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***Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds.* By William Schweiker. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004. ISBN 1-4051-1344-8. Pp. xxv + 239.**

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This work, written by Professor William Schweiker of the University of Chicago Divinity School, is an attempt to address what he refers to as the problem of overhumanization. He identifies overhumanization as a moral ideology rooted in the high modern conviction that humans dwell in a morally empty universe within which they must create meaning for themselves. Ironically, says Schweiker, while the radical voluntarism of modernity was offered as a ground for the dignity of the human being, it produced a circumstance in which human worth is dislodged from any source other than the exercise of power. The result has been overhumanization, a profaning of human existence through rampant consumerism, overly managed social systems, environmental destruction and war.

If there is to be any retrieval of human dignity, any response to the problem of overhumanization, argues Schweiker, it cannot be accomplished without reference to religious resources. His work, then, is offered as an attempt to draw out the implications of the Christian tradition for life in the “time of many worlds” (the subtitle of the book, which refers to the collision of various worlds in an interdependent global reality). With reference to the question of violence and reconciliation, for example, Schweiker argues that it is not enough to conceive of justice under a generalized principle, without reference to religious language or symbols. Rather, he suggests that justice is best thought of as “the merciful establishment of right relations among persons and social and natural processes” (36). This is a conception of justice which he grounds theologically, in the notion of creation. His theological exploration affirms the basic goods of human life, reads the love command of Christ back into the created order, and conceives of justice on the basis of God’s merciful dealing with the enemy.

Of course, a standard objection to any such appeal to religious resources is that the religions themselves have contributed to overhumanization. Schweiker makes no attempt to skirt around this complaint. He nevertheless asserts that religious traditions can help address overhumanization as they themselves go through a “chastening” process. Through a theological analysis of the metaphysical and moral dualism of the *Didache*, Professor Schweiker provides an example of how this “chastening” task should be approached. The dualism of the *Didache*, he argues, can easily contribute to moral madness, to an us-and-them mentality which inscribes an essential opposition into the social fabric. This dualism, however, can be “chastened” by reading the double-love command of Christ over and against it, thus giving a place of prominence to neighborliness—the “neighbor” being someone “who acts righteously and, more radically, loves like Christ, loves even the enemy” (101). Only through such a “chastening” of their own traditions will religious communities be able to contribute to forgiveness and reconciliation.

*Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics* is a collection of essays reworked into book form, and it reads as such. While there are a number of prominent themes weaved together through the work, it lacks a well defined theme to animate the whole. The book is loosely divided into three parts. Part One is proffered as a description of the present global situation and appeals to the logic of creation/new creation in order to address the challenges of pluralism in the context of globalization—where “proximity” to the other presents profound challenges. This first part of the book also includes an insightful analysis of greed in the context of consumerism. Part Two considers the question of time, seeking to demonstrate how beliefs about the nature of time are related to ethical questions. It also offers an analysis of political forgiveness in what Schweiker calls, again, the “time of many worlds.” Part Three takes up many of the themes touched on in the previous two sections and addresses them with more methodological considerations in mind; here he addresses scriptural interpretation, religious difference, and moral madness.

There are two criticisms of the book which should be offered. The first is that Schweiker is not always as thorough in his analysis of various writers as should be the case. In his discussion of political forgiveness, for example, he makes reference to “Hannah Arendt’s insight that forgiveness is linked to the unique human power of natality, of forging new beginnings” (117). He makes no mention, however, of the fact that Arendt’s conception of forgiveness is, in important ways, at odds with that articulated in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. For Arendt, forgiveness is understood as an answer to the problem of irreversibility (the fact that all human actions inevitably have unintended and unforeseeable consequences) and not as an answer to the problem of human sin as understood in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Any appeal to Arendt’s understanding of the relationship between forgiveness and natality should at least make note of this important difference.

A second criticism can be brought out by reference to the Postscript of the work, in which Schweiker presents what he calls theological humanism. Under the rubric of theological humanism he argues that “one does ‘theology’ in order to articulate how the moral space of life is saturated with worth not reducible to human power and what that means for the conduct of life” (202). The Postscript represents a thoroughly theological ethics—taking its beginning from the theological tradition, considering the world-situation in terms of that tradition, and mapping out a way of life which is faithful to it. This is one of the strongest portions of the book, yet it is here, ironically, that our second criticism arises.

Throughout the book, Schweiker speaks in the first-person plural, but the question arises—who is this “we”? He speaks, for example, of the fact that “we have tried to get along morally without orienting myths” (94). He explores what is to be done if “we are to sustain viable communities” (116). Schweiker seems to conceive of himself as developing an ethical and moral vision for those who are part of the “western” tradition. But if the challenges which present themselves in “the time of many worlds” are to be answered by way of theological argumentation, by way of theological humanism, then on what basis could such argumentation be embraced by any “we” other than the Church? The logic of new creation, forgiveness, and justice are, for the

Christian community, inextricably linked to the revelation of God in Christ. To uproot such theological concepts from the context of faith and offer them to citizens of “the west” as general moral principles is to detach them from their moorings. This strikes me as a dodgy enterprise for both the theological ethicist and for those who are on the receiving end of the gift.

Roland De Vries, *McGill University*

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***Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus As the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew.* By Lidija Novakovic. Tübingen: Paul Mohr Verlag, 2003. ISBN: 3-1614-8165-8. Pp. 243.**

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Lidija Novakovic's *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew* is an excellent summary and critique of works in which Jesus is presented as the new Solomon: a healer and exorcist. Through examination of messianic backgrounds and Matthew's use of Scripture in relation to Isaiah, Novakovic proposes that Matthew's christology is midrashic.

After a brief discussion of the Davidic promises and the Davidic messiah, the book quickly focuses in on the Gospel of Matthew. Novakovic raises the point that although Matthew claims there are fourteen generations in the last listing of names, in fact only thirteen actual names are mentioned. While most commentators count one name or another twice, Novakovic emphasizes the use of the divine passive to indicate that God is implied as the father, the fourteenth member of the final grouping. The reader is also reminded that Matthew “does not present Jesus as the Son of David who has been installed to the position of the Son of God by an act of divine adoption, but as the Son of God who became the Son of David by an act of human adoption” (63). Jesus is then identified as a Son of David who will save people from their sin and its consequences (76).

The third chapter focuses on the healing narratives of Jesus, particularly those in which Jesus is called “Son of David.” It is here that the idea of Solomon as exorcist is rejected as the background for understanding Jesus' messianic characterization: “The main weakness to this solution is that Matthew's presentation of Jesus' healing activity lacks all the essential elements found in the traditions about Solomon” (104). Since the motive for the miracles and Jesus' messianic identity cannot be found in the Solomon traditions, the author proposes that one might find Jesus' background in the eschatological prophet of Deut 18:15, 18 and 34:10–12. But this hypothesis is also rejected: “Matthew's unwillingness to present Jesus' miracles as the prophetic signs thus appears as a strong evidence against the supposition that he has fused the functions of the royal Messiah and the prophet like Moses in the passages which link Jesus' healing miracles to his messianic identity” (118).

The fourth chapter explores ways in which Matthew interprets Jesus' healing acts in light of various Isaiah texts and examines pre-Matthean traditions relating to a healing messiah. Novakovic concludes that the Son of