

of human equality. Moreover, Allen provides a necessary critique of Terence Keel's recent work, *Divine Variations: How Christian Thought Became Racial Science* (2018), which claims that "racial science" originated in a Christian theological anthropology. Keel's position is utter nonsense, both historically and theologically. He simultaneously claims that Christianity was "replaced" by secular racial science and blames Christianity for causing that same racial science. However, you can't argue that Christian anthropology was sidelined and "translated" into secular terms, then turn around and blame Christian theology for the resulting racism. Allen is to be commended for his cogent takedown of the view.

In chapter 8, Don Howard re-reads Einstein's "cosmic religion" against the grain of the stock Spinoza label. He argues that the deeper grammar is Stoic and Philonian: *logos*—"reason made manifest in nature"—rather than full Spinozist metaphysic. Howard rescues Einstein's theology from the Spinoza shortcut and installs *logos* at the center—reason manifest, personally de-centering yet morally energizing, shaped by deterministic commitments and yet alive to mystery.

In chapter 9, Dominique Lambert reconstructs how Lemaître moved from an expanding, beginningless cosmos (the 1927 Eddington-Lemaître model) to the primeval atom idea of 1931. By separating hypothesis from model, origin from creation, and heuristic from theory, Lambert lets readers see why Lemaître could champion a scientific beginning without this amounting to doing theology by other means. It complicates the neat "Lemaître the apologist" stereotype and offers a persuasive account of how a theologically literate physicist coined a generative concept that helped science learn to speak about "before" space-time.

Moving further afield, in chapter 11, Fausto Fraisopi proposes that twentieth-century revolutions in physics and logic don't deepen a rift between science and religious feeling; they erode the rift. Quantum theory's discontinuity, non-commutation, and uncertainty principle, combined with Wittgenstein's demonstration that language cannot capture its own logical foundations, restrain maximalist rationality and reopen the space where wonder and inquiry meet. When the grand mirror cracks, science doesn't end—its austere limits become the very condition for a chastened, non-triumphal "mystical" outlook.

In chapter 12, Andrea Vestrucci and Christoph Benz Müller frame Kurt Gödel's ontological proof as continuous with his cautious realism rather than

treating it as a philosophical curiosity detached from his mathematical work. By placing Gödel's proof within his modest Platonism—and then stress-testing it with automated reasoning and careful variants—they provide a disciplined map of what different axiom choices buy you: consistency at the price of re-defining essence; necessary existence without modal collapse; or, embracing collapse, a bracing necessitarianism.

In the final chapter, Stefano Furlan and Rocco Gaudenzi's portrait of John Archibald Wheeler traces his pivot from "daring conservatism"—Einstein-loyal geometrodynamics—to the confession that black holes had pushed that program to its limits. Wheeler emerges neither as mystic in disguise nor mere methodologist, but as a craftsman of questions who, when classical tools failed him, learned to work at the edge where explanation becomes invitation.

My assessment of *Divined Explanations* is overwhelmingly positive, with two reservations. First, the book sometimes reproaches the "conflict thesis" while quietly borrowing its plot; the genealogy of that thesis is older and more intra-Protestant than a Draper-and-White origin story admits, and ignoring that fact weakens the historiographic footing. Second, several reconciliations come with a theological price tag (especially in post-Darwinian settlements); they deserve greater attention, not a wave through.

The volume's strongest chapters succeed through methodological clarity and sense of place. They show how doctrines, metaphors, and habits shape the imagination of inquiry without sliding from order to a necessary Orderer, from heuristic metaphor to metaphysical conclusion, or from boundary-work to quiet concordism. The result is a capacious frame: not a Kuhn-lite atmosphere but a thicker ecology in which theological imagination has been less an antagonist of science than one of its provocateurs.

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SOCIAL SCIENCE

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THE NOT SO OUTRAGEOUS IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY by Joseph A. Scimecca. Routledge, 2023. 153 pages. Paperback; \$54.99. ISBN: 9781032360171.

There have been a plethora of books touting the outrageousness of Christian academic endeavors in a secular age, and this book, while building on the theme,

Book Reviews

takes the opposite tack. The trend began with Christian historian George Marsden's short *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (1996), a supplement to his magisterial *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (1994), which is now in a 25th anniversary edition with the subtitle *From Protestant to Post-Secular* (2021). Another example is Paul Gould's *The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor* (2019). Scimecca inserts a negative into his title ("not so outrageous") because he argues that, not unlike the university itself, the origins of sociology have deeply Christian roots. Thus, the idea of Christian sociology ought *not* to be so outrageous.

However, it *is* outrageous to many in the dominant culture, as Scimecca's book has not been reviewed by the mainstream sociological journals, even though it's published by Routledge academic. Similar works have been published in the past decades advocating for a Christian sociology and they, too, remain marginal to the discipline.¹ While Scimecca does not mention these other books, he does give ample evidence that, historically speaking, Christianity has not been marginal to sociology and, in fact, has been the source of its roots and has inspired some of its best thinkers over the centuries.

One advantage to this book is its brevity, as it is at once shorter and more comprehensive than his more historically specific *Christianity and Sociological Theory: Reclaiming the Promise* (Routledge, 2018). Students will welcome it for other reasons: it has a strong theme that decries the meaninglessness of an age closed to transcendence and left with only materialistic explanations for human life. Scimecca uses the concept of "shadow nihilism" to describe social science without bearings beyond behaviorism, empiricism, quantification, and the machinations of power. He argues that a holistic view of the human being must include the quest for meaning and an understanding of the moral order that sits at the core of social life.

The structure of the book is clearly chronological, summarizing the prehistory of sociology through Aristotle, various clergymen, theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and key Enlightenment philosophers (chap. 2), then describing the secular turn in the classical European sociologists of Comte, Marx, Durkheim and Weber (chap. 3). These are contrasted with the American social gospel thinkers (chap. 4) whose ethical commitments were rejected by the mid-century positivists bent on imitating the natural sciences (chap. 5). The final chapters push back on the atheistic assumptions of positivistic scientism (chap. 6), offer the basics of a Christian under-

standing of personhood following the works of George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, and Christian Smith (chap. 7), and then lay out broader frames for a Christian sociology by using some concepts from the likes of Dorothy Smith, Roy Bhaskar, Margaret Archer, and Peter Berger (chap. 8).

A strength of the book is how it describes the waning of Christian influence and the gradual rise of a narrow scientism supposedly without ethics, values, or concern for social problems. He offers concise summaries of the work of numerous sociologists in his historical survey, including many Christians. Albion Small (1854–1926) is one illustration: the son of a Baptist minister, he went to seminary at Yale and then studied at the University of Berlin until 1881, where he learned about the new discipline of sociology. He received his PhD in history and political economy from Johns Hopkins University and went on to found the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago. His goal was to "institutionalize sociology ('the science of society') as a mechanism for spreading the Social Gospel" and so "pave the way for the Kingdom of God" (p. 63). Due to Small's efforts, the *American Journal of Sociology* was established, in which he hoped to see theology, morality, and science come together.

Scimecca brings other important Christian sociologists into the foreground, such as Charles Ellwood (1873–1946) at the University of Missouri, men who have either been forgotten by mainstream sociology texts or whitewashed of their Christian commitments. He could have included those beyond American boundaries—Christian social thinkers such as Jacques Ellul and Ivan Illich, for example. More contemporary examples, such as David Lyon in Canada and David Martin and Grace Davie in the UK, would suggest that there are more sociological prophets still left in the discipline.

Another reason the idea of a Christian sociology ought not be so outrageous is that numerous ideologies—feminist, neo-Marxist, and critical race theory, etc.—have all found some legitimation in the academy. They are deeply value-laden and point out the non-neutral and failed objectivity of the positivist paradigm. While this is mentioned in passing, it is curious that, while Scimecca surveys Christian Smith and a variety of his books, he skips over Smith's *The Sacred Project of American Sociology* (Oxford, 2014). Here Smith contends that modern scientism and objectivity is not so much the problem in American sociology as is a new sacred project—the emancipation project of liberal individualism (what some today would call "woke" scholarship).

While Scimecca points to the social location of sociologists and their atheistic milieu, Smith does a more thorough “sociology of sociology” that shows the link between the objective modern pretense and the postmodern political bias. This is similar to what George Marsden does in his anniversary edition of *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, as well as what Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff argues for in his apologetical work, *Religion in the University* (2019); they describe the postmodern moment as a crack in the secular, opening up a postsecular option that is potentially more friendly to religion.

This seems like a better strategy to me. Scimecca’s history is a valuable addition to the conversation about Christian faith and sociology. His description of shadow nihilism and the imperative of a moral core for sociological analysis tied to some notion of transcendence is vital for the common good. What we need is an articulate Christian sociology that is primed for a pluralistic academy, where Muslim, Jew, feminist, and LatCrit theorists can all have a place at the public academic table. This needs to be done not only with the American sociological network in mind, but also with intentional reference to sociologists in the global church and partners beyond.

Note

¹E.g., David A. Fraser and Anthony Campolo, *Sociology Through the Eyes of Faith* (HarperOne, 1992); Russel Hedden-dorf and Matthew Vos, *Hidden Threads: A Christian Critique of Sociological Theory* (University Press of America, 2009); David Lyon, *Christians and Sociology* (InterVarsity Press, 1976); and Matthew Vos, *Strangers and Scapegoats: Extending God’s Welcome to Those on the Margins* (Baker Academic, 2022).

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TECHNOLOGY

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SUPERBLOOM: How Technologies of Connection Tear Us Apart by Nicholas Carr. W. W. Norton, 2025. 260 pages including notes, references, and index. Hardcover; \$29.99. ISBN: 9781324064619.

If you’ve been paying attention at all over the last ten years, you already know that many modern technological “developments” have either caused or at least coincided with significant social challenges—increases in depression and anxiety, pervasive factionalism, internet addiction, and so on. This book seeks to answer some big questions: How did we get to this point? And, is the rise of social media, smartphones, and AI the cause of these problems?

Nicholas Carr, best-selling author and journalist, addresses these questions by deftly pulling in significant events in technological history, along with current research from sociology and psychology. He unifies it all under the umbrella of a study of “communication.”

The author looks at historical mechanisms of communication and their ties to social change. Specifically, he looks at the publishing of magazines and newspapers, creation of the telegraph, the introduction of the telephone, and then the rise of radio and TV. With each technology, authority and control became more concentrated on a select number of companies or individuals. However, promoters of the new technologies repeatedly and consistently saw each technology as a hopeful agent for democratizing the sharing of information and opinions. Then came the Internet and Facebook, which continued the trend with its stated “social mission to create a more perfect society by getting people to communicate more” (p. 15). I think we all know how that turned out.

Why are the creators of new communication technologies so hopeful? Carr claims that they all believe that “if communication is good, more of it must be better” (p. 20). However, what we are seeing is that more-efficient communication mechanisms leave less time for reflection or consultation, demanding immediate and often hasty responses. Chapter 2 explains from a legal perspective how we got where we are. The author usefully gives some background regarding the laws concerning privacy and personal and mass communication, and how the laws did not adapt quickly as communication mechanisms evolved. Especially noteworthy are the Radio Act of 1927 and the creation of the Federal Communications Commission in the 1940s, both of which prohibited broadcasters from promoting causes and candidates. A “fairness doctrine” existed that allowed radio stations to express their own opinions on issues but required them to allot time for other views. These regulations could be implemented because mass communication was still one-to-many via radio and TV.

People had some control of their media consumption. They could change radio stations, subscribe to different newspapers or magazines, or switch TV channels. With the advent of the Internet, communication becomes many-to-many, especially with the creation of social media. Under President Reagan, deregulation removed the requirements of common carriers to take account of the public good. Still, on Facebook you could choose what to see—by choosing and following your friends.