

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.

Bilal Bas

McGill University

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.

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

as those looking to enjoy the kind of pithy maxim for which McLuhan was renowned—may find Woods' study of language use and attitudes disappointing.

Once that hurdle has been crossed, however, this book can be welcomed as a contribution to religious studies and sociolinguistics—in particular, Woods' integrative notion of “language-religion ideology” (41), developed in chapter 2. Rooted in Smolicz's theory of “core values”, which provides a means of identifying the symbolic values of different social groups and grounds for group membership, Woods' “language-religion ideology” (LRI) assesses the value and centrality of language for different religious groups. More particularly, it is a tool for describing “a denomination's actions, attitudes, traditions, and official/unofficial policies which pertain to language” (41).

Focusing in this study on the LRI of sixteen ethnic Christian churches in Melbourne, Australia, Woods demonstrates how these denominations and ethnic communities differ with respect to views, practices and policies surrounding the connectedness of language and religion. Diverse levels of English and heritage language proficiency intersect with different perceptions of the relative sacredness of specific languages; at the same time, differing immigration patterns and attitudes towards cultural maintenance cut across divergent styles of worship and evangelism, creating highly idiosyncratic linguistic and religious subcultures. Thus, different LRIs.

Woods situates her discussion of language and faith in ethnic churches within the framework of Australian multiculturalism—understood as both social reality and government policy. In doing so, she highlights the relative paucity of research into the religious dimensions of contemporary multiculturalism and addresses a lacuna in sociolinguistics and social scientific research that is only recently gaining recognition. Using Bouma's notion of “religious settlement” (24), Woods sketches the congregations in her study as representatives of “the heterogeneity of migrant communities in Melbourne” and “different periods of Australia's migration history, as well as different languages, cultural backgrounds and religious orientations” (2).

Having established the notion of LRI and the context of her study, Woods uses the central chapters of this book to display the LRI of her sample congregations, presenting questionnaire and interview data drawn from clergy and lay people. Her summary of clergy perspectives in chapter 3 affords an overview of the attitudes, linguistic practices, common issues and strategies used for handling linguistic diversity within ethnic churches: illiteracy, lack of resources, ‘second generation’ members, translation and interpretation. Woods' contribution is to recognise these dimensions of ethnic church communities as part of a larger whole—that is, as illustrative of each congregation's LRI.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on Woods' in-depth case studies of two contrasting congregations. In her statistical analysis of clergy and congregant responses, Woods paints by numbers the divergent LRLs of these two very different ethnic churches. Key points of contrast include literacy levels, reasons for attending an ethnic church, rates and attitudes towards code-switching, and the prestige of individual languages. The potential for conflict arising from divergent LRLs *within* a congregation is also discussed, together with the pastors' perceived role in linguistic, cultural and religious maintenance.

A reprise of Woods' main findings, proffered as a series of observable trends across a range of ethnic churches, comprises chapter 6. In sum, Woods notes that language can play both a unitary and divisive role within ethnic congregations. More interesting by far is Woods' contention that herein lies a danger—namely, that “The language which is a companion, key and expression of the faith may, indeed, become not only an article of faith but a faith in its own right” (160). Suddenly and unexpectedly, Woods shifts gears with an almighty crunch—discarding descriptive sociolinguistics in favour of prescriptive theology, with neither warning nor justification. Positing that the central question facing ethnic churches today is whether they should prioritise the promotion of religious faith ahead of cultural and linguistic preservation, Woods answers her own question with a clear affirmative: “It is the medium which *serves* the message” (174). Readers may well take issue with this undefended assertion.

In concluding her study, Woods revises two earlier models of ethnic churches and proposes a new framework to accommodate the “dynamic nature of language practices and attitudes” (163). She also identifies a range of implications arising from her research—for ethnic churches, for denominations and for the wider church—and proposes several directions in which this work might be developed. Canadian students of religion and language will find considerable stimulus for related research within the scope of Woods'.

Kate Power

Alliance University College
Nazare University College