

and state are not to be trusted as orthodox in their accounts of providence, eschatology and missiology.

Clearly, this is not an uncontroversial line of argument, but it deserves some careful attention. Yet the author herself seems to struggle to keep her focus on it. It is most clearly at the foreground in the second chapter, where Moseley contrasts Niebuhr's non-providential affirmation of Zionism with his inclination to assert the character of the USA as 'a messianic nation' (p. 47) and probes associated tensions in his thought. This follows a first chapter that sets out a lively analysis of attitudes to Israel implicit in recent sociology dealing with the resurgence of religion and seeks to establish a link between anti-secularism and anti-nationalism. The remaining chapters are then dominated by an attempted critique of John Milbank and (at greater length) Rowan Williams, which leave us in no doubt as to Moseley's view of their trustworthiness. She accuses both of them of expounding ultimately unorthodox theologies whose roots are in Hegel and the esoteric traditions on which he fed, as evidenced by their alleged refusal to affirm Israel's election through Abraham and hence collusion with Hermetic teachings about the Egyptian origins of both Moses and Jesus. The exposition of Milbank and Williams's writings on which these charges are based could be criticized on numerous points and does not provide a secure foundation for the thesis she wishes to establish. The brief treatment in the final chapter of Barth and a handful of other theologians whose approach Moseley evidently finds more trustworthy hints at a different, more constructive work one hopes she might eventually write.

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Andrew Shanks, ***A Neo-Hegelian Theology: The God of Greatest Hospitality***, Farnham: Ashgate, 2014; 158 pp.: 9781472410870, £55.00 (hbk)

William Franke, ***A Philosophy of the Unsayable***, University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, Ind., 2014; 384 pp.: 9780268028947, £30.50/\$37.00 (pbk)

These are two rather different books, one addressed to the Academy, the other more to the Church, but they share several significant points of contact. Among these is a common commitment to openness as a fundamental theological virtue and, variously qualified, the claim that the philosophy of Hegel is an important source for a distinctively modern conception of openness.

'Truth-as-openness' is perhaps the key term of Shanks's book. He sees this as a clear consequence of the Church's origin in the Pentecostal dispensation of the Spirit and also, as the title suggests, he finds it eminently articulated in the thought of G. W. F. Hegel. Shanks illustrates the point with reference to three main areas: heresy, apologetics and 'propaganda'. With regard to the first, he argues that it ought to hold the Church back from becoming 'a closed community, fearful of internal dissent' (p. 9), a tendency illustrated in some clerics' reaction to a 'Body, Mind, Spirit'

event at Manchester Cathedral. With regard to the second, he shows that ‘truth-as-correctness’ is not enough and that apologetics must also incorporate the intuitive and holistic deliverances of the right hemisphere of the brain. Third, the Church must always resist letting its message become propaganda and truly be ‘a church that does not boast’ (p. 89). In all of these areas, he believes Hegel to be a useful, perhaps even essential, guide. Properly read, Hegel is so far from offering a closed system as to exemplify a rich, dialectical openness that values the ‘mythological’ forms of religious traditions and that does not allow itself to be shrunken to a narrow moralism, contemptuous of community. This also provides a basis for thinking a legitimate, if weakened, ‘Constantinian’ type of Christianity, that is, something akin to what the present-day Church of England may be in the process of becoming.

An ideal reader of this work would be the kind of active Anglican who takes an interest in the intellectual case for Christianity and, more specifically, for the Church of England. Some of these potential readers may be put off by the mention of Hegel, a thinker whose style – as Shanks acknowledges – is exceptionally difficult. But, apart from Chapter 4, the book is more *inspired* by Hegel than busy with finer points of academic interpretation. This should hopefully encourage some potential readers who might otherwise be put off – but although Hegel was a major influence on Anglican liberalism in the decades before the First World War it is perhaps doubtful how far he is really best placed to help the Church of England become a ‘penitent, oppressor church’ (p. 95) today. And while Hegel is praised for showing and performing the essential ambiguity of religious meaning versus the glib deliverances of religious propagandist, many readers of the German philosopher may still find him just a bit too certain regarding the claims of ‘absolute knowledge’.

Hegel also plays a prominent role in the earlier part of William Franke’s *A Philosophy of the Unsayable*. As the title suggests, Franke is a robust proponent of apophatic thinking and, at first glance, this might seem to make Hegel a very unlikely partner-in-dialogue. As Franke himself says ‘Apophatic thinking sacrifices system in order to let the infinite be undetermined and wholly other to every definition in discourse and every construction of consciousness’ (p. 28). Given that Hegel is generally regarded as the supreme representative of systematic thinking this would seem to place him at the opposite end of the spectrum from any apophaticism. While Franke is critical (more critical than is Shanks) of the anti-apophatic element in Hegel, however, he also sees Hegel’s holistic orientation as one way of leading us to the limits of what can be said. ‘Hegel indeed shows how reason itself is mystical’, writes Franke (p. 55). Hegel is shown here more as a point of departure than arrival, however, and Franke tracks a number of twentieth-century writers, philosophers, and theologians who have taken Hegel’s negative dialectics much, much further. In the case of Paul Celan and Edmund Jabès, apophaticism becomes related to the ‘unspeakable’ event of the Shoah although, interestingly, where Celan focuses on the sheer unspeakability of the event, Jabès sees unspeakability as arising from the nature of language itself. Further chapters provide extensive comment on Jean-Luc Nancy’s idea of ‘adoration’, on Radical Orthodoxy, and a large cast of thinkers

usually referred to as ‘postmodern’, including some who offer a ‘secular’ pushback against Radical Orthodoxy. The discussion is fed throughout by a rich vein of references to classical Neoplatonism that gives added depth to its contemporary focus. Despite its own suspicions of apophaticism, Radical Orthodoxy is found to depend on its own version of apophatic thinking and thus also on philosophy – which Franke thinks is a good thing and, if acknowledged, would help Radical Orthodoxy’s own cause.

Strongly reflecting academic debates of the last thirty years, Franke’s book is not quite a research monograph and not quite a course book but a thoughtful, provoking and often helpful exploration of an intellectually and spiritually demanding discourse.

Both books speak to the tension between thinking about the central issues of religion in the context of the Academy and in that of the Church. This is, in different ways, a shared strength, but it also raises the question as to whether there is a public ‘out there’ ready and willing to let faith be informed by radical philosophy or to let their radical philosophy be affected by (and not just subordinated to) a thinking faith. One can but hope.

### **George Pattison**

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Michael S. Northcott, ***A Political Theology of Climate Change***, SPCK: London, 2014; 344 pp.: 9780281072323, £19.99 (pbk)

‘Only connect’ is the overarching theme of Michael Northcott’s new book. Northcott is the Professor of Ethics at Edinburgh University. Confronted by the strength of the evidence for anthropogenic global warming, he asks why the response has been so inadequate, and what can be done to bring about effective policies to counter the prospect of catastrophic climate change?

He draws on the discipline of political theology to provide his answer. The book locates the roots of climate change in the transition from a Ptolemaic to Copernican conception of the universe. This paradigm shift – from our co-dependence with the natural environment as expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures (Noah’s rainbow, Moses’ cloud) to the separation of nature and culture – finds one of its earliest expressions in the work of Francis Bacon: ‘For Bacon, progress in the domination of nature – through scientific discovery and technological invention – is the means to redeeming the original fall from Paradise’ (p. 105).

The first large-scale coalmines in the West were opened in Germany in the sixteenth century; as the mines grew in size the previous, small-scale and mutual sources of development funding were insufficient, and gave way to corporate shareholding and waged work. Literally and metaphorically, fossil fuel extraction was at the heart of the new understanding of society; and the exponential growth in the burning of fossil fuels has resulted in the crisis facing humanity now.