

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

epistemically acceptable but *required*, even in the face of unanswered defeaters. He writes, ‘The love for God, which should inspire (paradigmatic) believers in any activity, rational investigations and debates included, requires that they firmly commit themselves to God and the related beliefs—that God exists, loves us, sent Jesus Christ into the world for our salvation, and the like—no matter how convincing the evidence that contradicts such beliefs might appear to be’ (p. 6). Hence, Di Ceglie rejects what he calls *mere epistemology*—the view that one should always prefer beliefs supported by more evidence to beliefs supported by less evidence. Instead, he argues that when a believer finds herself in a debate in which there is less evidence for her religious commitments than evidence against her religious commitments, the believer should be content with inconclusiveness in the debate given that no amount of evidence should cause her to change her mind.

According to Di Ceglie, the Christian makes an unjustified, a-rational commitment to the fundamentals of the Christian faith. As Di Ceglie points out, ‘the perseverance that the Christian believers are expected to maintain is not justified—it is not based on common evidence, and no publicly acceptable explanations can be offered in its support’ (p. 99). Thus, when the Christian believer is presented with a defeater such as the Divine Hiddenness Argument (which he considers in Chapter 5), he encourages her to take the *spiritual turn in epistemology* in which she focuses not on pursuing a defence of the truth of her beliefs but on God and the spiritual growth that could result from reflection on the defeater. This may eventually lead her to consider defending the truth but only if doing so contributes to the greater goal of her spiritual growth. Thus, as Di Ceglie observes, the spiritual turn in epistemology may be construed by some as a turn away from epistemology since the truth is only valuable as a means to our pursuit of God.

Di Ceglie extends his discussion of the spiritual turn to unbelievers as well. He notes that unbelievers often have unjustified, a-rational commitments to the good just as believers have such commitments to God. In particular, he notes that ‘nowadays, nobody would seriously deny the assumption that there are fundamental rights that all human beings, with no exception, should be put in a condition to exercise, regardless of race, political orientation, and the like’ (p. 191). This commitment to the good is unlikely to be relinquished even in the face of contrary evidence. Thus, when the unbeliever is presented with arguments against a commitment to the fundamental rights of all human beings, it is reasonable for her to firmly hold to her commitment to the good even if she cannot yet answer the defeater. In this way, her commitment to the good is epistemically analogous to the believer’s commitment to God.

Di Ceglie develops the themes that I have highlighted in three parts. In Part I, he outlines John Locke’s view of faith and reason which seems akin to the mere epistemology that Di Ceglie intends to reject. He notes modern and contemporary figures in philosophy that have opposed Locke’s

view including Thomas Reid, John Henry Newman, and Alvin Plantinga. In Part II, Di Ceglie develops Aquinas's view on faith and reason which he understands to reject Lockean mere epistemology. Aquinas's claim that it is appropriate for a Christian to maintain tenacious faith in the face of counterevidence leads Di Ceglie to reconsider the purpose of debates. He argues that it is the search for good and not the search for truth that should characterize intellectual pursuits. Finally, in Part III, Di Ceglie develops his notion of the spiritual turn in epistemology in which the Christian believer engages in debate for the purpose of her own spiritual growth and growth in the virtues. He then develops his claim that the unbeliever can also take an analogous spiritual turn in debates given the unbelievers' a-rational commitment to the good.

As Di Ceglie's thorough research indicates, he is not the first Christian thinker to have offered a defence of firm and tenacious religious commitment without evidence. He demonstrates a mastery of both historical and contemporary accounts of religious epistemology. His own perspective stands in contrast with recent Reformed Epistemologists who have argued that the Christian believer's firm and tenacious commitment to her faith is *justified*. As Di Ceglie notes, Alvin Plantinga argues that belief in God is properly basic. On this account, a religious believer's commitments are not a-rational; they are justified (or warranted) basic beliefs. Thus, the Reformed Epistemologist has an available explanation for the epistemic acceptability of maintaining religious belief in the face of contrary evidence, namely, the justification for one's belief in God's existence outweighs the justification provided by the contrary evidence for belief in God's nonexistence. Moreover, if one's belief in God is justified and not merely an unjustified, a-rational commitment, then we can make sense of how a Christian believer is able to maintain that belief indefinitely in the face of contrary evidence. When presented with contrary evidence for any belief B, one does not always immediately abandon B. But for one to continue to believe B even though convinced by evidence for not B over an indefinite period of time, at best, seems akin to an epistemic vice and, at worst, seems impossible. As for the impossibility claim, if we form our beliefs somewhat involuntarily, it is hard to see how we could resist revising an unjustified, a-rational belief in the face of persistent, convincing contrary evidence. However, if our belief in God is justified in the way that the Reformed Epistemologists suggest, we can explain the firmness and tenacity of belief in the face of contrary evidence in the following way: the justification for belief in God is not outweighed by the defeater arguments.

I am deeply sympathetic to Di Ceglie's project. I, too, want to defend the epistemic appropriateness (maybe even justification) of firm, tenacious belief in God. Though I have suggested that there may be advantages to the nearby view on faith and reason that emerges from Reformed Epistemology, Di Ceglie's book is an important contribution to the ongoing discussion of faith and reason both in its practical proposals for the

religious believer and its extension of the position to include the unbeliever's commitment to the good.

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**UNSPEAKABLE CULTS: AN ESSAY IN CHRISTOLOGY** by Paul J. DeHart, *Baylor University Press, Waco, 2021, pp. x + 261, £47.63, hbk*

Some recent Christologies appear strangely post-biblical, as if Lessing's 'great ugly ditch' had been transferred into the theology faculty, dividing systematicians and exegetes into utterly discrete silos of discourse. Any contemporary Chalcedon-consistent Christology must reconcile metaphysics and biblical narrative. Christ is both absolute (transcendent) and relative (immanent); Chalcedon's logic demands that the singular life of Jesus be accredited as the self-disclosure of infinitely transcendent reality, but nonetheless as a human life embedded within relative causal pathways. DeHart reconciles these impulses by recourse to semiosis, cutting through any post-biblical dissociation of historical facticity and the cultic reception of Christ's divinity. Although the prime targets are Christologies that constitute Christ as an interruption to the quotidian flow of creaturely causality, *Unspeakable Cults* is equally opposed to dogmatic reductions of facticity to irrelevance, and to any historicism that over-asserts the power of atomised facts to drive out metaphysics. Christologies are immunised against historical deconstruction only to the extent that they acknowledge their incapacity to exorcise themselves of history.

For DeHart, Christology flourishes within the space of 'lagging epiphany' (the ecclesial reception of Christ, derived from and determined by the incarnation itself). This reception does not re-pristiniate the pre-determined fact of Christ but is the means by which that fact (*qua* Absolute Fact) reaches self-expression and actualisation. The incarnation is 'inevitably stretched out into a temporal interpretative process through communal cultural activity' (p. 12), but the nexus of semiosis invoked by this 'extended incarnation' intersects with the ontological mission of redemption. On DeHart's account, cultural semiosis is analogous to prime matter, formed by the animating dynamics of the Spirit 'without disturbing its purely immanent cultural dynamic' (p. 163). Christology consequently demands a pneumatology that avoids the extremes of Bultmann (entanglement within history) and Barth (disengaged hovering over history, poised to interrupt): the integrity of Chalcedonian Christology