

than there is in Śaṅkara and Advaita, on the relative *reality* of the created order in all its fine-grained discrete particularities” (15).

By focusing on theological questions of particular importance to systematic theology, one of the greatest merits of Soars’s book is his insistence on the relevance of comparative theology to fundamental doctrinal concerns. Another significant merit of Soars’s account is the spotlight he shines on Sara Grant, whom he rightly acknowledges as an undervalued voice in the history of Hindu-Christian thought. While the technical theological debates and inclusion of an array of Sanskrit terminology may prove challenging for some readers, Soars does an admirable job of presenting his points in a clear and accessible manner. Selections of the text are sure to enrich the comparative theology classroom, especially at the graduate level. This erudite and captivating study is required reading for scholars of Hindu-Christian studies and comparative theologians more generally. Systematic theologians are also sure to benefit from Soars’s invitation to think comparatively.

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Karl Rahner’s Writings on Literature, Music and the Visual Arts. Edited by Gesa E. Thiessen. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2021. ix + 212 pages. \$39.95.
doi:10.1017/hor.2023.60

In most academic Catholic circles today, the idea of theology and the arts is synonymous with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s seven-volume theological aesthetics, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik*, the first volume of which was published in the original German in 1961. If Balthasar today means theology and aesthetics, Karl Rahner more commonly evokes the “Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge” of *Geist in Welt* (1957) and the multi-volume *Schriften zur Theologie*. Gesa E. Thiessen’s splendidly edited *Karl Rahner’s Writings on Literature, Music and the Visual Arts* helps redress that stark distinction between the two giants of twentieth-century theology, showing Rahner’s interest in the field and his insights into it. Although there has been some treatment of Rahner and aesthetics—Gesa lists Paul Joseph Fritz’s book and Denis Hétiér’s, and there is her own chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*—this volume will certainly help further not only studies of the question in Rahner’s works but also help foster new directions of thought in theology and aesthetics more generally.

As she notes in her foreword, the volume is the first to collect in a single book Rahner's writings on the topic, including translations into English of six previously untranslated writings. This makes the collection a necessity for any collegiate library with a serious interest in theology as well as a potentially valuable textbook for an advanced seminar on Rahner or theology and aesthetics. Gesa has helpfully divided the book into four groupings—"Faith, Culture, Theology and the Senses," "On Literature," "On Visual Art and Architecture," and "On Music"—with a concluding "Postlude" that consists of a "Prayer for Creative Thinkers." Some of the pieces are occasional writings for audiences, some are academic explorations, and there are even delightful gems such as a newly translated short piece by Rahner on, yes, The Beatles ("What do the Beatles sing?"). On the matter of the Beatles, he concludes in good Ignatian fashion that the preacher "must meet people where they are" (191). The stylistic breadth of these various writings gives the lie to the canard that Rahner's works were uniquely abstruse while showing his penetrating insights into highly abstract questions, such as his important previously published "The Theology of the Symbol," which is helpfully included here—it appears in *Schriften zur Theologie*.

By collecting these works, Gesa allows us to see lines of convergence and preoccupation emerge throughout Rahner's engagements with theology and aesthetics. As she notes in an introduction to the collection that maps out the broad conceptual terrain of Rahner's writings on theology and aesthetics, the pluralist context of modern theology and the subjective experience of the modern individual consistently informed his writings on this topic. Rahner's "anonymous Christian" occurs with some frequency throughout the essays collected here as well, making this a valuable volume for those interested in that question. One would expect a theological aesthetics from a revelatory religion such as Christianity to privilege *presence* and a *positive* conception of aesthetics, which is indeed what one finds in Rahner. But he also offers a compelling possibility for engagement with the dominance of the negative and critique when he consistently and eloquently tempers the positivity of revelation by returning again and again to mystery, writing in "Seeing and Hearing" of "the infinity of the enveloping mystery of holy silence" (72).

Rahner's writings on theology and the arts help us see the broader participation of all, believing and unbelieving, in the loving and saving work of God, even when, perhaps especially when, that work does not have the visible markings of the church. In his understanding, the arts become not simply reflections of the purported truths of theology but themselves a place for doing theology. As Thiessen crucially observes, "Rahner emphasized that art, due to its revelatory dimension, is not to be understood merely as *ancilla*

theologiae, as an aid or illustration of a religious truth, but can in itself become a *locus theologicus*" (3). This admirable collection is indeed one such location.

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The Souls of Womenfolk: The Religious Cultures of Enslaved Women in the Lower South. By Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021. xii + 307 pages. \$27.95 (paper).

doi:10.1017/hor.2023.75

I must begin this review by stating that I wish I had had this book when I was studying Black religion and spirituality as a graduate student. Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh's insightful and thoroughly researched book on enslaved Black women's spirituality is a major contribution to womanist discourse, history, and research. Wells-Oghoghomeh takes the reader on a journey that begins in Africa, and then situates itself within the genesis of the enslaved women's spiritual journey from Africa. Her writing sheds light on the ways that Black women's spiritual resilience and embodied practices have been resources for their survival of trauma (enslavement, rape, separation from family, death) and highlights the rituals and spiritual practices of African women as they were forced to find a "home" in America.

The book includes not only archival research and first-person accounts of the enslaved women's experience but also a retrieval of archival sources through secondhand accounts and other narrations, such as autobiographical narratives, cultural expressions, and the body ritual and religious practices. Wells-Oghoghomeh focuses her research on the lives of the enslaved women on the plantations within Georgia. As she states, Georgia housed religious and cultural elements that cut across state boundaries to the greater Atlantic.

For her research into the inner lives of enslaved African women of Georgia, she placed the narratives of these women into dialogue with the cultural practices of areas along the West African geographical coast (Upper Guinea, Cape Verde Islands, areas along the Senegal River, as well as areas now known as Sierra Leone and Liberia). The journey of enslavement is thoroughly researched and quite disturbing. As she writes, "The dismembering experiences that would knit enslaved persons together in personal and collective memory and form the basis for enslaved women's religious consciousness did