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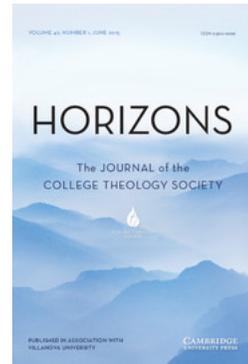
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***Hope Sings, So Beautiful: Graced Encounters across the Color Line.***  
**By Christopher Pramuk. Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013.**  
**ix + 201 pages. \$19.95 (paper).**

Laurie Cassidy

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example of . . . apophatic pluralism” (89), and another chapter in which he makes his complex case that the New Testament, despite its number of well-known and overused exclusivistic texts, offers “the overlooked potential . . . for nonexclusivistic theologies of religions” (105).

So under the banner of apophaticism, Rose sounds the charge to challenge the “dominance of inclusivism as the default theology of religions” (26) and “the massive rejection of pluralism in mainstream theology of religions” (35). Christianity is at a “crossroads,” and it is time for it “to divest itself of its claims to religious sovereignty” (129–30). Rose also calls upon religious studies to “rouse itself from its particularistic slumbers,” not to abandon its “thick descriptions” of particular traditions but to have the courage for the “unashamedly essentialist” task of drawing universal conclusions, as long as such conclusions are humbled under the apophatic critique (158).

Rose would serve his call to deabsolutize religious claims better by being a little less absolute and more humble himself. He would do well to follow the thoroughly pluralistic advice he finds in Hinduism—that is, to recognize “the possibility that either inclusivism or exclusivism may be true and that pluralism may be false” (90). Also, in his frequent appeals to the apophatic “brilliant darkness beyond all expression” (145), how does he account for the evident contradictions between the cataphatic claims of religions?

For those who see pluralism as “the future of religion,” Rose’s book will be a solid buttress. For those who don’t, it is an argument that they will definitely have to contend with. It’s sad, therefore, that the price of the book puts it beyond the reach of student textbook budgets.

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*Hope Sings, So Beautiful: Graced Encounters across the Color Line.* By Christopher Pramuk. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013. ix + 201 pages. \$19.95 (paper).

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Christopher Pramuk shares a soulful work with his readers in his book *Hope Sings, So Beautiful*. The limited space of this review cannot do justice to the synthetic character of his project, as Pramuk offers “a method of catholicity” (xxi) that involves not only the construction of a methodology but also the creation of theological language. Pramuk explains that this work is “frankly experimental,” (xvii) and his weaving of personal narrative, social critique, theological insight, and pastoral practice is held together by the

theological virtue of hope. The careful weaving reveals the rich and diverse ways people come into conversations, especially conversations around race; the hope is that we can have conversations in which we truly *see* one another across differences. Pramuk's use of diverse sources serves to resist reduction of each person's unique personhood, which when truly encountered is an experience of grace.

Pramuk's method of catholicity is a way of envisioning and enacting conversations across differences. Two elements are foundational to his method. First, he builds this conversation practice on the belief that we—all of us—are the Body of Christ. Second, he describes racism as a human problem that holds our imagination captive. He argues for the use of storytelling, music, and visual imagery to heal this virulent disease of imagination. Upon these foundations, Pramuk explores entry points in the circle of conversation. He is uneasy with academic categorical descriptors such as white privilege. Pramuk contends that such descriptors obfuscate "the deeper mystery that binds us together as human beings" (13). He turns away from these terms in order to bind himself to the Mystery of Love, which cannot be captured or contained in formal academic descriptions. Through rich narrative detail, he desires to demonstrate that even when whites are painfully aware of their privilege, there are practices that can enable them to—however briefly—meet others across racial lines. Pramuk illustrates his claim by offering examples of what he calls "graced encounters across the color line." "Grace *interrupts* our habitual ways of seeing, judging, and acting from day to day, . . . it illumines a truth that already is but was hidden from our sight" (xix). The final step in his method is to offer rituals, language, and images of God that enable us to realize that in these graced encounters we are living the mystery of the Incarnation. In so doing, we "drink deeply from the wellspring of human experience in all its mosaic, sacramental diversity" (xxi). A unique feature of Pramuk's text is the inclusion of a website ([www.HopeSingsSoBeautiful.org](http://www.HopeSingsSoBeautiful.org)) with practical support, "especially for folks laboring in the trenches, . . . seeking to build bridges between the many communities . . . who hold a critical stake in the dialogue about race in US society today" (xxiii).

A powerful and refreshing element of Pramuk's book is his substantive and engaging use of the work of Shawn Copeland, who provided the foreword. Copeland's starting point is the particularity of black women's bodies and their suffering; she moves from this beginning toward an understanding of something universal about humanity. Pramuk's starting point differs: he does not begin with the particularity of any body. Drawing on Copeland, then, raises a question: how do bodies matter to the circle of conversation? For example, in the introduction Pramuk describes how he had one foot in

the world of white privilege and one foot in the world of black worship (xv). How does his white body make it possible to move between these worlds? Recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, reveal that not all bodies can inhabit different worlds, let alone their own, without risking mortal danger. For white people, honestly exploring how white bodies matter to “seeing, judging, and acting from day to day” can lead to the experience of finally being able to hear those whose experiences differ because their bodies are not white.

This book deserves a wide readership not only because of its achievements, but also because of the risks it takes. Pramuk’s work challenges all of us to “wade into the waters” of honest and truthful conversation across difference, because it is there that we will enact God’s healing of our broken humanity.

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*Hope: Promise, Possibility, and Fulfillment.* Edited by Richard Lennan and Nancy Pineda-Madrid. New York: Paulist Press, 2013. xvi + 261 pages. \$24.95 (paper).

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It is often easy to determine whether an edited volume is comprised of essays by scholars in sustained conversation with one another or is instead one in which the editors simply collect essays on a particular theme. This volume is clearly the culmination of a collective endeavor by Catholic scholars from various disciplines; the essays bear the imprint of sustained interactions around the vital topic of hope—what it is, and how it is nurtured, sustained, and lived out.

Drawing on resources both within and outside Catholicism, these writers examine the challenge and possibility of hope in a contemporary global context. Part 1, “Grounding Hope,” sets the tone by offering helpful exegetical background on biblical—especially Pauline—understandings of hope as well as examining hope as a theological virtue, with some help from Aquinas.

Part 2, “Nurturing Hope,” features more contextual analyses of how and where hope is cultivated. It begins with a lovely exegetical piece entitled “The Fragility of Hope in Luke-Acts,” wherein Christopher Matthews demonstrates how the hope set forward by Luke is hope that includes the redemption of Israel. Thomas Groome’s essay, “Is There Hope for Faith?,” creatively makes connections between the pedagogy of Jesus and a Freirean model of education, a model Groome has taught for decades with great success. In the final essay in this section, Hosffman Ospino offers a fascinating