

fails to realize this fully, and the question remains as to 'how theologically coherent, critically patriotic, localized civic participation is to be galvanized' (p.9). Addressing this in chapter 5, Hordern argues that 'local churches can play a uniquely important role' (p. 9), where 'the strange stability of Christian affections is embodied in a localized life of joyful, praising, intersubjective, reconciled communion amidst temporal politics which witnesses to the Christ who will one day descend to bring ultimate peace, reconciliation and justice to the world' (p. 10). This approach he contrasts with Hauerwasian virtue ethics and the view of sacraments as quasi-Aristotelian practices. As far as I can judge, at least as discussed here, the claim is that virtue ethics fails to address fully Hordern's wish to accommodate the situated episodics of emotional response. I was less convinced by these arguments though perhaps I failed to grasp their subtleties.

On the whole the core argument is carefully unfolded, and the book merits close study by political scientists, theologians and church people interested in the public square and the common good – which should be all of us! If I have a mild complaint it is that its conceptual complexity is astonishingly high in places and sentence structure highly demanding on working memory. More concrete examples would also have undoubtedly helped enliven the frequently abstract prose. That said, the detailed arguments evidence good and thoughtful scholarship. Pertinently, Hordern's choice of dialogue partners is well chosen. He is hospitable and constructive in his engagements with them and, by carefully building on rather than attempting to challenge or completely destroy their more secular arguments, he is much more likely to achieve leverage in wider socio-political debates.

My difficulty with *Political Affections* has been hard to pin down. The book's soft conservatism aside, my mild unease may have resulted from a suspicion that a praise-centred, evangelical response alone, as outlined here, might prove insufficient to transform the political landscape in ways many of us would like. A fuller or complementary treatment, though not necessarily Hordern's to offer of course, could engage more fully with the theology of the Body of Christ. Such an account might then deal in more detail with the universal-particular paradox, and more critically and crucially explore the role of affections in promoting subsidiarity and solidarity *through praxis*, and a truly (theologically and politically) participatory, decision making. And maybe, just maybe, the global ecclesial context is now right for a revived, affectively grounded, embodied but not materialist, liberation theology to remind us of the compassion, joy, faith, hope, and love needed to exercise properly the preferential option for the poor, deal effectively with pressing global issues, and strive for the local and global common good. Perhaps, however, Hordern's thoughtful book will prove but the first born of the family of 'theologically affective politics', not I hope its only child. As such it is to be warmly welcomed.

PETER HAMPSON

**THE SALVATION OF ATHEISTS AND CATHOLIC DOGMATIC THEOLOGY** by Stephen Bullivant, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp xi + 215, £65.00, hbk*

Chapter 14 of Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* acknowledged again the traditional teaching that it is necessary for the salvation of every individual to be a part of the Catholic Church. On the other hand the Council expressed in the same document in chapter 16 its hope for the salvation of those non-believers, who without their own fault are ignorant of the gospel, and who nevertheless seek

God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience.

These two passages of *Lumen Gentium* mark the parameters for the question of the salvation of non-believers, and they are also the starting point for the study on the salvation of atheists by Stephen Bullivant. According to him the primary purpose of his study is to explore and to explicate the meaning of these two passages and to ask and eventually to answer the question how it is possible for an atheist, within the parameters of Catholic theology, to be saved. It is important for Bullivant to ask his question from the perspective of Catholic dogmatic theology and he emphasizes explicitly his own roots in Catholic orthodoxy. This seems to be necessary because of some debates in Catholic theology about various pluralistic concepts on salvation, which have been criticised by the Holy See.

Bullivant starts his study with two clarifications. First, he defines salvation as a process of transforming a human being on his way to the final encounter with God, which does not end with death, but which continues in purgatory, and secondly he gives a rather broad definition of an atheist as someone who is without any belief in God or the gods. The second chapter deals then explicitly with the theological tradition of the question of salvation of atheist, starting from Pius IX to Vatican II. Crucial for the further development of the question is the position of Pius IX, who, after again stating the necessity of the church for salvation, declared in 1854 in his encyclical *Singulari Quadam* that 'it is to be held for certain that they who labour in ignorance of the true religion, if this ignorance is invincible, are not bound by any fault in this matter in the eyes of the Lord'. Bullivant is able to show that the optimism of Vatican II regarding the possibility of the salvation of non-believers is not an exception, but part of the continuity of the theological and doctrinal development of the teaching of the Church. With Joseph Ratzinger he is able to say that the theoretical possibility of the salvation of non-believers and non-Christians is certain and therefore only the question remains how salvation is actually possible for atheists.

For this purpose Bullivant examines various different theologians, including Schillebeeckx, De Lubac, Daniélou, Congar and Maritain, and he comes to the conclusion that all of their conceptions have in common the idea of an implicit, unconscious or anonymous faith on the side of the non-believer, which eventually should enable the non-believer to be saved. This means that the concept of the 'anonymous Christian' of Karl Rahner, which is then discussed by Bullivant in the subsequent chapter, is not as exceptional and unique as generally believed. The focus of his critique of Rahner's conception is on the lack of clarity of unconscious or implicit faith. He refers in his critique also to the position of Augustine DiNoia, who rejects the idea of an implicit belonging to the church and who instead suggests the idea of a *post-mortem* conversion of the non-believer. An important aspect of the salvation of non-believers is nevertheless, according to traditional theology, the ignorance of the non-believer of the gospel. Bullivant proposes, with reference to the theory of social structures of plausibility of Luckmann and Berger, a rather broad concept of ignorance, which would allow atheists in our secularized society to be regarded as ignorant of the gospel. His own conception is based, on one side, on some aspects of the theology of Gavin D'Costa, especially his concept of Christ's decent into hell and the idea of the continuing possibility of the '*limbus patrum*' for the non-evangelized. A conversion of atheists in purgatory without any traces of their way to God in their life is, on the other side, not enough. This leads him in chapter 5 to Matthew 25, 31–46 and the statement of Jesus Christ that whatever someone did to the least ones he had done to him. In their work for the poor, even the atheists encounter Christ, as Bullivant points out with references to the spirituality of Mother Teresa. Under the influence of grace the atheist strives therefore in his moral acts to salvation. The necessary incorporation into the Church and the baptism on the

other side happens *post-mortem* in purgatory, parallel to the evangelization of the dead in Christ's descent to hell. But not every atheist will be saved, according to Bullivant, but only those who have endeavoured to lead good and moral lives. Bullivant tries to avoid any ideas of the *apokatastasis*, but he is also aware of a possible accusation of Pelagianism, which he tries to get around by emphasizing the importance of the presence of grace already in the work of the non-believer.

The work of Stephen Bullivant is a remarkable study on the topic of the possible salvation of atheists, which tries to avoid the traps of post-modern relativism. Nevertheless three questions remain for a debate with the approach of Bullivant. The first question is just a short remark, because while Bullivant discusses the concept of Rahner's 'anonymous Christian' at length, he only touches the thinking of Von Balthasar, whose idea of Christ descending into hell in order to live his solidarity with the dead in all its consequences, raised some questions about the possible idea of the *apokatastasis* in the theology of Von Balthasar. A more comprehensive discussion with this approach is unfortunately missing in the work of Bullivant. The second question is related to the critique of the concept of implicit faith in atheists. Bullivant rejects on the one hand this idea as problematic, but on the other hand he has to refer to this idea himself, when he introduces his own interpretation of Matthew 25, which requires the implicit presence of God's grace in the works of the atheists. In this sense it seems to me that the idea of an implicit presence of God's grace in every human being and his works is absolutely necessary, in the sense of a transcendental presupposition of human existence as such, but in order to avoid any incorporation of atheists as anonymous Christians against their consent, it is necessary to emphasize the absolute free character of the act of faith. This leads to the last remark on the work of Bullivant. An atheist is not just someone who does not believe in God; he also rejects the whole idea of eternal salvation. If, as Bullivant points out, a conversion is necessary for salvation, how does this act of faith remain a free act of the human subject if the atheist encounters God's reality in purgatory? Does the atheist really have the chance to resist and to say no to God? Apart from these minor questions the study of Bullivant shows that the question of salvation for non-believers belongs deeply to the tradition of Catholic theology, and with his own model of the ethical praxis of atheists, within the line of Matthew 25 and the spirituality of Mother Teresa, and the possibility of a later *post-mortem* conversion of an atheist, Bullivant succeeds in making an important contribution to the contemporary debate on atheism and Christian faith.

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**THEOLOGY, AESTHETICS AND CULTURE: RESPONSES TO THE WORK OF DAVID BROWN, edited by Robert MacSwain and Taylor Worley, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp. xiii + 313, £65.00, hbk**

How to communicate christianity to a generation which has largely lost touch with religious practice is perhaps the churches' most pressing concern. This is the focus of the extensive writings of David Brown, which are thus relevant to a much wider readership than theological aestheticians. As Robert MacSwain points out in his introduction to this collection, Brown's best-known early work was a defence of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, which also pleaded for a better integration of theology, philosophy and biblical studies. It was the Incarnation that fuelled Brown's growing interest in what people actually believe, what might actually constitute religion *for them*. So he champions culture and imagination in the practice of theology, while being careful to try to integrate them with reason.