on Wisdom and Mary, more represented in the liturgical tradition than in theology.

He admits early on, though, that many of the woes of Sophiology come from attempting to translate visionary experience into dogmatic theology. Those visions of a mysterious feminine figure: and although Plested presents Hildegard of Bingen's visions of Sophia very sympathetically, he admits that her Sophia is 'free floating'. For Stratford Caldecott, the bizarre imagery of Jakob Boehme (Hans Urs von Balthasar gave up on him) is not to be construed as theology, but as an example of 'the active imagination turned wholly towards God'. The Catholic visionary Anne Catherine Emmerich herself admitted that she was not sure whether some of her visions were of the actual lives of Christ and Mary, or only symbolic.

Do we then accord the Sophiology of the visionaries the same status as art – not unimportant, but secondary to the theological tradition – or does 'visionary Sophiology' offer deeper insights *into* the theological tradition? For example, Christ *is* Wisdom, but he came not just to reveal himself but the Father, the Spirit and the mystery of the Trinity. And Margaret Barker's work on Wisdom as the 'Lost Lady' of the Temple, a pneumatological *and* pre-Marian figure, is controversial but massively well sourced. These are deep waters, but working from the solid ground to which Plested has brought Sophiology, we can move forward with more confidence than hitherto.

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CHRISTOPHER DAWSON: A CULTURAL MIND IN THE AGE OF THE GREAT WAR by Joseph T. Stuart, *The Catholic University of America*, Washington, D.C., 2022, pp. xv + 454, £ 31.50, pbk

Christopher Dawson (1889-1970) was enormously influential in the decades between the two World Wars and beyond. When T. S. Eliot, during a lecture tour of the United States in the 1930s, was asked whom he considered the most powerful intellectual influence in Europe, he replied 'Christopher Dawson' without hesitation. Strangely, Dawson's reputation was almost completely eclipsed in the years after the Second Vatican Council. Those who knew his work often stated that it was 'dated' and therefore out of tune with the spirit of the Council. Yet, barring the deep dismay expressed by Dawson about the liturgical changes, there is nothing in his work in the least inimical to the Council. Indeed, Pope Paul VI

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himself mentioned Dawson in the same breath as J. H. Newman as the most important English Catholic thinker.

Joseph T. Stuart's study of Dawson's 'cultural mind' is the most complete and penetrating attempt to explain the significance and enduring importance of his work. The subtitle needs a word of explanation: 'the Age of the Great War' will lead readers to assume that the book focuses on the period 1914–1918, but what Stuart means is the traumatic rupture caused by the Great War, a trauma that continues to affect us. This is what a group of Dawson's friends that included David Jones and Harman Grisewood came to refer to as 'the Break', a phenomenon that Dawson himself evoked memorably in a brief autobiographical sketch: '[t]hose of us who remember the world before the wars have witnessed a change in human consciousness far greater than we have realized, and what we are remembering is not the Victorian age but a whole series of ages – a river of immemorial time which has suddenly dried up and become lost in the seismic cleft than has opened between the present and the past'. It is no exaggeration to suggest that this preoccupation informs Dawson's whole oeuvre. 'If [our civilization] is dead', he argued, 'it deserves to be recorded, no less than any other vanished civilization. If it is not dead … we must … discover what elements in its tradition can be recovered, what is lost beyond recall and what is indispensable to the continuity and identity of Western culture'.

This was a tall order by any standards. It required the mastery of an unusually broad range of disciplines, not least those that attempted the scientific study of 'culture' as an anthropological concept. Such studies had gained widespread acceptance in the wake of the Great War, but they invariably went hand in hand with a rejection of the traditional, humanist understanding of 'culture'. One of the most original aspects of Dawson's work is the way in which he brought these two seemingly opposing traditions into fruitful conversation. The sociological insights of the likes of Patrick Geddes and Frédéric Le Play, for instance, were assimilated and given a broader significance by relating them to the legacy of Christian culture. As Dawson wrote in his Gifford lectures of 1947, 'any material change which transforms the external conditions of life will also change the cultural way of life and thus produce a new religious attitude. And … any spiritual change which transforms men's views of reality will … change their way of life and thus produce a new form of culture'.

Dawson thus managed to preserve a unified vision of the manifold expressions of 'culture' while scrupulously respecting the limits of the disciplines needed to study it. Stuart suggestively detects here the influence of Newman, especially the principle, brilliantly encapsulated in *The Idea of a University*, of developing the 'philosophical habit of mind … of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respecting values, and determining their mutual dependence'. Dawson too believed that the various 'cultures' studied by the social sciences needed to be related to their broader intellectual and spiritual contexts. As Stuart puts it, '[i]f

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anthropology supplied the principle of cultural holism …, sociology the elements of cultural analysis, and history the basis of cultural morphology, then comparative religion provided a hermeneutical key in uncovering cultural meaning in spiritual experience and explanatory principles in analyzing the culture-process in intellectual and institutional developments' (p. 184).

Dawson's most accomplished achievement along these lines was his first book, *The Age of the Gods* (1928), where he presented to the general interested reader a staggeringly comprehensive synthesis of the then available archaeological and ethnological investigations that shed light (in the words of the subtitle) on 'the origins of culture in prehistoric Europe and the Ancient East'. What emerges with great conviction from this astonishingly original tome is the centrality of religion in the development of culture. This did not mean, as some of Dawson's readers often uncritically assumed, that he was advocating an identification of religion and culture – and by extension, an identification of the Catholic Church with Western Culture. Any such identification seemed to Dawson 'a kind of idolatry' in which religion would lose its spiritual character by being tied too closely to the social order while culture would become 'as rigid and lifeless as a mummy'. As he wrote in 1935, '[w]herever the Church has seemed to dominate the world politically … she has had to pay for it in a double measure of temporal and spiritual misfortune'. To boot, 'ecclesiastics often make the most unscrupulous politicians', and 'political parties which adopt religious programmes … have always distinguished themselves by their fanaticism and violence: in fact by a general lack of all the political virtues'.

This was in essence a Thomistic outlook. Dawson could have been writing about himself when he elucidated Aquinas's defence of the autonomous rights of human reason and its scientific activity against a purely theological ideal of knowledge and the rights of human nature and natural morality against any kind of exclusivism. But this was no slavish adherence to a school of thought: Dawson was sharply critical of his Thomist contemporaries for ignoring the diversity of cultures. As he wrote to an American correspondent in 1955, Thomism may be 'potentially the *philosophia perennis* of the whole world. But it cannot become so until it has incorporated the philosophical traditions of the rest of the world in the same way that it incorporated the philosophical tradition of Hellenism'.

Dawson had originally planned to continue *The Age of the Gods* with an ambitious set of volumes with the overarching title 'The Life of Civilizations', a project that makes him sound somewhat like a failed Catholic Toynbee. In reality, however, the reasons why the project was regrettably never completed have more to do with Dawson's intellectual integrity: he could not be an archaeologist, anthropologist, or sociologist at the expense of history where the necessary fieldwork in the social sciences had not yet been done. In *Progress and Religion* (1929), which was planned as the introduction to the whole collection, and *The Making of Europe* (1932),

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which would have been volume 3, we can get a glimpse of what the complete collection would have looked like – with a second volume on the classical civilizations, which was never written, and subsequent volumes on the late middle ages, the Reformation, the Age of Revolutions and the Modern World, which can be glimpsed in *Mediaeval Religion* (1934), *Mediaeval Essays* (1954), *The Dividing of Christendom* (1965), *The Gods of Revolution* (1972), and *The Movement of World Revolution* (1959). Already in *The Making of Europe* – a superlative vision of the early Middle Ages which has never been entirely replaced – it is clear that Dawson needed to rely on literary, liturgical, economic and political sources at the expense of archaeological and anthropological ones. This made his original plan lose its overall coherence, but what he left us is nevertheless of enormous value and enduring relevance. We are all in Stuart's debt for reminding us about the urgent need to reappraise these marvellous works and for providing such a complete guide to the thought of one of the most original and multifaceted 'cultural' minds of the last century.

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GOD, THE GOOD, AND THE SPIRITUAL TURN IN EPISTEMOLOGY by Roberto Di Ceglie, *Cambridge University Press*, Cambridge, 2022, pp. 350, £75.00, hbk

Roberto Di Ceglie adds his unique voice to those defending the important thesis that it is appropriate for Christian believers to maintain indefinitely commitment to the fundamentals of Christian faith in the face of contrary evidence. In his thoroughly researched book, *God, the Good, and the Spiritual Turn in Epistemology*, Di Ceglie situates his view on faith and reason in the tradition of Aquinas, though he acknowledges the similarity of his position to other historical and contemporary epistemologists. His unique contribution to this discussion is twofold. First, Di Ceglie prescribes what he calls the spiritual turn in epistemology—his proposal for how the religious believer ought to understand and engage in debates about the fundamentals of Christian faith. Second, Di Ceglie argues that just as it is epistemically appropriate for the Christian believer to maintain religious belief in the face of contrary evidence, it is also epistemically appropriate for the unbeliever to maintain a commitment to the good in the face of defeaters.

Di Ceglie observes that there is a firmness and tenacity with which a Christian holds to her faith that cannot be justified by the strength of the evidence that supports it. This firmness and tenacity is not just

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