology*'.

Aoun is perceptive in his diagnosis of the core challenges that generate an *aporia* in Arab Christian theological discourses. When it comes to unpacking the details of the *aporia*-related causes, Aoun counts four such causes: first, the obsolescence of the vocabularies Arab Christians use to convey Christ's *kerygma* to their Arabic-Muslim context; second, the challenge of the variety of influences and multiplicity of references that influence Arab Christian theology; third, the challenge of synchronisation between the 'medieval, pre-conciliar' elements of Arab Christian theology and the 'modern and post-conciliar' ones (pp. 104–5); and fourth, the split 'between the content of the Gospel message and lived reality' (p. 105).

How can we, then, conjure up an Arabic theological discourse that is free from the dilemmatic, aporetic ramifications of these four challenges? Aoun proposes a politico-contextual theological discourse circling around the theme of conviviality. The hermeneutical core of this theology must generate a consensual understanding 'on major principles of common life, such as freedom, justice, peace [and] solidarity' (p. 19). This is what enables the Arab Christians, in Aoun's opinion, to live and to foster conviviality with the Muslims in the Middle East.

Aoun could easily end his book at the closing of the 131 pages that comprise the first part of the volume, and tenably dispense with the ensuing, 206 page-long second part, which is an extensive, handbook-like, survey of models of theologies of conviviality already developed by other Lebanese theologians: Youakim Moubarac, Michel Hayek, George Khodr and Gregoire Haddad. Aoun's survey of these four Lebanese theologies of conviviality reveals that his proposed politico-contextual Lebanese theology hinges conspicuously on George Khodr's theological hermeneutics of conviviality. Aoun adapts without further ado Khodr's advocacy of a theology of conviviality that is based on 'three forms of justification: the absolute liberty of God, the multifarious radiance of the Spirit, and the multiple places in which Christ revealed Himself' (pp. 259–60). Based on Khodr's proposal, Aoun concludes that the future of Arab theology of conviviality lies in finding its place in a religiously pluralist landscape, wherein only the language of love 'will be able to express the distinctive yet universal characteristics of the Christ event in the context of contemporary Arab societies' (p. 380).

Aoun's book is a valuable exposition of trends of theological reasoning in the Lebanese context and good introduction of these trends to the Anglophone readership. His main thesis, however, could have been easily presented in a shorter text and without the unnecessary repetition of other writers' ideas and views. Aoun also over-ambitiously claims that developing theology to/in the Lebanese context would be representative and expressive of a theological discourse speaking on behalf of the entire Arab world. Such an allegation is far from congenial with Aoun's making of contextuality a key hermeneutical element in his theological reasoning: the Arab world is far more versatile and diverse contextually than being reductively and essentially 'Lebanised'.

In this context, the title of the book misguides the reader. The main title, *The Arab Christ*, is not indicative of the main theme of the book's two parts. None of them offers an Arabic theological interpretation of Jesus Christ's event or life, identity and ministry, let alone reasoning theologically about Christology. On the other hand, the description of an 'Arab Christian theology of conviviality' in the book's subtitle in terms of 'towardness' gives the impression that the author is inviting the readers to ponder the possibility of developing a theological discourse that has not been moved *towards* before, and that the author is initiating, if not pioneering, this towardness. The second part of the book demonstrates that this is far from being the case. A more appropriate and telling title to the book would be something like: *The Lebanese Christians: Politico-Contextual Models of a Theology of Conviviality*. Notwithstanding these qualifications, this book offers a useful text to expose students, scholars and interested readers on what is going on theologically in that turbulent part of the world.

doi:10.1017/S0036930623000273

Grant Kaplan, *Faith and Reason in Christian History: A Theological Essay*

(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), pp. xvi + 360. \$29.95.

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What most distinguishes Grant Kaplan's survey of faith and reason is the quality of his prose, which is so fluid and engaging that I found myself choosing to enjoy reading sections of the book late every evening in times I usually reserve for leisure reading. Its eminent readability makes this an especially attractive text for professors seeking to spark the interest of undergraduates. Kaplan pulls this off with little loss in precision, all while condensing his survey of faith and reason throughout Christian history into a little over 300 pages.

The book is divided into three fairly equal sections. The first part, 'Premodern Christianity', covers first century origins to Aquinas, Bonaventure and Scotus in the 'High Middle Ages'. The second, 'Modern Theology', covers the Reformation through the nineteenth century. And the third, 'The Twentieth Century and Beyond', begins with neo-Thomism, Blondel and Barth, and ends with various theologies of liberation. Kaplan is Catholic, and this influences his periodisation, selection and interpretation of figures. As a Protestant I found this particularly informative, in particular regarding his treatments of Reformation and twentieth-century theologians (though his almost complete omission of Schleiermacher was a surprise). Scholars from outside the Catholic tradition may benefit from the ways Kaplan's survey can add new perspective to and begin to fill in gaps in their studies.

Any single volume covering so vast a period will necessarily sacrifice depth (e.g. 'The Pauline Approach' is two pages long; Aquinas gets the most space with twelve pages), so