

love of the Father for the Son because God's inner being is an eternally generative life-giving harmony of persons. God's intention is to draw the creation into the joy of God's interpersonal relationality. Because our true being is found in communion with God and others, individualistic conceptions of the *imago Dei* are dangerously misleading.

Based on these foundational convictions, the authors contend that the church is not just a collection of like-minded people, but is the living and personal body of Christ where Christ joins his life to the faithful. In proclamation Christ speaks as a living, active subject and through the sacraments makes himself present. The liturgies of the church shape our identities and counteract all the worldly liturgies that inculcate illusory notions of human flourishing. Whole-hearted immersion in the life and ministry of the church is the necessary context for knowing God in general, and for doing theology in particular. The authors further conclude that paradox and mystery are necessary qualities of genuine theology, for conformity to secular modes of rationality would reduce Christianity to an echo of worldly discourse. The eschatological orientation of the faith should inspire an orientation to the future that further resists the world's assumptions about historical probabilities.

The volume's account of Christian theology's importance in shaping lives and its need to resist domination by other forms of discourse is powerful and valuable. Nevertheless, the book exhibits some internal tensions. While it claims to be equally distant from leftist and rightist ideologies, sometimes its list of secular idolatries includes items that are dear only to the political right. For example, it is not clear how a critique of 'transgenderism' follows necessarily from the doctrines of Trinity and incarnation. In such instances the volume may be guilty of the very conformity to alien conceptualities that it so rightly condemns. Also, while it describes its project as ecumenical, its attachment to one particular theological trajectory excludes other plausible and pious construals of the Christian story. Not even within the Reformed heritage is there a universally accepted ecclesiology. Perhaps the Christian faith and Christian theology are even more mysterious and multi-vocal than this volume sometimes suggests.

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## **Matt R. Jantzen, *God, Race, and History: Liberating Providence***

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Matt R. Jantzen's *God, Race, and History: Liberating Providence* is not exactly a retrieval of the classical doctrine. Rather, by means of intellectual history and constructive theology, Jantzen diagnoses the doctrine of providence as beholden to problematic visions of white western male dominance and attempts to reconstruct it in light of this diagnosis. Ultimately, Jantzen hopes 'both to liberate the doctrine of providence

from its symbiotic entanglement with racial vision and to articulate an account of the liberating character of God's providence' (p. 8), in hopes that we might discern, respond to and participate in the liberating activity of God in history.

In chapter 1, Jantzen appraises some recent efforts at diagnosing the fate of the doctrine of providence (by Langdon Gilkey and G. C. Berkouwer), arguing that these have failed to recognise the 'more historically and conceptually basic problem for a Christian account of providence in modernity' (p. 6), namely, its captivity to modern racial reasoning and practice. In the chapters that follow, Jantzen locates a paradigmatic instance of this adulteration of the doctrine and then examines two major modern attempts to counter the unholy union of providence with ideology, in the process making several key interpretive moves in support of his larger argument.

In chapter 2, Jantzen argues for the centrality of G. W. F. Hegel's hierarchical and teleological anthropological vision – i.e. of European humanity as the consummation of the divine providential will – within his larger philosophical theory of the unfolding of the world-historical process. Shrewd readers will observe an affinity between Jantzen's reading of Hegel and J. Kameron Carter's reading of Immanuel Kant. Taken together, these German philosophical giants have played a central role in advancing notions of an anthropological hierarchy that grounds whiteness and white supremacy.

In chapter 3, Jantzen interprets Karl Barth's doctrine of providence, as found in *Church Dogmatics* III/3, in light of his occasional political-theological writings, arguing that Barth's christocentric conception of the relationship between world history and salvation history (i.e. that in Christ the two are related though distinct) is fundamentally an ideological critique that seeks to oppose the marriage of the doctrine of providence with various forms of idolatrous nationalism, including anti-communist hysteria of the western Cold War. US readers will find Jantzen's analysis of Barth's assessment of Cold War anti-communism particularly relevant in light of contemporary debates about the extent of Marxist influences in public education in general and on the construction of analytical tools like Critical Race Theory in particular.

In chapter 4, Jantzen interprets James Cone's broader christological project as largely dependent on a doctrine of the Holy Spirit – indeed, 'Cone's doctrine of providence is a doctrine of the pneumatological contemporaneity of Christ' (p. 114). Jantzen is careful not to claim for Cone a pneumatology, but to suggest the need for greater attention to Cone's pneumatology due to the centrality of the Holy Spirit in his Christology. This is a welcome observation which resonates with recent calls for increased attention to pneumatology in the black liberation theological tradition.

In chapter 5, his most constructive theological chapter, Jantzen offers a comparative analysis of Hegel's, Barth's and Cone's doctrines of providence, isolating three main themes upon which he builds his own constructive of providence: the centrality of Christology, the creatureliness of humanity and the mediation of the Spirit. Additionally, Jantzen also isolates two problems which he thinks plague all three thinkers: androcentrism, which is manifested through gender-exclusive language and masculine conceptions of human agency projected onto conceptions of God's providential agency; and 'reductive pneumatology', which finds the Spirit either independent of Jesus (Hegel) or effectively indistinguishable from him (Barth and Cone). In an effort to build on the three themes while responding to these problems, Jantzen proposes his own 'pneumatological conception of providence', in which the Spirit mediates 'varying intensities of Christ's presence in creation', so that 'Christ's presence through the Spirit is coextensive with the entirety of creation, even as that presence is weaker or stronger

based upon creation's relative participation in its source' (p. 154). At this point it is somewhat unclear how this pneumatological mediation avoids the problem of triumphalism, since configurations of socio-political power make it possible for certain individuals or groups to claim 'strong' christological presence and participation in order to justify their own interests, or 'weak' christological presence and participation among those they wish to exclude.

Jantzen concludes the text by applying his pneumatological conception of providence to discern the Spirit at work in making Christ present in and through human efforts to resist racialised practices of gentrification in the city of Durham, North Carolina.

Jantzen's commendable contribution might be complemented or expanded upon in at least one major direction. His pneumatological conception of providence would benefit from constructive dialogue with the ecclesial community for whom this doctrinal perspective is perhaps most characteristic: Pentecostals. Especially considering Jantzen's discussion of Spirit-initiated cross-class and cross-racial communities of solidarity and non-statist democratic participation, black US Pentecostalism seems an obvious interlocutor.

In the end, Jantzen's book follows in the footsteps of texts such as Willie James Jennings' *The Christian Imagination* and J. Kameron Carter's *Race: A Theological Account*. If Jennings' diagnosis of a deformed doctrine of creation and Carter's diagnosis of a pseudo-theological anthropology of race represent critical-constructive accounts of the doctrines of the first and second persons of the Godhead, respectively, then Jantzen's pneumatological conception of providence completes a trinitarian offensive against modern racial reasoning.

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## Pieter Vos, *Longing for the Good Life: Virtue Ethics After Protestantism*

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Vos investigates how Protestantism 'relates to the long and multifaceted tradition of virtue ethics' and how this inheritance might 'contribute to the development of a viable contemporary virtue ethics' (p. 1). These objectives are pursued over eight chapters, which give the reader much to ponder.

The first two chapters attend to several preliminary issues. Chapter 1 introduces the virtue tradition with reference to Aristotle, then turning to its reception by Augustine. In this exploration the more modern 'philosophy of the art of living' (with its provenance in Foucault) is used as a foil and is forcefully critiqued. Chapter 2 further plumbs Augustine's thought in conversation with Nicholas Wolterstorff. For Wolterstorff, Augustine causes a decisive break with eudaimonism; Vos disagrees. He persuasively