

*Christology and Science*. By F. LeRon Shults. Grand Rapids, Mich. and Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. x + 171 pp. \$99.95 (cloth); \$29.95 (paper).

Most contemporary discussions of the interaction of science and faith focus less on the specific beliefs of any particular religion and more on the larger philosophical issues such as the possibility of theism, the relationship of the divine to the natural world, or that of transcendence and materialism. Shults's *Christology and Science*, however, promises instead to be about how science relates to the specific doctrine of Christology. It is a refreshing change in that it takes the discussion of those larger issues and brings them to bear on a particular topic of systematic theology.

One of the most notable aspects of the book comes in the first chapter, where Shults introduces the book's structure in the form of a twelve-box matrix. He couples three aspects of Christology with three areas of scientific study: incarnation and evolutionary biology; atonement and cultural anthropology; and parousia and physical cosmology. Then he identifies each set's shared interests (in knowing, in acting, and in being, respectively); the philosophical categories that affect it; and how these are reflected in the way of life of the person Jesus of Nazareth. It is a brilliant example of a thoughtful, effective integration of science and theology that doesn't begin with the assumption that any relationship between the two must necessarily be dialectical.

Shults's illustrations of how the philosophical categories have been influential throughout Christian history are noteworthy as well. For example, the section on historical changes in societies' understandings of law, order, justice, and punishment and how those have affected the church's teachings about the atonement could be a stellar encyclopedia entry on the role of legal categories in Christian theology. Shults's seven pages on the topic are the best overview of the development of atonement theology in light of jurisprudential changes that I have read, covering everything from the influence of Plato's *Republic* on the early church to contemporary feminist social theorists Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. There are nine subsections about these developments in philosophical meditations in the book, and they are quite illuminating.

In each chapter, the study of these philosophical categories is followed by a survey of current thinking on each topic, with two theologians who are doing interdisciplinary work studied in depth, then a dozen more summarized in brief. While this survey is informative, it is a source of frustration as well, because of all the theologians we hear from, there is one voice that is conspicuously absent: that of Shults himself. He does register his points of agreement and disagreement briefly—but very briefly. Unlike Haight in *Jesus: Symbol of God* or Wildman in *Fidelity with Plausibility* (to choose an

example where the relationship of science and Christology is also central), Shults doesn't utilize this historical survey as a jumping off point to propose and defend his own constructive viewpoint in any depth. As each chapter winds down with short paragraphs about modern work in the area, the reader waits without fulfillment for a substantial conclusion, but gets only a few pages. After the novel matrix that begins the book with such promise, the omission of an overarching narrative is unsatisfying.

Perhaps that constructive project is forthcoming. I certainly hope so. Shults clearly has a substantial depth of knowledge, the ability to interpret Christian doctrines old and new in innovative ways, and a vibrant theological imagination that would suggest a highly original contribution to Christology and science if he pursued the topic further. This isn't that book, however, and as a result *Christology and Science* provokes the rarest of critiques: it comes off as being too short.

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*Church of St. Barnabas*  
Irvington-on-Hudson, New York

*Corpus Homini: A Poem for Single Flesh.* By Sofia M. Starnes. San Antonio, Tex.: Wings Press, 2008. 48 pp. \$15.00 (cloth).

This collection of linked poems, or more accurately one long poem with twelve parts, attempts a huge task—a task much larger than a chapbook could ordinarily sustain, one would think. Sofia Starnes, however, is up to the challenge. Having already written two award-winning books of poetry, she approaches a compelling theme in this little book, praising relatedness and the unity of flesh, spirit, and all experience. Thus, she writes, we breathe gulps of air, “long-taken . . . by others with our breath.” We are, as the title claims, single flesh. Each poem celebrates connections, boundaries disappearing like the “odd kiss mating / March to April year to year” (p. 1).

Starnes's peculiar angle of vision is absolutely fresh and original. This is not easy poetry, but it is poetry with a rich vocabulary, oddly wonderful language, sometimes surprising and always imaginative, the images absolutely right: “We squeeze a large gold grapefruit,” she writes, “and the pits collect as small sins in a cup” (p. 6).

The language may be beautiful, the mood exhilarating, but the poet is also realistic. We do wear out, she realizes. We drop cells, lose hair. Species become extinct, and that which the earth nurtures and grows can disappear