
***The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics.* Edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. ISBN 0-631-23506-X. Pp. xii + 510.**

This book was written, according to the editors Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, with the hope of being a “milestone for Christians.” While more time is needed to determine whether or not the Christian audience in mind will come to this conclusion, Hauerwas and Wells clearly have believers in mind in this book, in terms of both content and style. It is no surprise that a companion on Christian ethics may have special interest to Christians or be oriented particularly toward Christians, and this book creatively uses the framework of Christian worship and liturgy to discuss the practices of Christian ethics. The result is a wide array of essays unified around the themes of Eucharist, worship, and the gathered Christian community.

The first section of the book outlines the editors’ rationale in looking at ethics through the perspective of worship and liturgy. Central to the aim of the editors in this book is to emphasize the praxis of Christian narrative, which is ethical in its entirety, against conceptions of ethics largely focused on theory and individually focused ethics. They write, “Once there was no ‘Christian ethics’...Christian ethics names the compromise that theology made in modernity by which Christian convictions would still have a hearing in contemporary debates so long as they were detached from the Church’s practices” (28). Theology and ethics, it is argued, should not be seen as separate ‘disciplines’ but should be part of an indistinguishable whole—the Christian life of action. Worship in the gathered community of believers, which is focal for Christianity, is in part characterized as “the time when God trains his people to imitate him in habit, instinct, and reflex” (25) and thus serves as the place where Christians are trained in virtue and character. The suggestion made in the initial chapters, that Christian ethics is really about the Christian life of action, sets a tone that carries throughout the subsequent collection of articles. The remaining sections of the book, which I will briefly comment on, follow the general themes found in a Catholic-type liturgy.

The second section is entitled “Meeting God and One Another” and focuses on gathering, greeting God and others, confession of sin, and celebration. The third section is “Re-encountering the Story” and this addresses various ways of hearing, interacting with, and proclaiming the story. In this section, and scattered throughout the book, there are a number of timely articles related to justice, poverty and liberation that address Christianity in a global context. The fourth section “Being Embodied” addresses in a variety of ways the importance of and role of the body in Christian ethics or ‘worship.’ The largest section is the fifth section, “Re-enacting the Story,” which focuses specifically on various actions or manifestations of the corporate Christian life. As in the preceding sections, each ‘ethical’ reflection is tied to common practices in the Christian church. Overall, the tying of what traditionally might be called ethical themes or problems to aspects of Christian worship, is done well. At times this identification with aspects of Christian liturgy seems slightly

forced or overemphasized. The last section is “Being Commissioned” and it emphasizes ‘going into the world’ outside of the church. Here the movement of liturgy and worship is complete—one could say the liturgy is incomplete without this accompanying outward movement.

There are many interesting, informative and contemporary articles in this companion, and in general it conforms well to the orientation of *The Blackwell Companions to Religion* series, which attempts to “approach the subject in a creative and forward-thinking style” (ii). Most of the essays are not overly difficult and they present both traditional practices and thinking, and new perspectives on the issues discussed. While not a reference book on Christian ethics, this edition is still very valuable for the theologian or Christian ethicist, if these can indeed be distinguished. However, it would have been helpful in my opinion, to hear more voices from the Christian tradition outside Western society. Generally speaking, Asian and African voices are lacking, and these constitute a significant portion of the practicing Christian church; these are ‘creative and forward-thinking’ Christian voices that have much to say to the West.

One other note relating to the overall tone and approach of the book is that it seemed to clearly be written *by* Christians, *primarily for* Christians. In many ways, it is refreshing to look at different aspects of Christian life and ethics unapologetically described through the lens of Christian worship, by practitioners of the faith. However, I could not help but think throughout the book that it was more for those inside the Christian faith than those outside of it. This may or may not be a problem for those outside of Christianity, but I would have preferred to see an approach that was slightly less liturgically focused and less aimed toward helping “Christians recover the story and practices that are the form and substance of their lives” (50). In addition, more articles addressing the relationships of Christians to those of other faiths would have been welcome as this was largely omitted. By way of summary, I am certain that many readers will be pleased by the abundance of up-to-date and creatively written articles in this volume. Whether it will be a ‘landmark’ for Christians is yet to be seen.

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In Deference to the Other: Lonergan and Contemporary Continental Thought. Edited by Jim Kanaris and Mark J. Doorley. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004. ISBN 0-7914-6243-9. Pp. 187.

Bernard Lonergan, a Canadian philosopher and Jesuit theologian, while not exactly a household name, has been nonetheless gaining more recognition in recent years, not only as an important thinker in his own right, but also as a significant contributor to the debate between Analytic and Continental thought. For anyone who has ever struggled to understand Lonergan’s dense