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CHRISTIANITY AND LAW: AN INTRODUCTION

By John Witte, Jr and Frank S Alexander
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Since 11 September 2001, a growing number of books continue to explore the place of religion in the public sphere, arguing, on the one hand, for the removal or restriction of that role[1] or, on the other, for its increased use and the transparency of that use in the public arena.[2] From this general interest emerges a closer scrutiny of those religious traditions that synthesise faith with law, either in the state itself or in a system of norms running parallel to a secular system of government. The best example of this is, of course, the large body of work on Islamic law or *shari'a*,[3] although recent scholarship also deals with Jewish law[4] and Hindu law.[5]

Among the three monotheistic traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—however, little has been written on what might be called 'Christian law'. There are obvious reasons for this: above all, Christianity was not founded as a religion of laws, as were its Jewish and Islamic counterparts. And aside from Byzantine

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1 See eg Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2004); Michel Onfray, *The Atheist Manifesto: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam* (2007); Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (2006).

2 See eg Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion?: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* (2007); Antony Flew and Roy Abraham Varghese, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (2009).

3 See eg Wael B Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (2009); Hunt Janin and André Kahlmeyer, *Islamic Law: The Sharia from Muhammad's Time to the Present* (2007); Jamila Hussain, *Islam: Its Law and Society* (2004); Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (2001); Lawrence Rosen, *The Justice of Islam* (2000). Although, interest in religious law is also found in the broader concern with comparative law: see H Patrick Glenn, *Legal Traditions of the World: Sustainable Diversity in Law* (3rd ed, 2007).

4 See eg Norman Solomon, 'Introduction' in Norman Solomon (trans and ed), *The Talmud: A Selection* (2009) xv.

5 See eg Werner F Menski, *Hindu Law: Beyond Tradition and Modernity* (2003).

Christianity, there have been few if any historical attempts to develop a coherent body of legal norms under a Christian banner deserving the title Christian law. Even in Byzantium itself, doubt exists as to whether Justinian's 6th century CE *Corpus Juris Civilis* (codified, as it was, during the height of the Byzantine nexus between Church and State) truly 'Christianised' the Roman law so much as added a Christian rhetorical flourish to the substantive principles of the classical Roman law.[6]

Yet, notwithstanding the lack of attention given it and the paucity of historical examples, contemporary scholars increasingly reveal that a Christian law does, indeed, exist.[7] And *Christianity and Law: An Introduction*, edited by John Witte, Jr, and Frank S Alexander—arguably the co-heirs to Harold J Berman's leadership in law and religion studies following his death in 2008[8]—represents the fullest exposition yet of its structure. Containing seventeen essays written by the leading figures in the field (including Berman's 'The Christian sources of general contract law'[9]) the book represents a seminal piece of work deserving of a place within the canon of law and religion scholarship. Drawing on a wealth of primary and secondary sources, it provides both an introduction to the topic for students and an excellent reference work for advanced study. The first five essays form the historical/theoretical/philosophical background to the remaining eleven, which explore the concrete relationships between Western Christianity and doctrinal categories of Western law: constitutional and public law, contract law, torts, evidence, family law, property, criminal law, and corporate law.

In the 'Introduction',[10] John Witte argues that law and religion relate dialectically, crossing-over and cross-fertilising each other, and that the province of law and religion studies concerns itself with those instances of overlap. Four such major overlaps are identifiable in the 2000 year history of Christianity: (i) The Christian conversion of the Roman Empire in the 4th–6th centuries CE, (ii) Medieval Catholicism emerging from the Papal Revolution or Gregorian Reform of the late

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6 Caroline Humfress, 'Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian' in Michael Maas (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (2005) 161, 167–71.

7 The seminal work, of course, is Harold J Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (1983). See also Michael A Scaperlanda & Teresa Stanton Collett (eds), *Recovering Self-Evident Truths: Catholic Perspectives on American Law* (2007); Michael W McConnell, Robert F Cochran, Jr, and Angela C Carmella (eds), *Christian Perspectives on Legal Thought* (2001); Robert E Rodes, Jr, *Pilgrim Law* (1998).

8 See 'Alexander, Witte Reflect on Career of Harold J. Berman' (2008) *Emory University Center for the Study of Law and Religion* <http://cslr.law.emory.edu/news/news-story/headline/alexander-witte-reflect-on-career-of-harold-j-berman/> at 5 November 2009. For an interesting personal insight into the difficulties faced by Berman in establishing law and religion as an accepted field of inquiry within the legal academy, see Harold J Berman, 'Foreword', in McConnell, Cochran, and Carmella, above n 7, xi, xi–xiv.

9 Harold J Berman, 'The Christian sources of general contract law' in John Witte, Jr, and Frank S Alexander, (eds), *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* (2008) 125.

10 John Witte, Jr, 'Introduction' in Witte and Alexander, above n 9, 1.

11th through 13th centuries CE, (iii) the Protestant Reformation and its transformation of canon and civil law and of church and state in the 15th and 16th centuries CE, and, (iv) the Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries CE.[11] These four moments constitute the 'watershed … periods, the civilizational moments and movements that permanently redirected the Western legal tradition'.[12] This said, Witte turns the remainder of the work over to the 'more refined and colorful portraits of individual topics offered in the succeeding chapters'.[13]

There is, then, both theoretically and doctrinally, something here for everyone. In the case of the former, the book will be of specific interest to those engaged in the work of separating the threads of the contemporary Western legal tradition with a view to determining where religious (read Christian) concepts are present and where not.[14] It may be a sobering realisation for some, though, to find that much, if not all, Western law is, at least in origin if not also in operation, Christian. Witte writes that:

> [e]ven today, the laws of the secular state retain strong moral and religious dimensions. These dimensions are reflected not only in the many substantive doctrines of public, private, and criminal law that were derived from earlier Christian theology and canon law. They are also reflected in the characteristic forms of contemporary legal systems in the West. Every legitimate legal system has what Lon L. Fuller called an 'inner morality', a set of attributes that bespeak its justice and fairness. Like divine laws, human laws are generally applicable, publically proclaimed and known, uniform, stable, understandable, non-retroactive, and consistently enforced. Every legitimate legal system also has what Harold J. Berman calls an 'inner sanctity', a set of attributes that command the obedience, respect, and fear of both political authorities and their subjects. Like religion, law has authority—written or spoken sources, texts or oracles, which are considered to be decisive or obligatory in themselves. Like religion, law has tradition—a continuity of language, practice, and institutions, a theory of precedent and preservation. Like religion, law has liturgy and ritual—the ceremonial procedures, decorum, and works of the legislature, the courtroom, and the legal document aimed to reflect and dramatize deep social feelings about the value and validity of law.[15]

This conclusion presents a formidable challenge, then, for those seeking to show that the Western legal tradition contains within itself the ability, objectively

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11 Ibid 5–30.

12 Ibid 5. The full recounting of these movements is available, of course, in Berman, above n 7.

13 Witte, above n 10, 5.

14 For a recent example of such work, see Ngaire Naffine, *Law's Meaning of Life: Philosophy, Religion, Darwin and the Legal Person* (2009). For further analysis of this issue, see Paul Babie, 'Breaking the Silence: Law, Theology, and Religion in Australia' (2007) 31 *Melbourne University Law Review* 296.

15 Witte, above n 10, 28–9.

and intrinsically, to deal with the most difficult and pressing concerns facing contemporary society—beginning and end of life issues, sexuality, the environment, and so forth. If their work is to have any moral purchase whatsoever, such commentators must respond to this challenge and demonstrate how Western law is not religious or, more precisely, not Christian.

Doctrinally, the present volume restricts itself to mapping the dialectic between law and religion according to the Western Christian (largely Catholic and Protestant) tradition. With any religion, different manifestations of the same tradition can produce alternative viewpoints and conclusions. Perhaps the best contemporary example of that is the case of Islam, where Sunni, Shi'i and the much less known Sufi versions of that tradition can and do reach radically different positions concerning the meaning and application of *shari'a*.[16] This fact is often overlooked in the case of Christianity—there are sometimes significant differences between approaches taken by those loosely categorised as Western Christians, let alone the variations that can be found as between Western and Eastern Christianity. No criticism can justifiably be levelled against the editors or authors for restricting the focus of this volume to Western Christianity. Indeed, any attempt to deal with the insights found in Eastern Christianity must first contend with the caveat issued by *The Economist* in its review of Charles Taylor's magisterial *A Secular Age*:[17]

> Eastern Christianity, which takes a less pessimistic view of human nature than Augustine or Aquinas did, has answers to such dilemmas… But to go down th[is] route would … require thousands more pages of intricately woven argument.[18]

That said, the Eastern Christian voice has contributed much to modern law and contains great comparative potential for the development of Western legal doctrine.[19] The remainder of this essay ventures to demonstrate, briefly, where an Eastern Christian approach might lead.

It helps, first, to narrow our focus. One might choose any of the essays in the volume to outline Eastern Christian insight; consider Frank S Alexander's 'Property and Christian theology'[20] and, to narrow the focus further, consider the argument advanced therein concerning the importance of human relationships to property,

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16 See, for example, the differing conclusions reached by Sunni, Shi'i and Sufi Islam in relation to *shari'a* and the environment: Richard C Foltz, 'Islam' in Roger S Gottlieb (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (2006) 207.

17 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (2007).

18 'A land where God is absent: The Western world may believe that it has liberated itself from clerical power, but divinity just keeps on breaking in' (2007) *The Economist* <http://www.economist.com/books/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_JSGNSTP> at 4 November 2009.

19 Witte notes briefly, for instance, the ongoing relevance of Orthodox canon law: Witte, above n 10, 29.

20 Frank S Alexander, 'Property and Christian theology' in Witte and Alexander, above n 9, 205.

both in theology and in law. Alexander argues that there are few more challenging concepts for Christian theology than property for it is:

> often viewed as fundamentally inconsistent with the proclamation of the Gospel, yet it is proclaimed as evidence of God's bountiful reward. It is neither evidence of salvation nor a means to redemption, yet it is used to create personal identity and to define interpersonal relationships. Property is that which is to be gathered up, yet it is that which is to be shared with others and held in common. It is a resource to be appropriated and consumed, yet it is God's creation and it is *'very good'*.[21]

To tackle this thorny issue, then, Alexander begins by positing that while it makes little sense to speak of a theology of property, '[i]t makes a great deal of sense … to speak of a theological understanding of property because the nature of being human reflects, refracts, and refines the nature and function of property'.[22] This stance permits a multifaceted conception of property based upon the Christian doctrines of creation, fall, and redemption, which 'allows one to understand the differing claims, and different rules, of property in a far deeper and richer context while at the same time insisting that no single positivist, normative, or economic claim dominates.'[23]

For Alexander, a theological understanding of property addresses human experience in three ways, corresponding to the creation, fall and redemption.[24] In the first stage, following creation, humanity falls by asserting its self-awareness against God. Corresponding to the fall is 'property as mine',[25] by which Alexander means '[t]he initial human tendency … to supplant an experience of dependency with an assertion of autonomy and to form one's identity by possession and control'.[26] The whole of American property law, even more than the British (and the Australian), Alexander argues, affirms and reifies the legitimacy of these instinctual claims to ownership.[27]

The second stage of human experience, corresponding to the Christian understanding of redemption, Alexander calls 'property as yours', a phrase intended to identify the other in relationship to the individual. This holds great potential, for '[a] theological affirmation of another person as a child of God, the one we are to love as we love ourselves, invites the affirmation through law of the property of that person, the things that form the identity, power, and control of the other'.[28] Still, while this can allow for giving, the act of which 'sets aside both for oneself and for

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid 208.
24 Ibid 208–9.
25 Ibid 209 and 209–10.
26 Ibid 209.
27 Ibid 209–10.
28 Ibid 208.

the other the assertion of power and control in gaining property…',[29] this can also produce barriers, and act as a source of distance, alienation and estrangement.[30] Simply, while the necessary corollary of 'property as mine', the obvious difficulty with 'property as yours' is the reality that in both theology and law, the identity and claim of 'the other' is fraught with ambiguity.[31]

In the third stage of human experience, redemption, one moves beyond looking at property as mine or yours, to see it as ours, and in so doing 'quickly confront[s] both the positive conception of shared ownership and the economic reality of the imposition of external costs on others'.[32] In other words, unlike the popularly accepted conception of property—one person holding, absolutely, all of the available rights in relation to a resource or thing—'property as ours' posits that no one person holds absolutely all such rights in a thing. This is true not only of Western law, but also of the theology of the human condition.[33] Where the self-interested person of the absolutist conception parallels the fall of Christian theology in which 'the individual self is primary and all else is secondary unless and until it is defined as important to the individual',[34] the doctrine of redemption challenges the paradigm of private ownership and control in Western law with a theological perspective of property held purely in common.[35] Alexander concludes:

> Humans … are innately resistant to yielding control and are frightened by holding all things in common. Yet, we are reminded that what we have has been graciously given to us, "for the land is mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23).[36]

For Western law, Alexander shows, the concept of property and its legal invocation begins with the individual. For both political and legal liberalism, this is the self-sufficient, atomistic and right-bearing individual who acts upon egoism and self-interest[37] and in which 'desirable communal living is derivative from that which detached entities are entitled to demand, the "priority of the right over the good" '.[38] The Western Christian tradition largely informed this understanding of

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29 Ibid 212.

30 Ibid 208–9.

31 Ibid 208–9 and 211–2. On the ambiguity of the 'other' in liberal thought generally, see JW Harris, *Legal Philosophies* (1997) 289–93; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (1989); Paul W Kahn, *Putting Liberalism in Its Place* (2005). On the ambiguity in liberal law, see Ted Decoste, 'Taking Torts Progressively' in Ken Cooper-Stephenson and Elaine Gibson (eds), *Tort Theory* (1993) 240.

32 Alexander, above n 20, 209.

33 Ibid 212.

34 Ibid 213.

35 Ibid 213–4.

36 Ibid 214.

37 Harris, above n 31, 289.

38 Ibid 290.

the individual.[39] And Alexander's Western Christian understanding of property—while clearly a significant improvement on the absolutist conception—follows this liberal route: one begins with the individual (property as mine), moves through an intermediate stage of concern for the other (property as yours) to a desirable, but ultimately derivative (upon the individual) form of communal living (property as ours).

A strong communitarian critique of liberalism in the last twenty years, however, posits an alternative conception of the individual:[40] 'human persons situated within, and at least partially constituted by, the communities in which they live'.[41] And communitarian arguments lie behind the work of 'property as social relations' scholars,[42] a loosely organised group of theorists who see property as rights among persons in relation to the control of things.[43] This view emerges, at the latest, within the last twenty years or, at the earliest, if one traces its origins to early 20th century CE American legal realism,[44] the last one hundred years. The focus of

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39 See Stephen L Carter, 'Liberal Hegemony and Religious Resistance: An Essay on Legal Theory' in McConnell, Cochran, and Carmella, above n 7, 25; C John Sommerville, *The Decline of the Secular University* (2006) 23–38; Taylor, above n 17. For an opposing view, see Naffine, above n 14.

40 See Alasdair MacIntrye, *After Virtue* (1981); Michael J Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982); Charles Taylor, above n 31.

41 Harris, above n 31, 290.

42 See CB Macpherson, 'The Meaning of Property' and 'Liberal-Democracy and Property' in CB Macpherson (ed), *Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions* (1978) 1 and 199; CB Macpherson, 'Capitalism and the Changing Concept of Property' in Eugene Kamenka & RS Neal (eds), *Feudalism, Capitalism and Beyond* (1975) 104; Jennifer Nedelsky, 'Reconceiving Rights as Relationship' (1993) 16 *Review of Constitutional Studies/Revue d'études constitutionelles* 1; Duncan Kennedy, 'The Stakes of Law, or Hale and Foucault!' (1991) 15 *Legal Studies Forum* 327; Joseph William Singer, *Entitlement* (2000); Joseph William Singer, *Introduction to Property* (2nd ed, 2005); Joseph William Singer, 'The Legal Rights Debate in Analytical Jurisprudence from Bentham to Hohfeld' (1982) *Wisconsin Law Review* 975; Joseph William Singer, 'The Reliance Interest in Property' (1988) 40 *Stanford Law Review* 611; Joseph William Singer, 'Re-Reading Property' (1992) 26 *New England Law Review* 711; Joseph William Singer & Jack M Beermann, 'The Social Origins of Property' (1993) 6 *Canadian Journal of Law & Jurisprudence* 217; Joseph William Singer, 'Sovereignty and Property' (1991) 86 *Northwestern University Law Review* 1; Carol M Rose, *Property & Persuasion: Essays on the History, Theory, and Rhetoric of Ownership* (1994); C Edwin Baker, 'Property and its Relation to Constitutionally Protected Liberty' (1986) 134 *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 741; Laura S Underkuffler, *The Idea of Property: its Meaning and Power* (2003); Laura S Underkuffler, 'On Property: An Essay' (1990) 100 *Yale Law Journal* 127.

43 See Singer, *Entitlement*, above n 42; Singer, *Introduction to Property*, above n 42.

44 Beginning with Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld, 'Some Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied in Judicial Reasoning' (1913) 23 *Yale Law Journal* 16; (1917) 26 *Yale Law Journal* 710; Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld, *Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied in Judicial Reasoning* (1919); Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld, *Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied in Judicial Reasoning, II* (Walter Wheeler Cook ed,

property as social relations is no longer the individual but 'the other', as embodied in the community or society broadly conceived, which itself is constitutive of the individual.

But neither the American legal realists, nor the communitarians, nor the property as social relations theorists were the first to reveal the community as constituting the individual. As early as the 6th century CE, in fact, Eastern Christianity posited not only that rather than the individual it was the person that was the relevant ontological entity, but also that the person only exists in community, indeed, is constituted by the community, in relationship with others. The body of scholarship devoted to working out the structure of the world-wide church and known as 'eucharistic ecclesiology', developed by a group of important Orthodox theologians in the 19th and 20th centuries CE, most clearly demonstrates the 2000 year history of this Eastern Christian thinking about the person.[45] John Zizioulas, in *Being as Communion*,[46] stands alone as the exemplar of eucharistic ecclesiology.[47]

For Zizioulas, three ontological consequences for the human person flow from the Christian understanding of the relational Trinitarian existence of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. First, the human person emerges as an identity through relationship—an 'I' that can exist only as long as it relates to a 'thou' which affirms both its existence and its otherness. Isolating the 'I' from the 'thou' results in the loss not only of otherness, but of its very being; the 'I' simply cannot be without the other. For Zizioulas, this Eastern Christian approach distinguishes a person from an individual.[48] Second, personhood is freedom for the other, both anthropologically and theologically.[49] And from this, finally, it follows that freedom is also creativity for the other. The human person, in this view, is ec-static—it must go outside and beyond the boundaries of 'self', not in some movement towards the unknown, but in affirmation of the other.[50]

What difference does the Eastern Christian understanding of the relationally constituted person, as opposed to the atomistic and egoistic liberal and Western

1923). Others subsequently took up Hohfeld's thinking: Robert L Hale, 'Coercion and Distribution in a Supposedly Non-Coercive State' (1923) 38 *Political Science Quarterly* 470; Morris R Cohen, 'Property and Sovereignty' (1927) 13 *Cornell Law Quarterly* 8; Robert L Hale, 'Bargaining, Duress, and Economic Liberty' (1943) 43 *Columbia Law Review* 603; Felix S Cohen, 'Dialogue on Private Property' (1954) 9 *Rutgers Law Review* 357.

45 Nicholas Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit* (Vitaly Permiakov trans, Michael Plekon ed, 2007); Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist* (1987); John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (1985); John D Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (2006). See also John Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches* (2002) 39–43.

46 Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, above n 45.

47 See Douglas H Knight (ed), *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and Church* (2007).

48 Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, above n 45, 9.

49 Ibid 9–10.

50 Ibid 10.

Christian individual, make to the way we see the concept of property in Western law? The answer, of course, lies in Zizioulas' three ontological conclusions. When viewed from the perspective of the relationally constituted person, the point *reached* by Alexander through an analysis of the individual becomes the point of *departure*. The concept of private property, freed from the atomism and absolutism of its associations with the liberal individual, becomes a tool of freedom, and not simply the freedom to choose one's own preferences in relation to a given resource, but freedom to choose both *for* the other and what is *best* for the other. Unsurprisingly, just such a conception of property already forms the core of recent Eastern Christian scholarship.[51]

The obvious question, though, is this: even if the Eastern Christian analysis of property is correct, what prevents the person from acting egoistically? Seen from the perspective of the liberal individual, nothing. Seen through the eyes of Eastern Christianity, though, it is clear that such self-interested choices in fact negate the person, for they deny the importance of the community, the other, in constituting one's very existence. Some will respond that it is unrealistic in the extreme to expect this of persons. That may be true. But it is no less unrealistic to expect individuals, taking the Western Christian line, to agree readily to the substitution of communal property for private. Alexander sees this problem: 'the theological perspective of property held purely in common is troublesome for Western laws of real property (and most especially for economists) …'[52]

The advantage of the Eastern Christian approach is that it needn't reject private property. Rather, it *preserves* private property as a legitimate and viable Christian option. By placing at its very core the community and the freedom of the person to choose for the other, Eastern Christianity allows the community not only to constitute the property relationship that gives rise to that choice, but also the very person who holds the power to exercise it. Salvaging private property will render a Christian stance more palatable in secular society, and have significant implications for contemporary moral and social challenges such as climate change, global poverty and hunger, and the global economy.

A simple point lies behind this focus on the concept of property. *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* makes an extremely valuable contribution to the expanding dialogue between law and religion. Scholars serious about the nature of religious law generally and Christian law specifically cannot ignore this volume. It provides not only, as its title makes clear, an introduction to the area, but also a penetrating

51 See Kyriakos Dounetas, *Beyond Wealth: Orthodoxy, Capitalism, and the Gospel of Wealth* (2009); Anthony Scott (ed), *Good and Faithful Servant: Stewardship in the Orthodox Church* (2003). See also John Zizioulas, 'Preserving God's Creation: Three Lectures on Theology and Ecology' (1989) 12 *King's Theological Review* 1 and 41; (1990) 13 *King's Theological Review* 1; Anestis G Keselopoulos, *Man and the Environment: A Study of St Symeon the New Theologian* (2001); John Chryssavgis (ed), *Cosmic Grace + Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I* (2003); John Chryssavgis, *Beyond the Shattered Image: Insights into an Orthodox Christian Ecological Worldview* (2007).

52 Alexander, above n 20, 214.

Christian analysis of the doctrinal and theoretical dimensions of Western law (as noted earlier, there is something here for everyone). Still, just as Sufi Islam offers a unique position on *shari'a* not found in the dominant Sunni and Shi'i variants of Islam, there is much that can be learned about law—and not only about property, but also contract, tort, criminal law, and so forth (for above all else law is about human relationships, which is where Christianity has the most to offer)—from the different strands of Christian thought, including the Eastern. Therein lies the true importance of this book: it opens a window onto one aspect of a much broader vista of Christian law, both Western and Eastern. Setting such a task is to be commended. Accomplishing it cannot be underestimated. More importantly, it cannot be ignored.