

work ends on a positive note—a clarion call for the syncretic reweaving of traditions old and new, familiar and foreign—the tone of the last chapter casts a shadow over the book, and the reader cannot help but lament, with the author, the death of the Christian imagination.

J. M. Shields

McGill University

Celebrating Eternity Now. A Study in the Theology of St. Alphonsus de Liguori (1696–1787). By Hamish Swanston. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1995. ISBN 0-89243-842-8. Pp. 256.

Hamish Swanston combines a mastery of charmingly written incoherencies with a flair for scintillating non sequiturs to tempt the reader away from taking this book too seriously. Professor Swanston often states that St. Alphonsus, in his pursuit of eternity, wanted nothing to do with history that had a beginning, a middle, and an end. Swanston joyfully practices what Alphonsus preached. Thus is this book more of a meditational celebration than a study. Since Swanston is a popular lecturer, a much published theologian (*Community Witness, Ideas of Order, A Language for Madness*, and two volumes of *Studies in the Sacraments*), and a noted musical critic (*In Defence of Opera* and a recent study of Handel), the editors at Liguori Publications have obviously rushed to bring his own unrevised words to the public, mainly to take advantage of the fact that 1996 is the 300th anniversary of Alphonsus's birth.

The reader may open at random to any page of Swanston's jotted musings (in astronomy, music, opera, history, law...) to sample the flavor of the author's Dionysian style—and close the book after a paragraph or two, satisfied in having grasped the essence of the entire book. Since Alphonsus is the most important moral theologian in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, was made a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius IX, and is the founder of the missionary Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the seventh-largest men's institute in the Church, one would naturally have expected a great deal from the author, himself the first Roman Catholic to head a Department of Theology at a British university since the Reformation.

The extensive information about operas performed during Alphonsus's lifetime which might have influenced the saint's writings, alone would have made an obscurely interesting article. At \$24.95 (U.S.), Swanston's handsomely bound book should find a quiet corner in a few college libraries before becoming an out-of-print curio. Not since Théodule Rey-Mermet's weighty portrayal of Alphonsus's youth in *Le saint du siècle des lumières* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1987)—based on little more than inference—has another author succeeded in doing so much with so little evidence. Readers more interested in a narrative history of theology might rather wish to consult the briefer work by Rey-Mermet, *La morale selon St. Alphonse de Liguori* (Paris: du Cerf, 1987). However, should the reader insist on prosaically beginning at the beginning and continuing through to the end of

Swanston's performance, he or she will certainly come away having celebrated eternity now!

Paul Laverdure

McGill University

Faust the Theologian. By Jaroslav Pelikan. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995. ISBN 0-300-06288-5. Pp. xi+145.

"For my part, I cannot be satisfied, amid the manifold directions of my being, with only one way of thinking. As a poet and an artist, I am a polytheist; on the other hand, I am a pantheist as a natural scientist—and one of these as decisively as the other. And if I have need for one God for my personality as a moral man, that, too, is provided for." Thus spake Goethe, in a letter to Fritz Jacobi in 1813; and thus begets *Faust the Theologian*, the most recent offering of Jaroslav Pelikan.

Pelikan, a rare polymath in these times of specialization, tackles in this exquisite piece of erudition the archetypal polymathic figure of European literature—Faust. Goethe scholarship is a formidable jungle, and *Faust* scholarship its densest part, yet Pelikan enters undaunted, his able prose sustaining the delicate balance between courage and folly. He accomplishes this, in large part, by setting himself a task: to utilize Goethe's maxim as a tripartite typology with which to flesh out a portrait of his most recognizable (and most problematic) character. From the beginning, Pelikan eschews reductionist interpretations of *Faust*—whether Marxist, Freudian, feminist, or (orthodox) Christian—in favor of a 'Goethean' reading; yet one which does not always fall in line with Goethe's own vision of the drama. Pelikan uses Goethe's self-understanding as a hermeneutical tool with which to read *Faust*. The result is not only a provocatively novel reading of Faust (the character) and *Faust* (the play), but also a propaedeutic for a pluralistic theological aesthetics, rooted in Pelikan's interdisciplinary understanding of the "great chorus of theology."

First and foremost, *Faust the Theologian* seeks to make some sense of Goethe's "ungovernable theological problem-child" (Erich Heller), by situating the drama of Faust's fall and redemption within the typology of pantheist science, polytheist art, and monotheist ethics: these being distinct, but interrelated "ways of being" in the world. Pelikan presents a dialectical development of the Faustian character, who begins the drama as a frustrated natural scientist, comes to the realization that a poetic polytheism will fill some of the hollowness of such a stance, and eventually, in spite of Mephistopheles, but with the help of Gretchen (whose "seriousness...prevails over the cynicism of both Faust and Mephistopheles, in the eschatological dénouement of the drama" [15]) reaches redemption by virtue of a "rediscovery" of morality (53). In short, Pelikan transforms Goethe's typology into a set of developmental "stages on life's way," but which differ from Kierkegaard's in being dialectical—each stage sublating the others in turn (24, 89, 91–2). This allows Pelikan to avoid Christianizing *Faust*—even the monotheistic stage involves the polytheistic and pantheistic "ways" (24)—while permit-