

*Soldiers of God in A Secular World: Catholic Theology and Twentieth-Century French Politics.* By Sarah Shortall. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021. 338 pages. \$51.00.  
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With *Soldiers of God in a Secular World*, Sarah Shortall, who teaches twentieth-century French intellectual history at the University of Notre Dame, makes a brilliant contribution to historical theology. Her story spans the period from 1880 to 1965. Political exile and World War II, with its troubled aftermath, challenged creative groups of French Jesuits and Dominicans to “reimagine the nature of the church and its relationship to the political order” (2). The book has three parts: first, “Separation (1880–1939),” including chapters on “Exile Catholicism” and “From Royalism to the Mystical Body”; second, “Resistance (1940–1944),” with chapters on “Fighting Nazism with ‘Weapons of the Spirit’” and “The Theoretical Foundations of the Spiritual Resistance”; third, “Renewal (1945–1965),” including chapters on “The Postwar Catholic Engagement with the Left”; “The Drama of Atheist Humanism and the Politics of History”; “The Death and Resurrection of *Nouvelle Théologie*”; and an epilogue.

This deep and wide-ranging intellectual history, based on at least twenty-three French archival sources and published works in multiple languages, seeks to “integrate theology into the intellectual history of Europe” (10) by showing the already deep entanglement of modern European thought with theology. In this task Shortall joins an innovative group of historians including Samuel Moyn, Giuliana Chamedes, Edward Baring, and James Chappel. Unlike Chappel and Chamedes, however, Shortall doesn’t ask how and when the church became modern, but rather how her soldiers of God tried to ground modernization in premodern, often pre-Constantinian, thought, and how “they contested and transformed what it meant to be modern” (4).

De Lubac articulates his turn to eschatology and its corresponding attempt to reimagine the church as Christ’s mystical body in history in *Catholicism* (1938) and *Corpus Mysticum* (1944). To name the resulting critical posture toward the present, Shortall borrows William Cavanaugh’s “counter politics,” describing it as largely “coded” in response to political and religious censorship. Theologians firmly located on either “progressive” or “conservative” sides in US politics will likely be uneasy with “counter politics.” Upon finishing this book, I had to ask: If the mystical body really is the primary social body to which I belong, what are the political consequences? One of Shortall’s main emphases is “the ways in which religious thought tends to defy the logic of right and left” (257). Her intriguing concluding question interrogates the possibility of “a more reflexive and inclusive form of secularism” (258).

Shortall's recurring references to the "coded" writing of French theologians, both during and after World War II, offers, without explicitly mentioning it, a contextual response to John Milbank's oft-cited description of de Lubac after *Human Generis* (1950) as "a stuttering, somewhat traumatized theologian." I would have appreciated engagement with Michel de Certeau's critique of de Lubac's mystical body as an imaginary *catholica* that suppresses difference. Certeau makes a few appearances (e.g., page 312 note 172), but his critique comes after 1968.

*Soldiers of God* demonstrates not only how theology is part of European intellectual history, but also points to how theology might contribute to its future. Graduate students seeking to figure out what historical theology is will find in Shortall a sure guide. By reconstructing the world in which they mattered, she brings the ideas of twentieth-century theological giants to life in ways that elude most systematic theologians. *Soldiers of God* belongs in any library with a collection in contemporary Catholic theology.

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*The World and God Are Not-Two: A Hindu Christian Conversation.* By Daniel Soars. New York: Fordham University Press, 2023. \$35.00 (paper).  
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Daniel Soars's *The World and God Are Not-Two* is a compelling and carefully rendered comparative theological study of distinction, and of *distinctions* between creator and creation in Christian and Hindu worldviews. Subtitled "A Hindu-Christian Conversation," the book engages perspectives on panentheism and nondualism in Catholic theology and the Hindu philosophical tradition of Advaita Vedānta. A byproduct of Soars's 2019 doctoral dissertation at University of Cambridge entitled "Beyond the Dualism of Creature and Creator: A Hindu-Christian Theological Inquiry into the Distinctive Relation between the World and God," the monograph is part of the series "Comparative Theology: Thinking Across Traditions," edited by Loye Ashton and John Thatamanil.

Soars frames his project as an example of comparative theology, a practice envisioned and modeled by Francis X. Clooney, SJ, as "deep learning across religious borders." Soars, writing as a Roman Catholic, proposes that the *sui generis* relation between God and God's creation (or "the world") is