

Critical Issues in Ecclesiology: Essays in Honor of Carl Braaten. Edited by Alberto L. Garcia and Susan K. Wood. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 239 pp.

A book addressing contemporary issues in ecclesiology makes a fitting tribute for Carl Braaten, a happy warrior who has spent the last twenty years of his illustrious career battling *pro ecclesia*, “for the church.” Ironically, working for the unity of the divided churches on the basis of biblical canon, ecumenical creeds, and Reformation confessions (including today the reforming documents of Vatican II and the Joint Declaration on Justification!) is divisive of today’s pseudo-theological unities, whether in North American denominationalism or the European *Völkiskirche*. Carl Braaten has labored to see a realignment of the forces of Christian orthodoxy emerge out of these ruins. The beginnings of that new synthesis may be glimpsed in the more significant contributions to this volume from across the ecumenical spectrum.

UCC theologian Gabriel Fackre argues cogently that a “full doctrine of the at-one-ment is inseparable from the at-one-ment of the Church” (7), meaning that the three traditional motifs of satisfaction of divine wrath, moral example, and victory over contra-divine powers should not be played off against one another but thought together theologically in the converging church. Evangelical Timothy George takes to task Konrad Raiser’s notorious attack on ecumenical theology by recalling the splendid statement on the *verbum externum* from the Orthodox delegation to the 1991 Canberra assembly of the WCC: “We must guard against a tendency to substitute a ‘private’ spirit, the spirit of the world or other spirits for the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son. Our tradition is rich in respect to local and national cultures, but we find it impossible to invoke the spirits of ‘earth, air, water and sea creatures.’ Pneumatology is inseparable from Christology or from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity confessed by the church on the basis of divine revelation” (61). Anglican Joe Mangina’s contribution, “A Cross-Shaped Church,” makes the Pauline-Lutheran qualification of *communio* ecclesiology (expertly limned in this volume by Roman Catholic Susan Wood) better than most Lutherans. He asks the critical dogmatic question: “[C]ommunion in what? Participation in whom?” (79) and answers missiologically: “The church may be thought of as the death of Jesus stretched out across time, not by way of repeating or supplementing that death—the Reformation is very clear about this—but by way of attesting and confirming it. The unity of the church is not an end in itself. Its particular *koinonia* serves the larger covenant in which God is involved with the world as a whole” (80).

Lutherans make contributions as well. ELCA theologian Cheryl Peterson provides a helpful and well-researched case for pneumatological ecclesiology, in the sense of criticizing the Protestant tendency to reduce the Spirit’s work to inwardness in the experience of pious subjectivity (159). From Luther’s catechism she draws the counter-thesis that “[s]anctification is more than a new existential awareness for the believer and includes a communal element . . . a ‘holy people’ corporately lives out and experiences the new existence” (161). In an encouraging parallel to Peterson, LCMS theologian

Leopoldo A. Sánchez M. takes up the work of Roman Catholic Yves Congar on the dialectic of Word and Spirit in his impressive essay. He fleshes out a view of the church as a corporate reality from the perspective of a Trinitarian pneumatology, that is, of "the Spirit as a personal agent in its own right" (190) and shows how this strong Trinitarian personalism opens the divided churches to ecumenical engagement and convergence. Frank Senn of the Society of the Holy Trinity crisply reminds Lutherans of the ecumenical orthodoxy at the heart of their claim: "The very way the article on justification is presented in the Augsburg Confession shows that it is a theological implication of established church dogma . . . if God is as holy as the doctrine of the Trinity affirms, if original sin is as virulent as the Augustinian tradition holds, and if Christ is necessary for salvation as the Christological doctrines imply, then the only way to talk about the human relationship to God is to hold" to justification by faith alone (31).

Further contributions come from Robert Jenson, Michael Root, Alberto Garcia and James Childs. This collection would make an excellent selection for courses in ecclesiology or on the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed.

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