

ABSTRACTS

M. Jamie Ferreira, *Leaps and Circles: Kierkegaard and Newman on Faith and Reason.*

Søren Kierkegaard (in the Climacus writings) and John Henry Newman have starkly opposed formulations of the relation between faith and reason. In this essay I focus on a possible convergence in their respective understandings of the transition to religious belief or faith, as embodied in metaphors they use for a qualitative transition. I explore the ways in which attention to the legitimate dimension of discontinuity highlighted by the Climacian metaphor of the ‘leap’ can illuminate Newman’s use of the metaphor of a ‘polygon inscribed in a circle’, as well as the ways in which Newman’s metaphor can illuminate the dimension of continuity operative in the Climacian appreciation of qualitative transition.

Georg Behrens, *Schleiermacher contra Lindbeck on the Status of Dogmatic Sentences.*

Lindbeck has devised what he calls a ‘regulative theory’ of doctrinal sentences, which he considers to be superior to its main rivals ‘propositionalism’ and ‘experiential-expressivism’. For Lindbeck, Schleiermacher is the classical expressivist. I argue that Schleiermacher is more properly classified as a propositionalist, though he does have expressivist inclinations. According to Schleiermacher, doctrinal sentences express propositions about God, the world, and human self-consciousness, and they can be the objects of cognitive states. At the same time, there is a sense in which they ‘express’ pious self-consciousness. I also argue that Schleiermacher’s account of doctrinal sentences is superior to Lindbeck’s, because it provides a better basis for understanding ecumenical dialogue.

Paul R. Noble, *Hermeneutics and Postmodernism: Can We Have a Radical Reader-Response Theory? Part I*

This paper argues that if Stanley Fish’s postmodernist hermeneutics is correct then it has far-reaching consequences for Biblical Studies, because it licences radical reinterpretations that traditional approaches would consider inadmissible. The theory is then tested out by examining Fish’s own attempts at radical reinterpretation. Following a methodological discussion of the criteria by which his exegesis should be assessed, a wide-ranging survey of Fish’s examples shows that they consistently fail to support his claims, and that the nature of their failure suggests that his hermeneutical theory is seriously flawed. This is further proved by showing that Fish’s theory entails an extreme form of solipsism.

Vincen Brümmer, Calvin, Bernard and the Freedom of the Will.

In his *Institutes* 2.2.5 Calvin declares that he ‘willingly accepts’ the distinction between freedom from necessity, from sin and from misery originally developed by St Bernard. It is remarkable that a determinist like Calvin seems here to accept a libertarian view of human freedom. In this paper I set out Bernard’s doctrine of the three kinds of freedom and show that all its basic elements can in fact be found in Calvin’s argument in chapters 2 and 3 of the *Institutes* part II. Towards the end of chapter 3, however, Calvin’s doctrine of ‘perseverance’ makes him revert to a deterministic view of the divine-human relationship. I show that the considerations which prompt Calvin to this can be adequately met on the basis of Bernard’s libertarian concept of human freedom.

Paul Helm, Calvin, Bernard and Brümmer on the Freedom of the Will.

It is argued that Calvin does not veer between two incompatible accounts of grace, freedom and necessity in *Institutes II. 2*, but presents a consistent position. The consistency is evident once it is seen that Calvin carefully distinguished between *necessity* and *compulsion*. For him not all necessitated acts are compelled, but all human acts which are the outcome of efficacious divine grace are necessitated by that grace. Because Calvin is consistent, there is no need to suppose that he has mistaken the causal sufficiency of divine saving grace for its causal importance.

Paul R. Eddy, Religious Pluralism and the Divine: Another Look at John Hick’s Neo-Kantian Proposal.

This study focuses upon the heart of John Hick’s pluralistic philosophy of religion – his neo-Kantian response to the problem of conflicting inter-religious conceptions of the divine. Hick attempts to root his proposal in two streams of tradition: (1) the inter-religious awareness of the distinction between the divine in itself vs. the divine as humanly experienced, and (2) a Kantian epistemology. In fact, these attempts are problematic in that his hypothesis introduces a radical subjectivizing element at both junctures. In the end, I contend that Hick’s neo-Kantian proposal undermines his decades-long effort to defend some form of religious realism.

D. Groothuis, Wagering Belief: Examining Two Objections to Pascal’s Wager.

This paper concerns two objections to Pascal’s wager. The first claims that Pascal’s recommendation to habituate oneself to believe in God is tantamount to religious brainwashing. I argue that this construal misses important aspects of what Pascal had in mind, which may render the habituation process a legitimate means to acquire new understanding. The second objection is based on the idea that a key assumption of the wager – that theistic belief is required for eternal felicity – is morally absurd. I argue that theistic belief, as Pascal understands it, is a necessary aspect for spiritual restoration, not merely an isolated belief in an imperious deity.

J. J. MacIntosh, Belief-In Revisited: a Reply to Williams.

In ‘Belief-In and Belief in God’ (*Religious Studies*, 28, 1992), J. N. Williams suggests that belief in God cannot be rational unless one has rational beliefs *that* God exists.

While agreeing with his conclusion (though not with his statement of it), I disagree at almost every step with his method of arriving at it. In particular I suggest that Williams goes astray concerning the dual aspect of *belief in*, the nature of performatives, the arousal of belief states, and the correct account of belief in God.

Yuval Steinitz, Contradictions are Ontological Arguments.

Although ontological arguments had provoked many objections, most of them boil down to the claim that a purely conceptual analysis must be devoid of factual content. Thus, instead of rebutting each of these objections separately, this paper intends to convince those who deny ontological arguments to admit the existence, from their own perspectives, of at least *negative* ontological arguments. The paper argues that conceptual contradictions constitute arguments of this type, showing what necessarily does not exist.

Melissa Raphael, Feminism, Constructivism, and Numinous Experience.

This article brings together constructivist epistemology and feminist study of religion to provide phenomenological evidence that numinous consciousness is not the immediate, *sui generis* essence of religious experience that Rudolf Otto believed it to be. Whilst there are certain peculiarities in the Ottonian scheme that might make numinous consciousness unusually resistant to conceptual and ideological mediation, it can be shown that androcentric epistemological and axiological structures make the experience intelligible and worthy of accommodation within a given patriarchal religious tradition. By contrast, contemporary gynocentric spiritualities in which women celebrate their psychobiological difference as itself a necessary medium of religious experience, have no interest in protecting the holy from the limitations of its immanence.