

theme, and heart of his theology. Of course, no one ought to doubt the importance that Union with Christ does play in Torrance's program. However, the union motif finds its grounding and significance in Torrance's appropriation of the Nicene category.

With those things said, *Living in Union with Christ* provides a helpful overview of some of the main texts in Torrance's corpus. Especially helpful is Lee's concern to integrate Torrance's work within a Korean context. Lee's pastoral heart shines through and resonates with Torrance's theological contribution.

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*St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology.* By Andrew Louth. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-19-925238-6. Pp. x + 326.

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There is an inconsistency between the importance of John Damascene (c. 675–c. 749) as a theologian who seals the Greek patristic period and the scarcity of modern studies on his life and works. Andrew Louth points out that John has generally been dismissed as unoriginal thinker, a mere compiler of patristic *florilegia* (viii). According to the author, it would be anachronistic to expect originality from John in the modern sense of the word, for like any other author of late antiquity, when any novelty in the matters of religion was dismissed as invention and falseness, John understood originality as remaining faithful to the traditions of the orthodox church.

John Damascene is an exceptionally important figure of Christian history for many reasons: for Byzantine theology and the Eastern Orthodox Church, he is the most important theologian, who summarized and interpreted the whole patristic tradition. For Western Christianity, his work turned out to be very important because it became the model for the later *summa* tradition. In addition, during the iconoclast controversy, he was the leading figure of the iconophiles who defended the veneration of the icons very successfully through his sophisticated arguments in which he established the veneration of the images on the reality of the incarnation as a matter of Christian faith of primary import. He was also an important figure in the apologetic relations between Christianity and new-born Islam due to the argumentation in his apology against Islam which constituted the pattern of later Christian apologetics.

Andrew Louth undertakes a very important project writing an overall account of John Damascene's life and work. Unlike previous studies which have

focused on particular aspects of John, Louth's book attempts an entire survey of John's life and works that generously presents him as a multi-dimensional theologian who had something to say about every major issue of his period. Moreover, his lesser-known importance as the first compiler of the Greek Orthodox liturgy and as a poet of religious devotion as well as a very important preacher is treated with scrutiny.

The book consists of three main parts: the first part examines the life and times of John as well as his relation to the tradition which determines the importance of the theologian for the following millennium of the Christian church. Louth defines two ways of understanding John's relationship to the tradition. The first understanding sees the tradition as having shaped his experience, as he expresses in the preface of *The Fountain Head of Knowledge*. "I shall not say nothing from my own, but collect together into one the fruits of the labours of the most eminent of teachers and make a compendium" (15). However, according to the second understanding, John's role is more active, for in this latter role he was considered as the pre-eminent bearer of accumulated tradition. This role as the representative of the Byzantine theological tradition had become evident by the eleventh century in Eastern Christendom. In the twelfth century and thereafter, it made itself felt in the West (16). I think it is this latter understanding of John's relation to his tradition that makes him worthy of our academic concern, rather than the originality of his thought.

The second part is the longest section of the book and it contains a detailed analysis of John's most important theological work, *The Fountain Head of Knowledge*. Following the threefold framework of the book, Louth undertakes his analysis under three main titles: first, "Settling the Terms" corresponds to John's *Dialectica* which contains the definitions of the concepts needed for the study of theology. Second, "Defining Error" corresponds to *Haereses* or *On Heresies* which simply gives a list of heresies with a short definition for each, with the exceptions of Manichaeism, Messalianism, and Islam, about which John had much to say. Last, "Defining the Faith" corresponds to *On the Orthodox Faith*. This part of *The Fountain Head of Knowledge* is the best known of John's works and the most influential. It gives us a thorough account of John Damascene's theology which explains why he is called a Chalcedonian Orthodox, especially for his Christology.

The third part includes John's views against the iconoclasts, his role as a preacher, and his poetry. John's place in the theology of the icons is essential because there is no other theologian of the Christian tradition who defended the veneration of images so successfully, which defense came to us in his well-known *Three Treatises Against Those Who Attack the Holy Icons*. The book contains a good deal of the controversy over icons and John's place in the iconophile theology. The author also examines John's place in the tradition as a preacher, and gives us two

of his homilies as well. Finally, Louth assigns a chapter to John's poetry and his essential role in the development of the Eastern Orthodox canon. He states that John's fame as a theologian or as a preacher is all peripheral, so far as the Byzantine world is concerned, to the fame attached to his liturgical poetry, and everyone in the world touched by Byzantium knows John's great Easter canon, *The Day of Resurrection*, as well as many other pieces attributed to John (252).

The author's vast knowledge and mastery of the patristic literature makes it possible for him to examine the wide range of theological issues involved in John's theological *oeuvre*, in his homilies as well as in his poetry. Louth gives the reader, in each case, a good deal of historical and theological background that leads up to John Damascene who was a compiler and synthesizer of his predecessors; in this way he points out again and again his indispensable place in the early Christian tradition.

The book analyzes John's works, tracing the issues back to the earlier church fathers—such as the Cappadocians, Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite—to whom John is much indebted. The analysis always aims to place him in the tradition of patristic theology. Louth also discusses every single issue involved in light of the most recent studies, thus giving the reader a short survey of patristic doctrine. Moreover, the background surveys of the theological issues before John as well as the manuscript traditions of his works make the book very enjoyable to read.

Overall, I think that the book secures itself a very important place in patristic and Byzantine studies, being one of the first critical studies of John's life and works as a whole. It should become a crucial study for every church historian and student of Christianity.

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*Medium or Message? Language and Faith in Ethnic Churches.* By Anya Woods. Language Diversity and Language Rights Series, Volume 1. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2004. ISBN 1-85359-736-8. Pp. xii + 219.

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No informed reader of culture in the twenty first century could escape the allusion to Marshall McLuhan in the title of Anya Woods' newly published research into language and religion. However, Woods' appropriation of the now commonplace McLuhan aphorism remains, for the most part, only an allusion. Readers in search of a philosophical consideration of religious and linguistic technologies—as well