to assume a Christian afterlife; and Oppy worries that sceptical theism leads to another, uncompelling type of scepticism.

The final chapter is Oppy’s attempt to argue for narrow anti-theism. He contends that since, in his opinion, theism is impossible, it makes no sense for him to desire God’s existence. Oppy highlights the important point that one cannot desire something that one believes to be impossible. He takes the strategy of evaluating big pictures, ‘philosophical theories of everything’ (141), and argues that we cannot rationally desire impossible big pictures. In response, we might claim that there is value in considering impossible big pictures (I could rationally consider, for example, whether I would rather the Tooth Fairy or Father Christmas exist, or whether I would rather be omniscient or omnibenevolent). Though it reduces the axiology debate to a complex game of ‘would you rather’, it is an interesting inquiry, nonetheless. Hendricks, taking this line of thought, claims that we can still consider our desires for fantasies, even if they are impossible (the axiology of impossible big pictures becomes an exercise in dreaming the impossible dream, to paraphrase the Man of La Mancha). Almeida suggests that we could reframe the axiology debate by comparing the value of (i) a world where we discover that we live in a world in which God exists and (ii) a world in which we discover that we live in a world in which God doesn’t exist. Dumsday argues that the axiology question has an upshot that Oppy doesn’t consider – that it can help others to determine their axiological preferences.

Overall, this book invites the reader to enter an academic conversation with a group of outstanding scholars. It is a superb addition to the literature and a worthwhile opportunity to read the responses of each primary author to the critique and feedback from other contributors. The replies provide a useful dialectic, and the arguments presented in the text are original, interesting, and diverse. Accordingly, this book will be of immense value to philosophers of religion interested in the burgeoning wealth of literature on the axiology of world-views. With any luck, it will encourage others to become involved in the ongoing discourse and propel this area of study into the forefront of the philosophy of religion. I would even go so far as to say that one in which this book exists is a better world than one in which it does not.

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Jordan Wessling *Love Divine: A Systematic Account of God’s Love for Humanity* 

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It is clear that divine love is an important philosophical and theological topic. Divine love is foundational to reflection on the nature of God driven by reason and reflection on the concept of a perfect being. Divine love is also central to specifically Christian theological
reflection on the nature of God rooted in Scripture and tradition. Consideration of the nature of divine love also drives the two most prominent families of arguments against the existence of God as traditionally conceived — arguments from evil and arguments from hiddenness point to the incompatibility, or evidential tension, of certain states of affairs and God’s love. In Love Divine Jordan Wessling addresses the topic of God’s love, and topics adjacent to divine love, using an analytic theological methodology (the book is an entry in the series ‘Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology’). Wessling draws on philosophical reflection on the concept of love as well as the data of Christian scripture and tradition as he attempts to defend his account of divine love and how that account impacts on various other questions of philosophical theology.

Wessling begins in chapter 1 by defending the methodological approach of reflecting on human love to inform our view of divine love. Specifically, he defends what he calls the similarity thesis — ‘ideal human love is pertinently similar to God’s love’ (11), and the methodological thesis — ‘the theologian is justified in adopting the practice of drawing conclusions about God’s love by examining ideal human love’ (11). Chapter 2 is the heart of the book; here Wessling articulates and defends his value account of human love, and by extension, God’s love; to love someone ‘is to perceive that individual’s intrinsic worth (specifically dignity) and to respond to that individual by valuing her existence, her flourishing, and union with her’ (64). He argues that this understanding of love can account for (i) human love for another human, (ii) human self-love, (iii) human love for God, (iv) God’s intra-trinitarian love, and (v) God’s love for humans.

The remaining chapters address issues connected with divine love. In chapter 3 Wessling addresses the debate about the role of love in explaining God’s creation between glorificationism (God creates out of self-concern to express his own attributes) and amorism (God creates for the sake of loving his creation). He argues that natural theology (other-centred benevolence is an excellence) and Christian Scripture (Christ’s other-focused self-sacrifice) support amorism rather than glorificationism. In chapter 4 Wessling addresses the debate concerning whether divine love involves God’s experiencing emotions, including emotions ‘that involve experiences of suffering’ (116). Wessling argues that God experiences suffering-compassion, on the grounds that suffering-compassion is indicated to be experienced by God in Scripture, as well as that it is intrinsically valuable for humans, which gives reason to accept that it would also be valuable for God. Chapter 5 gives Wessling’s defence of the claim that God loves every human supremely, not meaning that God loves each person to the maximal degree, but that God loves every human such that each human can achieve their created good. Chapter 6 considers the relationship of God’s punitive wrath and love. Wessling argues against the divergent account (divine punishment and divine love diverge) and for the unitary account, which affirms that ‘divine punishment is motivated by love for the wrongdoer’ (184). Drawing on R. A. Duff’s communicative theory of punishment, Wessling sees God’s punishment fitting communication of the seriousness of the wrongdoing and of the aim to reform. This is the case even for God’s punishment of those in hell. In chapter 7, Wessling attempts to give an account of how humans can grow to have divine love and ‘participate in (or [be] infused with) the divine life’ (219). He builds on a model developed by William Alston, which explains how we can participate in a mental state shared with the Holy Spirit, and then argues that the Holy Spirit can share with us experiences of virtue that Jesus had during his earthly life. This allows humans to experience the process of deification and gives a fundamental role to Christ’s atoning death in this process.

This book is an important work in the burgeoning field of analytic theology. This leads me to a point of criticism; as I mentioned above, this book adopts the methodology of analytic theology. While I understand that philosophical theology informed by a particular tradition and that tradition’s scriptures has been practised for a long time, there has
been much reflection on this method over the last couple of decades. It would have been helpful if Wessling had discussed analytic theology as a method in the beginning of the book to set the stage for his argumentative method of combining analytic reflection on concepts (love, desire, etc.), exegesis of texts of Christian scripture, and exposition of the teaching of significant theologians from the Christian tradition. (From what I could find, Wessling only mentions ‘analytic theology’ once in passing in the book.)

Now on to strengths. As the summary above makes clear, the book addresses several different theological and philosophical issues that cluster around the concept of divine love. I found each discussion to be characterized by careful consideration and evaluation. There weren’t any weak analyses – and that includes the discussions where I wasn’t persuaded by Wessling’s arguments. Further, I would note that the arguments do not depend on one another. For example, the argument of chapter 6 concerning divine punishment and love doesn’t depend on the conclusion of chapter 4 that God’s love includes suffering. The discussion of the scope of divine love in chapter 5 is particularly pertinent in light of recent attempts to question the claim that divine love extends to everyone (e.g. arguments from Jeff Jordan, Michael Rea, Brian Davies, and Mark Murphy). Wessling carefully considers and responds to these objections, developing a plausible account of how it is that God loves every human being such that no one is cut off from the possibility of living a flourishing life. This work is highly recommended.

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Jerry L. Martin (ed.), Theology Without Walls: The Transreligious Imperative


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This volume is a stimulating work on philosophy of religion from a transreligious perspective well suited for our times. The contributors have employed different – mostly outside-the-box – ideas and perspectives to look at questions about the ultimate reality from multiple locations, many of which are outside the age-old religious traditions. As the editor of the volume argues, if the goal of theology is ‘to know and articulate all we can about the divine or ultimate reality’ (1), that goal cannot be achieved by a single religious tradition’s confessional theology. Since revelations and insights of one’s own are not ‘adequate to the ultimate reality’ (1) and since such efforts risk ‘narrowness, distortion, and misappropriation’ (1), what we need is Theology Without Walls (hereafter, TWW). Going beyond both religious pluralism and comparative religion, the aim of TWW is ‘to understand what is truly ultimate’ (2) using ‘spiritual discernment, philosophical reflection, personal experience, and transreligious insight’ (2).