

BOOK REVIEWS

Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith. The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation.* The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 2009.

This book explores the action of the Spirit in Scripture, Church tradition and history and theology. It explores the corresponding human receptivity of that action in Spirit-gifted individual believers (*sensus fidei*), and in the Spirit-gifted Church community (*sensus fidelium*), which is served by the Spirit-gifted teaching authority of the magisterium.

The book is a fine work of analysis and synthesis of the Spirit's action in and human reception of divine revelation. It is clearly argued and readable, scholarly and well-referenced.

No-one, to my knowledge, has explored in such detail and provided such a comprehensive account of human reception of revelation and the Spirit's role in the whole process. The book is the winner of the Lynlea Rodger ATF Book Prize for books published in 2009/2010. This Prize is for the most outstanding theological book authored by a theologian in the Australasian region. It is the fifth time the Prize has been awarded.

—Barry Brundell MSC

Eugene Stockton, *The Deep Within. Towards an archetypal theology,* Blue Mountains Research Institute, 2011

This book by Eugene Stockton, a respected Australian priest and academic who has written eloquently about Christian theology in the past, attempts to bridge the gap between Aboriginal spirituality and Christian theology. It places before us a commonality of intent based upon a recognition of the reality of indigenous mysticism—called *dadirri* by one informant. *Dadirri*, however, explores a going-out into nature, rather than a severance, an inwardness, which is often at the root of Christian mysti-

cism. Apophaticism, or negative theology, so important to Christian mysticism in both the East and West, finds its counterpart in the practice of *dadirri*, in the stillness that is realized in our natural surroundings.

The book makes a cogent argument for a re-visioning of Christianity in Australia, a land that Stockton believes has much to contribute to the ongoing vitality of Christian spirituality in the modern world. This can only come about by way of an integration of the Dreaming into the broader tenets of Christian belief. Not as a merging of the respective myth and Gospel cycles so important to each belief-system, but of developing a greater understanding and sympathy with indigenous archetypes. These archetypes have a powerful numinous effect upon Aborigines, just as Rudolf Otto (*The Idea of the Holy*) maintains. It may be that in time such archetypes can find a place in the collective understanding of all Australians interested in the re-visioning of Christianity.

Stockton has drawn upon parallels in modern textual and psychological analysis. Jung, Freud, Hillman, Davies, Fox and others have informed his vision of an 'indigenous' Christianity. Archetypal theology is about finding, or at least building a raft out of, communal myths and symbols. It is clear from his book that the author is at home in Eastern and Far-eastern spiritual traditions. He sees the work of Hindu thinkers, for example, as aligning themselves to the growth of a more fluid and inclusive approach to theological research. This is not to suggest any tampering or amelioration of Christian dogmatics.

Ultimately the author comes down on the side of a return to—or at least a re-visioning of—that great stream of mystical thought that underpins Christian dogma and belief. He sees this stream as being more richly expressed in Eastern Orthodox Christianity because of historical reasons. *Hesychia*, or the practice of stillness (*apatheia*) via the Jesus Prayer, may

be likened to *dadirri* in his view. The prayer interiorizes the in-Godness of Christ just as *dadirri* aids in the process of meditation by which nature is interiorized for Aborigines.

Woven into the text of this book is Stockton's own experience among Aborigines as a priest, as well as a field researcher in Balgo Hills Western Australia. It is clear that he has a deep affinity with the Aboriginal encounter with his land because of his own encounter with it growing up in the proximity of the bush in the Blue Mountains of NSW. He admits that in his youth his imagination became fully engaged by this encounter. The great 20th century French philosopher Henri Corbin spoke of the realization of the 'imaginal' as a way of entering into the spiritual life. The imaginal combines the active imagination with the intellect. Stockton's encounter with the bush, and his subsequent engagement with Aboriginal life, is thus an imaginal event and the basis for a theophany, another of Corbin's favorite terms.

Stockton's Christ figure partakes of what he calls 'archetypal theology'. He is a God-man, a figure in history, and a groundbreaker in religious thought. He is also a prefiguring Christ—that is, he harks back to an older dispensation, which underpins all spiritual aspiration. Of course his Christ is deeply imbedded in Catholic dogmatics; but the author leaves the door open to viewing him as a more universal avatar. In a sense, the author wants us to re-vision Christ in the context of landscape too—that is, in the metaphor of landscape. While he and the Father are necessarily One, he is also the embodiment of what the Aborigines often refer to as the 'big body' of earth. The earth lives in us even as Christ does also.

The Deep Within is a landmark in spiritual literature emanating from this country. In clear and lucid prose the author has laid down a ground plan for the future of Christian thought in Australia. How does one fashion an archetypal theology that is not only Christ-centred, but also earth-centred? Stockton proposes that we recover the concept of mythic life. That is,

he wants us to give myths a validity in our own lives. Not only the myth-life of Christianity, which must be acknowledged as being part of its ongoing spiritual vitality, but also a re-interpretation of Aboriginal myths in the light of what we now know exists. That is, a genuine Aboriginal mysticism known as *dadirri*.

The Deep Within is an important addition to the ongoing debate about the growth of an indigenous Christianity. We must be thankful that the author has taken the time to explore what is an exciting prospect for all believers, be they Christians or Aborigines. Indeed, Archetypal theology might one day be seen as a 'first step' along the road back to a meaningful dialogue with the mystical life.

—James Cowan

***Wisdom. From Philosophy To Neuroscience.* Stephen S. Hall. UQP. 333pp. \$34-95**

Hall asks whether there is any real place for wisdom in our frenetic, postmodern, quasi-apocalyptic, multi-tasking, dual-income, economically challenging world.

He maintains that among ordinary people there is a hunger for any excuse to raise their game and reclaim a better self.

Wisdom is an unusual quality in that it is extremely difficult to define, but fairly easy to identify. A former Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, remarked that you have only to speak to someone for twenty minutes to find out whether they have any.

Wisdom is not the same as intelligence. Everyone can think of intelligent people who don't have any. Hall, who has ample quantities of both, writes that knowledge is fixed, impersonal, and in odd way, non-social. Wisdom, on the other hand, is profoundly social, deeply personal, adaptive and intuitive. It has an important emotional component.

Stephen S. Hall writes about science and society for The New York Times Magazine. He has written five other books and seems to have interviewed just about everyone in America in philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience who writes about wisdom, or whose

work abuts on it. He has done a daunting amount of reading, which has been enlivened by frequent meetings with kindred spirits at Fanelli's Restaurant and Bar, New York, to discuss philosophy.

No one could accuse Hall of neglecting the classics in pursuit of the latest. What Socrates, Confucius, and Buddha have in common in their thinking about wisdom, he writes, is a concern for social justice and a code of public morality, altruism, an insistence on mastering the emotions that urge immediate sensory gratification, and a mission to share their accumulated body of knowledge.

As a matter of fact, they have something else in common, and here is my major criticism of this delightful and instructive book. They draw on a wisdom which is higher than human wisdom. Socrates was attentive to an inner voice which was so specific that it stopped him in the middle of a speech when he was about to say something wrong. Confucius said that at fifty he knew the biddings of Heaven, and that at sixty he heard them with a docile ear.

Needless to say, Buddha muddies the water in this respect. Did he hear the biddings of heaven? Perhaps not. But he believed in a metaphysical dimension to life: 'There is, O monks, that which is not born, not become, not made, not compounded.' And if there weren't, 'there would be no release in this life of the born, the become, the made, the compounded.'

Hall enumerates the different aspects of wisdom: patience, altruism, discernment, emotional calm. He realizes that love is not enough. Altruism needs a diverse suite of cognitive and emotional skills: discerning the fundamental unfairness of a situation; having the courage to defy one's immediate self interest; patience to wait for the rewards of a larger goal to materialize. And altruism is corrective, which raises the question of punishment.

The book purports to move from philosophy to neuroscience. And there is a lot of neuroscience in it. But what has that got to do with

qualities of wisdom like knowing what's important and a capacity to deal with uncertainty? Hall himself puts the question: 'does all this dense, constrained, hyper-qualified and speculative science-speak ultimately tell us anything useful about wisdom?' Well does it?

There is no doubt that it is useful to peer into our brains to discover whether anything is going wrong. But it remains unclear from the book how studying our brains will make us wiser.

One thing that the description of the neural machinery does is throw into strong relief the distinctness of mind and brain. We know from within what it is like to evaluate, deliberate and ponder. We never notice from within what the hiss and the pop of neural circuitry are like. The inference is that it is taking place in a different reality.

Occasionally, Hall transfers a description which belongs to mind and applies it to brain, to unintended comic effect. For example, he writes of an immensely 'astute' molecule called dopamine... 'like a movie critic assessing, broadcasting its opinion'[p.48] What a smart little molecule!

Like everything else, neuroscience can be abused, and Hall mentions a disturbing possibility. It has been found out experimentally which effects certain words have on the brain, and the emotions they release. There is a neuroscientific consulting corporation in California, which, down the track, may put together political speeches as a 'mosaic of code words, inflections and implicit associations...designed to detonate unconscious emotional reactions, especially fear and disgust.' [p. 259] Does such perfidy await us?

In contrast, the psychologists and neuroscientists Hall brings to these pages come across as intelligent, constructive, sensitive to criticism, and humane. They may save America yet. Philosophers make a splendid contribution to the book, especially Confucius. Though he spent the last ten years of his life pounding the pavements looking for a job, he is still being heard.

—Reg Naulty