

co-inherence with colonial and racial systems of power is a form of epistemological and theological violence.

Global, non-Western, and Southern Catholics, who live with the continuing and real effects of colonial, racial, cultural, gender, or religious subjugation continue to struggle to find purchase in theologies that continue to reinscribe European culture, language, and methods at the center of revelation and theology. For we too pray, hope, and believe in the salvation offered in and through Jesus Christ by a generous God to the whole world, we too are disciples of the living Christ and want to be of service in like manner to the whole world. For some of us, Christianity also historically predates European Christianity and European colonialism by hundreds of centuries. Our realities are part of the whole—the universal church. The “Catholic instinct” goes both ways: certainly, in the missionary church’s outreach to Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but also, and very importantly, in the open and enspirited reception to the Word by those non-European cultures in which it continues to root and grow.

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Intercommunal Ecclesiology: The Church, Salvation, and Intergroup Conflict.
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Intercommunal Ecclesiology is Steven Battin’s ambitious attempt to construct a new account of the church commensurate with the challenge of responding to “the reality of unnecessary aggression, conflict, and indifference between human groups” (33). Rather than analyzing particular unjust social systems of the capitalist/colonial world-system, Battin steps back from that important task in order to pursue the anthropological “condition for the possibility” (5) of particular historical problems and to let that pursuit inform his soteriological reimagining of the church, one more capable of “*making a decolonial turn*” (19).

An important feature of the author’s unfolding argument is the contextualizing of its claims by referencing the limitations within classical theology, contemporary theology, and Western thought. For example, *ressourcement* theology focuses on the church’s identity and uniqueness while liberation theology

focuses on the mission of the church as an agent of social transformation. The project's "*alternative approach*" (33) aims to overcome this dichotomy in ecclesiology by locating what is distinctive about the church not simply in its intraecclesial sources but, provocatively, in what it shares with other entities, namely, its being a human communal group. Here, Battin draws heavily on intergroup studies, including, for example, social psychology, biopsychology, and living systems theory, to examine the church as a collective force in time and space whose largely unconscious "protocols of interaction" (47) with other human groups, part of the church's constitution, will engender intercommunal unity or disunity.

The author's treatment of the dynamics of intergroup relationships leads to discussion of moral exclusion and violent protocols of interaction. "Moral exclusion occurs when individuals or groups *are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules and considerations of fairness apply*" (60). As a moral theologian, I find Battin persuasive that moral exclusion is a more effective explanatory frame for violent intergroup relationship than the individualistic notion of sin and morality prevailing in Western thought. Integrating the concept of "social sin" would have further illuminated the etiology and persistence of violent interrelation. Surprisingly, a more direct engagement with the literature on nonviolence and peace studies is lacking. That "conflict" has a nonviolent, constructive form should not be left implicit.

Although the critical task of an intercommunal ecclesiology is to identify moral exclusion, especially when ecclesiologies of moral exclusion are at work, "Our overall constructive task . . . is to re-envision the Church in light of its soteriological function relative to violent *intergroup* relatedness" (100). Hence, salvation is not simply forgiveness of personal sin or entry into heaven; "*salvation is God's protocol of interaction for God's encounters within the created order*" (140), an intra-historical pattern operative in Scripture and Greek Patristics whereby God acts, at the level of collective reality, with the help of human beings, to preserve life and establish right relationships (i.e., unity). In this framework, salvation is "the divine's model for offsetting and transforming intergroup relations that have been marred by the aggression, conflict, and indifference that attend moral exclusion" (90). The church, then, "functions as God's response to intercommunal disunity" (217). Particularly interesting is Battin's Christological turn and retrieval of the Body of Christ percept to connect the seity of the church with the church's mission. "In the Church, Christ takes form as a collective force not to make a group that coheres better than any other ('we' alone have true *intragroup* unity), but to heal disunity that occurs between collectives" (181).

The author anticipates a central criticism, which he writes "at the risk of being erroneously charged with treating the Church reductively as a 'mere

sociological entity” (198). Readers will judge that for themselves, though I find substantial evidence of the book’s theological character.

Intercommunal Ecclesiology is a clear and stimulating work of integrative constructive theology that engages multiple fields within and outside of theology, making it of interest to various schools of thought, such as liberation theology. The volume makes its own important contribution of a soteriologically inflected ecclesiology and to the pressing challenge of navigating difference and boundaries without claiming superiority or “othering” persons or groups. The text would also contribute to the foundations of an ethic that is authentically Christian without being sectarian or triumphalist. It is suitable for library and graduate classroom use.

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Humility: The Secret History of a Lost Virtue. By Christopher M. Bellitto. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2023. x + 165 pages. \$24.95. doi:10.1017/hor.2024.55

Humility is a brisk, erudite, and highly readable history of this virtue. The book follows a chronological arc: the first sentence is “Socrates was a humble man,” and the final sentence is “humility’s time has come again.” In between are chapters about texts and thinkers in the ancient world, the Bible, the medieval era, and the Enlightenment and its aftermath.

Christopher Bellitto, a professor of history at Kean University, makes an argument with a historical prong and a normative prong. The historical prong is to trace the rise, fall, and nascent recovery of humility. The ancient world did not have much use for this virtue. While historians, philosophers, and myths, such as those of Narcissus and of Icarus, challenged “the excessive, blinding, egocentric, and overblown sense of self that the Greeks called hubris” (13), neither the Greeks nor the Romans developed “a corresponding positive picture of humility” (19). For example, an inscription to the athlete and statesman Polemaios “extols his good deeds and achievements without a hint of modesty” (19). After quoting the inscription, Bellitto concludes, “In the Greco-Roman world, if you did it, it ain’t braggin’” (20).

Incidentally, this sentence is just one of Bellitto’s many droll, contemporary turns of phrase. Such expressions do not make the book less scholarly. Rather, along with a smattering of references to popular culture (such as the movie