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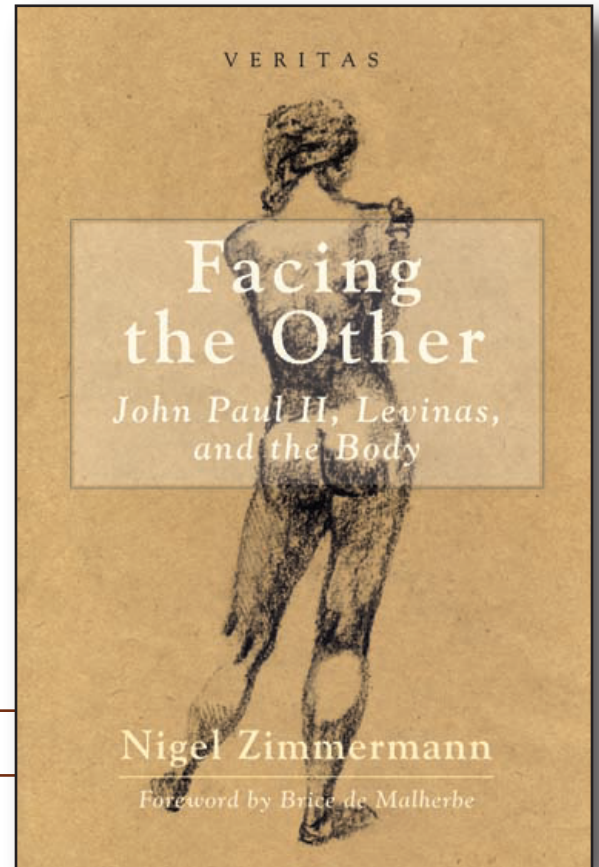
# Facing the Other

*John Paul II, Levinas, and the Body*

**Nigel Zimmermann**

*Foreword by Brice de Malherbe*

What is the significance of the body? What might phenomenology contribute to a theological account of the body? And what is gained by prolonging the overlooked dialogue between St. John Paul II and Emmanuel Levinas? Nigel Zimmermann answers these questions through the agreements and the tensions between two of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century. John Paul II, the Polish pope, philosopher, and theologian, and Emmanuel Levinas, the French-Jewish philosopher of Lithuanian heritage, were provocative thinkers who courageously faced and challenged the assumptions of their age. Both held the human person in high regard and did their thinking with constant reference to God and to theological language. Zimmermann does not shirk from the challenges of each thinker and does not hide their differences. However, he shows how they bequeath a legacy regarding the body that we would overlook at significant ethical peril. We are called, Zimmermann argues, to face the other. In this moment God refuses a banal marginalization and our call to responsibility for the other person is issued in their disarming vulnerability. In the body, philosophy, theology, and ethics converge to call us to glory, even in the paradox of lowly suffering.



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**Nigel Zimmermann** lectures in Theology with the Institute for Ethics and Society at the University of Notre Dame Australia (Sydney). He is author of *Levinas and Theology* (2013).

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“Zimmermann’s work uncovers and articulately discloses moments of sincere dialogue between two influential figures of twentieth-century philosophical thought: John Paul II and Emmanuel Levinas. These moments are exploited for what they give to a contemporary theology of the body, without in any way ignoring points of significant difference.”

—**Michael Purcell**, (1956-2013), Senior Lecturer in Systematic Theology, University of Edinburgh

“Karol Wojtyła and Emmanuel Levinas, obviously two of the great thinkers of the twentieth century, each profoundly original and deeply immersed in his own distinctive tradition, were yet able to meet in fruitful conversation on central questions about human nature and destiny, as Nigel Zimmermann shows in this lucidly and elegantly argued account.”

—**Fergus Kerr**, Honorary Fellow, School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh

“*Facing the Other* . . . draws out the significance of the difference between a religious tradition whose God is wholly other, and the Christian claim that God became incarnate. Along the way, Zimmermann offers the reader a ‘theology of the body for grown-ups’ as he explains the centrality of the nuptial mystery and its Trinitarian foundations in the thought of Wojtyła/John Paul II. The work is beautifully crafted.”

—**Tracey Rowland**, Dean and Permanent Fellow in Political Philosophy and Continental Theology, John Paul II Institute, Melbourne, Australia

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(541) 344-1528, ext 103 or [James@wipfandstock.com](mailto:James@wipfandstock.com)

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