

In her third chapter, Young moves to re-creation or resurrection and through this, she arrives at a broader doctrine of humanity. In doing so she ingeniously gives new life also to the discredited term 'soul'. Her fourth chapter investigates image and likeness, and couples this with a discussion of *theosis* and incarnation. Human participation within the *imago dei* reminds us of the inherent value of every human individual, but this must be seen within the context of community and thus the solidarity of all humankind. Here is the beginning of a positive theological anthropology. Next she moves to atonement and redemption. One of the remarkable issues of her discussion here is balanced enthusiasm for the place of Mary within Christian theology – Mary is the *theotokos*, the God-bearer.

The final three chapters cover the work of the Holy Spirit, a critical ecumenism, and the doctrine of God. Her epilogue is an extended poem under the title *Sophie's Call*, where Sophie stands for *sophia* or wisdom. The range of material with which Young deals within the book is breath-taking. Here is a systematic theology, rooted in the Patristic tradition which also serves effectively as a theological ethics. There is an apologetic tone to the book in places which, however, never becomes obsessive about the 'new atheists.' Young is proud of her own formation within Methodism and, early on, places alongside the Anglican triad of *Scripture, Tradition and Reason*, a fourth key 'Methodist element' by including human experience. In this book, Young offers a great gift which challenges as it also nourishes and sustains. It stands well within the remit of *Crucible* and reminds us of our inalienable and theological roots.

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Together for the Common Good: Towards a National Conversation

Nicholas Sagovsky and Peter McGrail, eds.
SCM Press, 2015, 212 pp., pbk, £25.00

Emerging from a national conference held in 2013, this volume addresses one of the central concepts within Christian social ethics in a timely and stimulating way. In recent years, the specific legacy of 'the common good' has seen something of a revival, especially within Catholic Social Thought (CST), stimulated by the election of Pope Francis with an explicitly public-facing set of pronouncements

on the global economy, environment and social justice, and by the gathering mobilization of a number of faith-based organizations around migration, urban renewal, welfare provision and debt relief.

This volume emerges from that wider context, therefore, but gains added value and force by virtue of the preparatory conversations which took place in advance of the conference itself. The wider circumstances behind its creation, plus, I suspect, some judicious and clear-minded editorial direction, conspire to make this volume remarkably consistent in quality and tone by the standards of many conference proceedings. Whilst leading practitioners and scholars are given freedom to write from their own specialist expertise – which include the philosophical roots of the notion of the common good, its relation to political economy, and its bearing on specific policy agendas – there is also a pleasing coherence and shape overall, meaning that it is possible to see how the sum of the volume is greater than its constituent parts: again, not always necessarily the case with edited collections of conference papers. Similarly, whilst all chapters work to a relatively strict word count they succeed in offering comprehensive, nuanced discussions of their topics whilst remaining concise and readable.

A number of recurrent threads are evident throughout the book. Many essays touch on the relationship between political activism and theological teaching. Jonathan Chaplin, for example, commenting on Evangelicalism's engagement with notions of the common good, makes the point that historically that part of the Church has been more comfortable with activism than systematic theologizing, but that evangelicals have much to contribute theologically. Similarly, Malcolm Brown finds in the inherited tradition of Anglican social thought – both ecclesiological and theological – a valuable corrective to the trap of becoming instrumentalized by government co-option of faith-based energies. This serves as an important reminder that effective activism towards the good society does require critical and strategic thinking about first principles in order to avoid being swept along unreflectingly by the course of events, or, worse still, delusions of relevance.

The volume is also strong in reflecting the contemporary reality of political, religious and cultural pluralism, through its conscious inclusion of various different traditions, including Judaism and Islam as well as 'secular' perspectives, whilst affording space for a range of ecumenical Christian voices. Furthermore, a succession of contributions articulates remarkably clearly and consistently the view

that the common good itself should not be interpreted as a reified ideal but as a process that informs all political reasoning, pushing us consistently beyond narrow sectional interests towards a broad and inclusive option that promotes the well-being of everyone in the name of our shared humanity. It is, as Esther Reed puts it, 'humanity's shared project of living together, not an idea or thing whose substance may be defined but a set of responsibilities pertaining to a shared project of which all are a part' (p. 58): it is about the promises, or even covenants, then, we are prepared to make with one another. Nor do these essays duck the uncomfortable, largely unresolved issues about the common good, mainly that it looks increasingly counter-cultural in the face of the 'hollowing out' of political discourse due to secularization and the continuing trends towards individualism and the decline of community. This is a question of how 'vision' translates into pragmatic considerations such as electability and implementation: perhaps there is scope for further reflection on this aspect of public theology and political strategizing.

Many regular readers of this journal will be familiar with the concept of the common good and debates surrounding its historic and contemporary relevance – indeed, the conference was featured in a previous issue of *Crucible* (July-September 2014) and many readers of this review may even have been in attendance at the conference. But for experienced hands and newcomers to the concept or to the discipline of Christian social ethics and public theology alike, this collection contains much of value and deserves to be widely studied and debated. Often, a response to volumes of essays of this kind is that they are too 'theoretical' or 'academic' at the expense of the voices of those at the grass-roots of policy implementation, and certainly one is always aware that the fruits of these discussions as published will inevitably reach a limited audience. Indeed, in her Foreword, Baroness Julia Neuberger calls for a second, follow-up volume to address policy initiatives and the view from the grass-roots, although it is a moot point whether the format of a standard academic publication would be the most adequate way of doing that justice.

As ever, one wishes and hopes that influential people in government and industry (including, and especially the financial and banking sectors) would consider some of the analysis contained here: in particular the conviction that markets should be designed to serve human activity, not the other way around. Unfortunately, as the negative reception of the various church-related discussion

documents for the UK 2015 General Election proved, politicians do not seem interested in values-based contributions to public debate. And yet, as events since then have also proved, people are hungry for fresh political ideas, particularly those which attempt to find alternatives to the economic solutions of the past decade; but electorates are becoming increasingly sceptical of the established political classes' ability to deliver a better or more just society. As European governments' reaction to the crisis of asylum-seekers and migrants has shown, one response to this crisis of political legitimacy is to appeal all the more to the certainties of self-interest, national sovereignty and divisive rhetoric, which can only lead to greater fragmentation and authoritarianism in society. It just goes to show how urgently we need a more inclusive, civilized and open-minded political vision. This volume makes a persuasive case that the common good remains, still, one such resource.

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God and Mrs Thatcher: The Battle for Britain's Soul

Eliza Filby

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Charles Moore's biography of Thatcher builds a picture of a complete politician who was yet very far from being cold or invulnerable, and who became 'a highly religious person in a highly English way' (Moore, quoted p.145). How did the Grantham grocer's daughter, shaped by old-school Methodism and small-town values, grow and grow until she dwarfed her peers and faced down world leaders, choosing at will from an armoury of rational, emotional and interpersonal weapons so that whatever the encounter, her trajectory was not interrupted? In this steely progress, what remained of that early Christian conviction, and how did she relate it to her vision of society?

Such are the framing questions of Dr Filby's widely-researched, if unevenly edited book. Interleaved with the quest is a well-informed tour of social theology in the period, particularly as moments in it were represented by the stances of Anglican bishops. The 1980s emerge as a decisive decade: the triumph of the Thatcherite project, and also the last full flowering of confident engagement by churches with the big issues of the day, on the basis of a common public theology assumed,