

of pain and suffering. Central to Messer's argument is the integration of Karl Barth's theology of creation and a teleological grounding established by Thomas Aquinas. In chapter 4 Messer articulates the sixteen theses he intends to guide Christians in issues of health, disease and bioethics. Incorporating Barth and Aquinas, Messer makes clear that health is properly understood as a penultimate good, and ultimate union with God is our primary end. Jesus Christ is the lens through which health and illness is interpreted, and our conception of human flourishing, as well as the utilisation of science and medicine, must be understood in that light.

Messer maintains the dignity of life throughout this book, and importantly urges readers to recognise the dignity and worth of others. Particularly demonstrated in his engagement with disability, Messer challenges readers to acknowledge diversity in life. Though unstated by Messer, a point which would complement these assertions is that certain realities of life such as disease, illness, disability and death must not be shielded from everyday view. Too often disease, illness and death are confined to hospitals, and people with disabilities are on the fringes of society. These are realities of life, and Christians must be prepared to act with courage and love towards all. Messer provides an important contribution to theological engagement with bioethics and, in the process, challenges Christians to consider their own reactions to the significant topics of health, disease, disability and death.

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doi:[10.1017/S0036930615000460](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930615000460)

Michael Banner, *The Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology, and the Imagination of the Human* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. xiv+224. £20.00 (hbk).

In this volume, Michael Banner engages with social anthropology to resource an approach to moral theology he calls an 'everyday ethics'. He argues that Christian ethics is misconceived when it is conducted as a response to 'hard cases', for an over-emphasis on such questions neglects the significance of 'the social context of our ethical actions' (p. 8). The 'hard case' tradition, Banner argues, identifies the good and the bad without locating either in 'psychologically and socioculturally realistic' narratives (p. 12). He thus advocates a dialogue with social anthropology to enable a more adequate approach by Christian ethicists to the social contexts in which human actions have their appeal and meaning. Anthropology,

Banner continues, helps illuminate how different 'forms of life' encompass specific logics of their own, which embody particular narratives of moral behaviour. The book suggests that attending to this dimension of human society will cure moral theology of its propensity to offer judgements without comprehending how human beings enact their 'everyday' moral lives.

There is much to appreciate in this carefully argued book. Banner's aim is to demonstrate ways in which the Christian creeds and social anthropology overlap in their shared investment in attending to moments of life which are 'paradigmatically human' (conception, birth, suffering, death and burial). His engagement with anthropological explorations of pressing contemporary issues such as reproductive technology, euthanasia and Alzheimer's are thoughtful and illuminating. But although his approach might initially be taken as following recent emphases on the significance of 'practices' in Christian ethics, or with the turn to ethnography among some ecclesialogists, the 'dialogue' Banner conducts between moral theology and social anthropology is a rather one-way conversation. For although Banner employs anthropology to instruct his reader about tensions in contemporary culture, what is not on offer is any engagement with ethnographies of particular Christian congregations. Rather, he employs social anthropology for two other purposes: first, as a model for conceiving moral theory in terms of elucidating 'ethical imaginaries' which shape the psychological and social forms of life humans inhabit; second, to illuminate the depth of the challenge presented by a number of pressing contemporary ethical problems.

The second of these tasks is modelled in chapter 2. Banner draws upon social anthropology's revisiting of the concept of kinship to analyse the popular demand for Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) in terms of a desire for a 'child of one's own'. Banner deconstructs this 'desperateness of childlessness' (p. 57) by drawing on studies which argue that ARTs depend on the very notions of kinship which they set out to undermine. Having identified this tendency in contemporary Western culture, Banner turns to ways in which the sermons of Augustine challenge the concept of biological kinship (since Christians are chiefly brothers and sisters 'in Christ').

This example highlights the way in which the book's use of social anthropology essentially follows the method of correlation. He employs anthropology to illuminate moral problems in contemporary society, for which Christian theology provides a distinctive response. As such, rather than analysing specific Christian communities in their social contexts better to understand the challenges confronting the Christian life, Banner's 'everyday ethics' is shaped by a normative Christian 'moral imaginary'. For this task,

he draws much of his inspiration from Christian art. Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece, for example, is employed to resource a meditation on the nature of Christ's suffering, which Banner argues exceeds mere humanitarian spectatorship of the other's agony (p. 101).

Here those familiar with anthropology may experience some dissonance with Banner's approach. For that discipline often identifies differences in human experience and behaviour which problematise universal normative descriptions of societies and cultures. Thus, for example, anthropologists speak of multiple 'Christianities'. Yet Banner's interpretations of his selected artworks are marshalled to describe the singular mode of Christian life. Differences of views or practices among diverse communities of Christians are not addressed in the book. This is a curious outcome of an engagement with social anthropology and ethnography. For all its emphasis on 'everyday' life, the theological approach to the social experience of Christians remains top-down. While Banner suggests that moral theology should seek to locate its 'prescriptive imagination' in a 'more fully realized account of the form of life in which this imagination might flourish' (p. 204), that prescriptive imagination is identified apart from the analysis of social contexts. In Banner's hands, therefore, social anthropology is thus very much the tool of a dogmatic theological interpretation of the Christian tradition. How one evaluates the volume will largely depend on the extent to which one appreciates Banner's reading of the tradition. In any event, however, this is a provocative and thoughtful volume that is worth attention.

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doi:[10.1017/S0036930615000575](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930615000575)

Hans Schwarz, *The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 416, \$35.00.

Hans Schwarz is Professor of Systematic Theology and Contemporary Theological Issues at the University of Regensburg, Germany. His theological anthropology highlights 'the biblical testimony, the historical unfolding by its major voices through the centuries, and the present affirmation of this tradition in view of rival options and of the factual evidence the various sciences have unearthed' (p. xii). While the biblical and historical elements are themselves comprehensive and helpful, one of the most interesting and