

herself, yet again, a lucid, trustworthy guide of history. She ends each chapter, notably, with a brief commentary on a particular work of art and in this way shows, rather than only tells, how ideas take concrete form, in art that both interprets and constructs meaning.

Two small criticisms might be offered of the book. One, to argue that the story of the cross is far from straightforward, as she does in the preface, is surely, at some level, to state the obvious. An observant reader of the daily news would surmise as much. Surely more is at stake in this investigation. Two, the writing of an epilogue proper might have brought a more satisfying closure to the book. One vivid example, commensurate to her extended analysis of the Ground Zero Cross, would have invited the reader to imagine how the cross tells a unique story in a twenty-first-century, global society.

That being said, *The Cross* is a welcome volume for historians, scholars in the field of theology and the arts, and for pastors and worship leaders, too. As artists have rendered it, the cross has pointed backwards to Eden, upwards to heaven, downwards to hell, and forwards to the New Jerusalem. Rooted in its historical origins at Golgotha, the cross has found itself both beloved and feared, revered and denigrated, by insiders and outsiders alike. It is not surprising, then, as Jensen persuasively shows, how for Christians throughout history, the cross has stood at the metaphysical center of the cosmos, implicating every sphere of life.

W. David O. Taylor
Fuller Theological Seminary

Modern Art and the Life of a Culture: The Religious Impulses of Modern Art

Jonathan A. Anderson and William A. Dyrness

Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016. 376 pp. \$21.35

Scholarship at its best is extended, informed, and efficiently distilled conversation. Major universities and academic publishers curate which scholarly conversations enter the academic canon and attract the attention of wider audiences. Scholarly conversations that do not enter the canon or exist on its margins often seem idiosyncratic—unless you are a member of the community for whom that conversation matters. So it was with a great deal of curiosity that I picked up Jonathan Anderson and William Dyrness's *Modern Art and the Life of a Culture*. Jonathan Anderson is an artist and art critic who teaches at Biola University. William Dyrness is a theologian of culture who teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary and who, early in his career, undertook extensive studies in art history at the Free University in Amsterdam.

The first half of the title references Hans Rookmaaker's 1970 *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*. It signals Anderson and Dyrness's participation in a long-standing conversation among evangelical Protestants about the place of religion, faith, and theology in modern art, a conversation that, until the late twentieth

century, was positioned as idiosyncratic with respect to mainstream art history and art criticism. The second half of the title, *The Religious Impulses of Modernism*, could stand on its own as a contribution to recent conversations on postsecularity that have now moved definitively into the academic mainstream. Thus, the book functions as an introduction to what had been a marginalized conversation into the mainstream, and to new developments in mainstream scholarship into what had been a subcultural scholarly conversation. As often happens when introductions are made, there is the excitement of newly discovered affinities, and sometimes a little awkwardness.

The awkwardness results from the bifurcated task the book, by necessity, sets for itself. On the one hand, Anderson and Dyrness are speaking to an evangelical audience for whom Rookmaaker's book was a core text. For this audience, Rookmaaker needs some charitable deconstruction to position his work as, ironically, a participant in the larger secularization paradigm that long governed the academy at large but which was, nonetheless, distinguished from that larger body of work by an ardent and faithful insistence that faith matters, that Christian artists and art lovers should strive against the eclipse of faith in culture, and above all that Christians should not abandon the arts. Chapter 2 is devoted entirely to this recontextualizing task. On the other hand, the book is aimed at art historians and art critics who may still need to be convinced, or may be convinced but lack arguments and evidence for their convictions, that religious influence, serious theological inquiry, and personal faith never did exit the art world and thus remain relevant for a comprehensive understanding of modern art. Chapter 1 takes on these questions from a theoretical perspective. These two chapters constitute the first part of the book. The second part of the book is made up of five chapters that flesh out these theoretical arguments by revising the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century histories of four regions key to the standard secularization story in the arts: France and Britain, Germany and the Low Countries, Russia and Central Europe, and North America. Anderson and Dyrness have done a large work of synthesis here, pulling together recent scholarship that underscores the importance of religious tradition and practice, the presence of genuine theological inquiry, and even the impact of artists' personal faith for art historical developments that previously had been narrated as purely formal or primarily political in motivation.

Introductions widen our conversational circle, and Anderson and Dyrness have widened the conversational circle for many evangelical readers seeking more productive methods for engaging modern and contemporary art. Non-evangelical readers who have no stake in the kind of Christian worldview scholarship practiced by Rookmaaker, and revised here in a more sophisticated form by Anderson and Dyrness, may find the book's critical foil perplexing and unnecessary and thus its art historical analysis too sweeping and general. But for readers who have come out of that particular Christian intellectual tradition, have faithfully heeded Rookmaaker's call to engage the arts, and yet have had to battle, as artists or scholars, the pessimistic presuppositions of *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*,

Anderson and Dyrness's *Modern Art and the Life of a Culture* will come as a refreshing vindication.

Lisa DeBoer

Professor of Art Westmont College, Santa Barbara, CA

Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Theology: The Gifford Lectures—An Extended Edition

Perry Schmidt-Leukel

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Perry Schmidt-Leukel, professor of religious studies and intercultural theology at the Westfälische Wilhelms-University in Münster, Germany, and a long-time veteran of interreligious discussions, offers a well-informed, wide-ranging survey that seeks resources for a pluralistic theology of religions in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese religions, proposing that all these religious traditions in principle offer equally valid paths to ultimate reality and salvation. His pluralist theology of religions develops the lineage of Rudolf Otto, John Hick, and Wilfred Cantwell-Smith; and he links this project to a call for interreligious theology from every religious tradition, because “it is only in and through interreligious theology that the pluralist assumptions might find their own confirmation” (114). His audience includes followers of all religious traditions as well as those who do not follow any religious path. Schmidt-Leukel invokes fractal theory to develop his model of interpreting religious difference; he hopes to include seeming contradictions between religions in a harmony of complementary contrasts, as part of an open-ended process seeking ever-new syncretistic syntheses. He is aware of postmodern concerns regarding the incommensurability of different religions and cultures and the dangers of wide-ranging comparative judgments, but he dismisses these as not persuasive (243–44).

Even though he claims that in principle all religious traditions possess equal validity, Schmidt-Leukel grants this recognition in practice only to those religious traditions that surrender their traditional self-understandings and accept his criteria for religious pluralism. He sharply criticizes traditional religions because each “understands itself as either uniquely true or uniquely superior in relation to all the other faiths” (31). He rejects exclusivist and inclusivist views for treating “religious difference as a sign of inferiority” (135), and so he judges the large majority of traditional religious perspectives to be inferior to his own pluralistic theology precisely because of their truth claims. Nonetheless, in a manner not unlike the inclusivists whom he criticizes, Schmidt-Leukel does grant a guarded acknowledgement that exclusivist and inclusivist religions may offer some limited benefit toward salvation: “Lacking in such openness [to other religions] may not completely prevent but also may not foster a salvific transformation” (127). While Schmidt-Leukel allows religious thinkers to retain what he calls “some continuity” with