

## Book Reviews

*Renewing Theology: Ignatian Spirituality and Karl Rahner, Ignacio Ellacuria, and Pope Francis.* By J. Matthew Ashley. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022. xxi + 409 pages. \$80.00.  
doi:10.1017/hor.2024.11

This book explores the question of why Catholic theology and spirituality need each other, how the two are related, and how they can be (and have been) mutually enriching. J. Matthew Ashley argues persuasively that academic theology has relevance in our daily lives but needs spirituality in order to avoid becoming what Hadot called “technical jargon reserved for specialists.” Ashley engages a range of questions here, including, importantly, “How do we reestablish a living relationship between academic theology and the lives of Christians in the world outside the university gates?” (xii). His answer is that we must reintegrate Christian spirituality into the practice and results of Christian theology—a division that both stems from and reinforces the social and cultural conditions of modernity. Only through an ecclesial praxis of doing theology and practicing spirituality at the individual and social-political levels, Ashley argues, can we overcome it. He looks to the robust tradition of Ignatian spirituality as a way of learning how Christian spirituality can influence academic theology.

The book’s argument is oriented around the work of three twentieth-century Jesuits: Karl Rahner, Ignacio Ellacuria, and Pope Francis, each of whom regarded the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* as their compass and guide, and yet each of whom were influenced by the exercises in different ways. Demonstrating how these pivotal figures emphasized different dimensions of the exercises in their respective theologies, Ashley takes readers on an exceptionally rich journey through their lives, contexts, interests, and thought. He argues that all three figures struggled to renew academic theology in order to meet the challenges of late modernity by drawing upon the Ignatian tradition. This is not incidental: Ignatius of Loyola lived in a time that, Ashley argues, was not unlike our own because it, too, was rooted in an encounter

with modern problems, and he grappled with the rupture between theology and spirituality. Indeed, the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* respond in a positive yet critically creative way to the shift to modernity.

These themes are the focus of the first three chapters of the book, which examine the spirituality that Ignatius inaugurated, including an examination of the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, with close attention to historical context. Ashley highlights in particular the elements of Ignatian spirituality that make it flexible and adaptable to different theological understandings and applications. He also highlights the context in which it emerged and has continued to grow: modernity. He argues that a key piece of Ignatian spirituality is the way in which it is embedded in the origins of modernity and anticipated the need to respond to the challenges of modernity.

Chapters 4 through 6 focus on Rahner, Ellacuria, and Francis, demonstrating how each one responded to the challenges of modernity in ways that were inspired by Ignatian spirituality. Ashley explores their differences and disagreements and in so doing makes a compelling case for the view that studying theological work by giving close attention to the spiritualities that underpin them is a fruitful way of understanding and addressing theological differences. By exploring the Ignatian influences on the views of Rahner, Ellacuria, and Francis, Ashley shows how each of these figures, in their own way, uncovered important features of the modern world. Chapter 7 concludes this exploration by arguing that Ignatian spirituality is as much a gift to our own time as it was to the sixteenth century because it animates and renews the theological imagination while academic theology presents the world to that imagination. While Ignatian spirituality invites us to encounter God in the world, theology invites us to expand that vision, to connect our understanding of the God we encounter with other horizons.

In the opening paragraph of this book, Ashley writes that theology “arose out of the crucible of Christianity’s first centuries,” and his subsequent account makes clear that he is indeed focused on Christian theology and Christian spirituality. But although his focus is the “Christian West,” he notes that spirituality can cross cultural boundaries more easily than doctrine or theology, and this book argues that theology can be renewed by and welcome the pluralism of modernity through a focus on spirituality. Indeed, because theology and spirituality are found in many different traditions and cultures around the world, those of us working in the area of comparative spirituality and theology will find much in Ashley’s work to build upon. Ashley makes a convincing case that spirituality “should exist in a mutually fructifying relationship with theology” (109), and I hope his work inspires much future conversation about how

different spiritualities and theologies might help us to navigate the boundaries that separate us.

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*Eucharistic Origins*, Revised Edition. By Paul F. Bradshaw. Eugene, OR, Cascade Books, 2023. xvi + 189 pages. \$27.00 (paper).  
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Paul Bradshaw is a masterful scholar and, here in this revised edition of his text *Eucharistic Origins*, we have his historical and theological insights on full display. Examining eucharistic worship from its roots in the nascent church through to the fourth century, Bradshaw draws on the latest scholarship to address age old assumptions about many of the fundamental understandings of the liturgy. He does so with a depth of scholarship and logic of argument that disassembles long-held understandings regarding everything from the origins of Sunday worship to the development of the epiclesis. This text is an essential companion for students and scholars of the liturgy alike.

A fundamental axiom of studies in the early church is that unity is most often expressed in and through diversity, that is, diversity in prayer forms, in ministries and in ecclesial structures, to name just a few examples. *Eucharistic Origins* makes the truth of this in regard to eucharistic worship abundantly clear. Proceeding systematically, beginning with the New Testament accounts of the “Last Supper and the Institution Narratives,” Bradshaw provides an insightful, concise analysis that draws out the development of liturgical scholarship over the last decades. He demonstrates how current thought and research asks new questions of the texts, offering a different orientation that supersedes long-held beliefs about language and meaning through linguistics and textual analysis. Bradshaw provides numerous comparative tables, and the plentiful and lengthy quotes from the various manuscript traditions are exceedingly helpful and illustrative of the arguments being presented. These will also be of assistance to students who may not be familiar with or have immediate access to the full range of texts under discussion.

Moving systematically through the central eucharistic writings of the early church, this work includes an examination of the Didache, Apostolic Tradition, the writings of Justin Martyr, and the work of Cyprian, Irenaeus, and Tertullian