

as a virtue,” leaves me baffled, since Tertullian actually says the opposite (20). At the treatise’s outset, the Roman writer claims that *patientia* is universally praised: “the good of [patience], even they who live outside it, honour with the name of highest virtue.”² He goes on to affirm that the philosophers are uncharacteristically unified in their “praise and glory” for *patientia*. And yet he also admits that there are ignoble varieties of *patientia*, condemning, among others, men who “patiently” endure marriage to overbearing wives for the sake of keeping the dowry.³

If a distinctive, ‘patient’ *habitus* doesn’t explain Christianity’s early growth, what does? Unfortunately, Kreider does not evaluate other theories that might shed light on this question. Throughout his study, he is too eager to draw sharp lines between the *habitus* of Christians and “Romans,” failing to appreciate that all Roman Christians, regardless of their re-socialization into a Christian way of life, remained Romans. In particular, his attribution of Constantine’s malicious rhetoric about Jews and heretics to his unreformed “pagan” *habitus*, rather than to well-established Christian discourses of the first three centuries, strikes me as an attempt to disavow disagreeable ideas and practices whose roots in earliest Christianity run uncomfortably deep (269-71).

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Jean-Yves Lacoste, *From Theology to Theological Thinking*. Translated by W. Chris Hackett. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014.

Jean-Yves Lacoste is a French philosopher who remains an under-appreciated contributor to the theological turn in the discourse of phenomenology, the philosophical movement associated with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Of his half-dozen major works, two stand out for their importance and for their availability in English translation: *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man* (PUF, 1994; Stanford Univ. Press, 2004), and the edited volumes of the *Encyclopedia of*

² Tertullian, *De Patientia* 1.7

³ *Ibid.*, 16.2

Christian Theology (Routledge, 2005).

Like Jean-Luc Marion and Michel Henry, Lacoste works to connect the project of phenomenology with the concerns of theology (often from a Catholic point of view). It is appropriate that his newly translated Richard Lectures, *From Theology to Theological Thinking*, deals with the relationship between philosophy and theology. The book is introduced by Jeffrey Bloechl, and proceeds through three chapters: “*Theoria, vita philosophica*, and Christian Experience,” “Philosophy, Theology, and the Academy,” and “Philosophy, Theology, and the Task of Thinking.”

The first chapter begins with a reminder that the distinction between philosophy and theology is a historical one and not an essential one (1). Lacoste’s definition of philosophy, following Heidegger, is “the attempt to give and account of being [*l’étant*] in its totality” (1). From this initial definition three additional defining features of philosophy can be gleaned from the dense brush of Lacoste’s writing: philosophy is “a human affair,” it aims beyond humanity, thereby exceeding its “Greek ambitions,” and it involves a decision between work and life (6, 8, 9-10).

This last feature seems to permit a disconnect between the life and the work of a philosopher, a distinction that allows Lacoste to continually draw upon Heidegger’s work without significant concern for his associations with National Socialism. The author’s bracketing of Heidegger’s biography seems out of place, given his condemnation of the moral lives of theologians like Karl Barth and Paul Tillich later in the chapter (23-24).

The initial chapter emphasizes that philosophy can be liberated from the desire to reduce itself to science, and instead can be grounded in a *logos* that predates our present understandings of both philosophy and theology (12-13). The rest of the book leaves the reader guessing about whether this hidden relation between philosophy and theology entails the victory or neutrality of either discipline in the contemporary academy (or church). In the second chapter Lacoste continues his historical reflection by examining Boethius’s combination of philosophy and theology in *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

Throughout the first two chapters, Lacoste stresses the importance of prayer for the relationship between philosophy and theology, referencing Evagrius’s statement that “One who is a theologian will pray truly” (24), and

noting Barth's argument that Anselm's great metaphysical texts were also prayers (41). Beyond the limited scope of this present book, Lacoste's work in the collections *The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response* (2005) and *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (2001) provide further depth to his prayer-centred, liturgical, sacramental, and philosophical theology.

The final chapter argues that philosophy and theology share a common ground in "thinking," further critiquing the rigidity of both disciplines in stating that we are "incapable of strictly demarcating philosophical thinking and theological thinking" (89). While acknowledging that some aspects of both disciplines remain untouched by the other, Lacoste shows how both are interconnected because of their shared concern for thinking and their inconsistent attitude towards tradition (90).

Whether the author fully succeeds in mobilizing phenomenology to serve the needs of theological thinking is beyond the scope of this review. What is more relevant to theologically oriented scholars and laypeople is where philosophy and theology stand in relation to one another today. Lacoste's book could serve to inspire Mennonite institutions of higher education to engage more intentionally with the ways in which theology and philosophy interact in their curricula. That said, this volume may not be useful to the many readers of this journal. It is often unclear whether Lacoste is making a descriptive historical claim or a prescriptive argument, and although the book contains several core themes, it is difficult to follow a coherent line of thinking that unifies it as a whole.

In summary, the book is edifying and invites further critique, both because of its troubling triumphant assertions of Christian supremacy over intellectual history, and its efforts to humble the pretensions of theologians who reject philosophy.

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