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**Book Review: The End and the Return of Metaphysics: Peter M. Candler Jr and Conor Cunningham (eds), *Transcendence and Phenomenology* (London: SCM, 2007. £65.00. pp. 534. ISBN 978 0 334 04151 1). Peter M. Candler Jr and Conor Cunningham (eds), *Belief and Metaphysics* (London: SCM, 2007. £65.00. pp. 534. ISBN 978 0 334 04150 4)**

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*THE END AND THE RETURN OF  
METAPHYSICS*

Peter M. Candler Jr and Conor Cunningham (eds), *Transcendence and Phenomenology* (London: SCM, 2007. £65.00. pp. 534. ISBN 978-0-334-04151-1).

Peter M. Candler Jr and Conor Cunningham (eds), *Belief and Metaphysics* (London: SCM, 2007. £65.00. pp. 534. ISBN 978-0-334-04150-4).

The phenomenological method of Edmund Husserl was widely influential in post-war Europe, especially upon Catholic thought as the pastoral wishes of John XXIII were implemented by theologians and bishops trained in phenomenology and who found it an effective means of both understanding and conversing with the modern world.

Husserl had proposed that a 'phenomenon' was not just the object which appeared to human consciousness but also the living experience in and through which it appeared. This means that phenomenology is, in effect, the study of lived experience and human aptitude for experience. Contemporary phenomenology attempts to push the phenomenological reduction of reality beyond the limits set by Husserl and his pupil Heidegger, arguing that once the phenomenon is reduced to its unconditional given-ness for consciousness, the self can be called into being by that *given-ness*.

Subsequent theological and philosophical accounts of the gift and love (conceived as gift) have enabled a move beyond metaphysics and ontological difference; God, as the being-as-given *par excellence*, gives himself absolutely, dazzling us with a presence that *transcends* all of our horizons. As Joeri Schrijvers writes in the first of these two books from SCM Press inaugurating their new *Veritas* series, "the end of metaphysics", it seems, has become a slogan; indeed, one might even suggest that it has become an appeal: as if it were an easy task to, as Schrijvers puts it 'to tear off the shadows of the metaphysical God, and free ourselves from that terrible metaphysics that has caused us to misrepresent the relation with God'.

Phenomenology as a descriptive enterprise is, of course, a vast project, one that crosses diverse traditions and disciplines. This outstanding collection of essays (the result of the Nottingham Centre of Theology and Philosophy's first annual conference in September 2005) examines the background to and discusses the much debated 'turn to theology' in philosophy, in particular the work of Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Yves Lacoste, Jean-Louis Chretien and the late Michel Henry, to whom this first volume is dedicated. A rich and varied collection, it considers both theological and philosophical accounts of transcendence, and the ways in which religious phenomena such as liturgy and faith, and how love and the humanity of Christ present themselves.

This recent transformation of the question of postmodernism into a larger question of phenomenology has begun a conversation about the significance of metaphysics to phenomenology, hermeneutics and postmodernism. For many there remains the puzzle of how to approach such a dazzling God whilst the eagerness of French phenomenology to *dépasser la métaphysique* by elevating Heidegger perhaps too readily equates metaphysics with philosophy and overlooks its possibility to think through ontological difference or articulate *un possible rationnel*: as Maurice Blondel once observed, 'One cannot exclude metaphysics except by a metaphysical critique'.

One of the stated aims of the Centre is to overcome the analytic/continental divide in philosophy and the second volume, *Belief and Metaphysics* (the fruits of the COTP's second annual conference held in Granada in 2006) gathers together both analytic and continental philosophical approaches to the question. A similarly distinguished collection of contributors, rather than trying to overcome metaphysics, argue for its retrieval and reinvigoration in the face of the postmodern challenge; across topics as diverse as the metaphysics of creation and the metaphysical imagination they suggest that there is a 'crucial need' for metaphysics to mediate between pure reason and pure faith. No longer supplemented by faith reason

has become prey to a 'dangerous dogmatism' whilst refusal of the idea that religious intuition be guided by rational discussion encourages 'fanatical and violent modes of religiosity'.

By turns both engaging and provocative these volumes present an impressive survey of the field, its key thinkers and their arguments, and provide a valuable framework for those new to the debate.

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### THE ESSENTIAL EXPOSITORY

Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (2nd edn; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007. \$29.99. pp. 400. ISBN 0-8010-2798-5).

*Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* by Bryan Chapell is a second edition published again by Baker Academic. Chapell is professor of homiletics and president of Covenant Theological Seminary in St Louis, Missouri. As the name implies, his monograph is an extensive work on the mechanics and theory of expository preaching. Chapell believes that 'Our Culture and the Church are desperate for dependable truths that address the brokenness of the world ...' and he is very clear about how this concern can be addressed. For Chapell, the expository sermon is the key to Christian proclamation. He writes: 'Expository preaching attempts to present and apply the truths of a specific biblical passage. Other types of preaching that proclaim biblical truth are certainly valid and valuable, but for the beginning preacher and for a regular congregational diet, no preaching type is more important than expository.'

The content of the book is extensive and follows a logical and clear pattern. It is divided into three main parts. The first section is entitled Principles for Expository Preaching. This section examines topics that include obligations of the sermon and a discussion on the priority of the text. To begin, Chapell is keen to stress the importance of preaching grounded in the power of the word. The second section of the work, Preparation of Expository Sermons, considers the overall process of explanation and deals with a number of mechanical aspects including introductions, outlining a sermon and transitions. A Theology Of Christ-Centered Messages is the final

section of the work that examines redemptive aspects of preaching. Ultimately, Chapell believes that expository preaching should lead a person to total reliance on God. He concludes his work by noting, 'Only when they know to look to God alone has a sermon been truly beneficial and biblical'.

The author has also included questions for reflection and discussion and exercises throughout. There is an extensive appendix including study resources, funeral messages and a sample sermon. Throughout the book there are a considerable number of illustrations, some more helpful than others.

Perhaps the major concern of the work is its sheer bulk and a tendency to present preaching as a mechanical task whereby a sermon is constructed and delivered as opposed to created and preached. Nonetheless, it offers a number of very helpful insights into the basic elements of preaching from week to week including an excellent discussion on the importance and power of story in preaching. The book functions as a handbook for preaching and it will be useful to those who hope to learn the basic elements of preaching. Thus, the book will be helpful to those who carry out preaching as a profession and those who are confronted with the task on the rare occasion.

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### DIVERSE ANGLICANS

Mark D. Chapman (ed.), *The Anglican Covenant: Unity and Diversity in the Anglican Community* (London: Continuum, 2008. £14.99. pp. 224. ISBN 978-0-5670-3253-9).

This is a useful collection of essays, arising out of an Affirming Catholicism conference in early 2007. It presents a helpfully diverse range of views about what should be done by Anglicans to cope with their present troubles (troubles by no means unique to them) and in this way provides substantial food for thought and reflection. These quite sharp differences make the book come alive, though they are not themselves directly the subject of reflection. Mark Chapman, in an interesting discussion of conciliarism in the fifteenth century suggests that we need to regard grand schemes for resolving communion-wide disagreements with caution: the Council of Constance