but many of his theological and prophetic assertions still strike this reader as tolerably vague and abstract.

Paul Cefalu. *The Johannine Renaissance in Early Modern English Literature and Theology*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. xiv + 352 pp. + 7 illus. $81.00. Review by James Ross Macdonald, University of the South.

In this learned, densely-argued study, Paul Cefalu shows how the writings ascribed to St. John the Evangelist exerted quiet but powerful influence in early modern England. Although his book's title consciously evokes John S. Coolidge's *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (1970), its scope is considerably different: while Coolidge traces the animating energies of English Puritanism back to St. Paul's epistles, Professor Cefalu explores the Fourth Gospel's imaginative imprint across a broad range of religious discourse. He suggests that four main features distinguish the Johannine sensibility from Paul and the synoptic gospels: "a high Christology that emphasizes the divine rather than the human nature of Christ...the belief that salvation is achieved more through revelation than objective atonement and expiatory sin...a realized eschatology according to which eternal life has been achieved and the end-time has already partially arrived ... [and] a robust doctrine of assurance and comfort, usually tied to Johannine eschatology and pneumatology." Moreover, early modern texts within this constellation are linked by "a stylistic and rhetorical approach to representing these theological features that often emulates John's mode of discipleship misunderstanding and irony" (21). This mode of exploring Johannine influence usefully cross-cuts the confessional binaries that frequently define the consideration of early modern religious writing, disclosing unexpected common ground among Catholic and Protestant authors, as well as deepening connections between the magisterial and radical strains of Reformation thought.

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tion of the Lord's Supper by way of John 6, above all its famous image of Jesus Christ as the bread of life. Tracing a line of interpretation from St. Augustine's homilies through the Middle Ages to Luther, Zwingli,

Calvin, and Archbishop Cranmer, Professor Cefalu shows how "Johannine emphasis on the Ascension warrants in both the theology and the imaginative literature of the period the Reformed claim that Christ cannot be present bodily in the elements of the sacrament because he remains in heaven with God" (44). The chapter then turns to an examination of literary influence that reveals surprising alignments. George Herbert's poems "Peace," "The Banquet," and the divergent versions of "The H. Communion" that appear in the Williams manuscript and the printed version of *The Temple* (1633) suggest a poet "more interested in a post-Ascension communion with Christ than he is the ritual of the Eucharist" (76). In the Commonwealth context of his follower Henry Vaughan's prose meditation *The Mount of Olives*, by contrast, "recasting the bread of life in Eucharistic terms is Vaughan's way of cultivating, perhaps rationalizing, belief in the truth of the real presence in the absence of the practiced ritual" (83). The Catholic convert Richard Crashaw's reflections on the miracle of the loaves and fishes (John 6:1–11) in his Divine Epigrams "convey the importance of belief in Christ and the Spirit rather than corporeal eating or a partaking of the real presence" (90), presenting unanticipated continuity with the Connecticut Puritan Edward Taylor's *Meditations*, which also "consistently use John's verses to identify their relevance not to the Supper proper, but to the required preparation thereof" (92).

The second chapter turns to Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Christ at the empty tomb (John 20), a pericope unique to the Fourth Gospel. As Mary mistakes Christ for a gardener and must be warned not to touch him, John's "ironic method of productive misunderstanding as a means of revelation" furnishes a model for texts by Robert Southwell, Crashaw, Vaughan, Anna Trapnel, and others (98). Beginning with an exploration of how early modern preachers found in the Fourth Gospel "an art-of-hearing manual" (106), Professor Cefalu shows how in *Marie Magdalens Funerall Teares* (1591), Southwell reads Mary's initial misapprehension as an emblematic instance of how faith arrives "through a belief in what is heard rather than seen" (109); in place of a "metanarrative of loss," the poem presents Mary's growing recognition that "Christ's death has indeed been expedient," since it allows her to "find comfort in her savior's continuing, immaterial presence" (118). A short excursus follows on

Hans Holbein's *Noli me tangere* painting of 1524–26, which presents visually the paradox that "the manifest distance that renders Christ's body unavailable to Mary" is what permits her to "achieve intimate fellowship with Christ" (124). This irony forms the subtext for brief accounts of Crashaw's "The Weeper" and Vaughan's "St. Mary Magdalen," two poems in which, Cefalu argues, Mary experiences "more of a state of glorification than initiation into the arduous process of conversion" (128). The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Trapnel finds in Mary's experience "comparable comfort" to warrant her own spiritual assurance (130).

The third chapter examines the distinctively Johannine conception of the Paraclete, which "departs from Synoptic pneumatology in emphasizing the power-affirming rather than power-giving aspect of the Spirit once it descends on the newly arrived Christ" (133). In the context of heated debates over faith, perseverance, and assurance, passages from John became theological flashpoints: the works of experimental predestinarians like William Perkins, for example, "typically invoke yet then veer from the Johannine conception of the Paraclete," in that "the Comforter does not recall us to the assurance of saving faith...[but] rather reminds us of the manner in which we can strive to prepare, maintain, and evince salvation" (137). Such differences serve to frame the chapter's culminating discussion of Donne and Milton. While Donne's sermons offer an "appreciative and largely traditional (not experimental) Calvinist understanding of the role of the Johannine Spirit" (140), the Holy Sonnets exhibit a much more turbulent subjective experience that ardently seeks an "*act* or *moment* of rebirth rather than an arduous, ongoing process of renewal riddled with backsliding and captivation by the enemy" (147, author's emphasis). Milton, by contrast, treats the Spirit's role with circumspect caution: as the archangel Michael unfolds for Adam a future-historical vision of the true church corrupted by episcopacy and superstition, the Paraclete's temporal consolations for believers must "inevitably give way to the more distant comforts of the protevangelium" (163). Where Donne craves the unequivocal assurance provided by the Comforter, Milton fears "the seeming ease with which the soteriological and ecclesiological powers of the spirit can be suborned" (170).

Johannine *agape*—foregrounded in the fundamental claim that "God is love" (1 John 4:16)—forms the subject of the fourth chapter. Professor Cefalu argues that John's treatment of the concept is distinguished by an "ontological and relational focus," in which "God's foundational love for the Son and, by implication, humankind" emerges with unparalleled clarity (181). This stance forms the basis for several Herbert lyrics that "position a speaker who determines that knowledge of God will issue from an understanding of God's inimitable love" (183). A poem like "The Call," for example, dramatizes a shift in spiritual vision, moving "from depicting *agape* as an act or quality to *agape* as God's ontology or essence" (186). Herbert's "Johannine optimism regarding the ease with which the communicant unites with the loving essence of God/Christ," however, furnishes another point of divergence from Vaughan, whose "speakers recapitulate the ignorance, questioning, and fear that Christ's auditors and disciples themselves express in John's Gospel" (196). Despite close affinities with Vaughan, Thomas Traherne's lyrics take an approach that Cefalu finds redolent of scholasticism: reasoning analogically, Traherne "incorporates an appreciation of the love of God found among the created orders into the love of God granted to the speakers through the vehicle of Christ" (210). Ultimately, however, Cefalu argues that these three poets are linked in spite of evident differences by their "prioritization of a metaphysics of love over the more practical-ethical horizontal conception of love that one finds more typically in both Synoptic and Pauline theology" (212).

The fifth chapter engages some of the monograph's most overtly political matter, exploring the significance of Johannine discourses at the religious fringe of antinomian dissent. Such separatist groups found the Fourth Gospel particularly congenial because in place of a "futurist/apocalyptic eschatology," John's cosmology centers instead on a "vertical dualism that typically contrasts two realms of being: the sphere of immemorial light, divinity, and Sonship is counterpoised to the contingent, worldly Pharisaical sphere of darkness" (215). The chapter's opening sections establish the central position of passages from John's writings in the philosophies of radicals like Hendrik Niclaes, John Traske, John Eaton, John Everard, Gerrard Winstanley, and George Fox, as well as in the Antinomian Controversy that convulsed

the Massachusetts Bay colony in the later 1630s. The argument then shifts to explore surprising affinities between such discourses and the lyrics of Crashaw and Vaughan. While these poets' establishmentarian sympathies seem wholly at odds with such bedfellows, Professor Cefalu shows how Crashaw shares with radicals an expansive idea of free grace, "not merely the Johannine notion that assurance naturally follows from faith but also a conception of faith as simple *belief* in Christ's message" (268, author's italics). Ironically, "Crashaw is most antinomian when he seems most mystical, when the faithful are united with Christ such that distinctions between self and Christ are diluted" (273). Vaughan, cut off from church ceremonies under the Commonwealth, evinces attraction to a dualist sensibility that presents the blessedness of eternal life as "a here-and-now possibility," enabled by faith (282).

The influence of John's literary style takes center stage in the sixth chapter: Professor Cefalu explores early modern appropriations of the Fourth Gospel's characteristic dramatic irony, as acts of correction within the narrative edify and enlighten the audience. Such a dynamic, he argues, is enacted throughout Herbert's poetry in lyrics like "The Bag," "The Bunch of Grapes," and "Love unknown," which move beyond irresolvable paradox by seeking "to illuminate knowledge of God's mysteries and Christ's redemptive actions ... through the route of stable irony in which meaning/knowledge increases as a particular poem's theological crux or spiritual conflict works toward resolution" (302). A final section explores Vaughan's remarkable rewriting of the Nicodemus pericope in "The Night," where the poet seems to reimagine the Pharisee's furtive nighttime visit to Christ as part of an effort to "rehabilitate spiritual darkness" by suggesting "the accessibility of God once God's brightness has been dimmed" (306). As it becomes clear in the final stanzas, however, that the poem "conflates the paradoxical sense of the benevolent darkness of God with the more straightforward sense of darkness as a hiding place" (310), Vaughan's evident irony comes to the surface: the poem's speaker "turns out to be quite like John's Nicodemus, after all, not quite sure of his conversion status" (312).

For Professor Cefalu, the Fourth Gospel often provides writers with irenic shelter from the storms of early modern religion: "insufflated

with the Johannine Spirit," they discover imaginative resources sufficient to "elevate them above the theological quibbles and ideological wrangling of the time" (36). Perhaps, though, the monograph's ambition to embrace fully both literature and theology invites reflection on the methodology of such interdisciplinary inquiry. Apart from the sixth, each chapter proceeds from an examination of exegetical tradition—amply documented in early modern sermons, tractates, and glossation as well as in modern Biblical scholarship—to close readings of selected literary texts. Implicit in this sort of structure is the danger of presenting intellectual history as a static, stable backdrop for the corybantic performances of literary imagination. While the chapters are more than subtle enough to escape this trap (in no small part because Cefalu brings the same nimble close reading practices to theological as to literary texts), at times the method produces the effect of two entangled discourses, or perhaps two distinct discursive stems nourished by a common taproot of learning. But perhaps this structure is merely the true reflected image of a Johannine Renaissance that appears to be deep but diffuse, less a cohesive movement than a surprising concatenation of affinities across a wide spectrum of religious opinion.

Gary Schneider. *Print Letters in Seventeenth-Century England: Politics, Religion, and News Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2018. x + 284 pp. $140.00. Review by Nicole Greenspan, Hampden-Sydney College.

In *Print Letters in Seventeenth-Century England*, Gary Schneider examines the intersection of epistolarity, ideology, propaganda, and news culture. The chronological focus is the 1640s and 1650s, which saw a rise in the numbers of printed letters and their regular deployment in political and religious contestations, though Schneider gives due attention to the earlier and later parts of the century as well. In contemporary debates over war and revolution, royalist and Parliamentary actions and aspirations, the veracity of Catholic conspiracies, and the fate of the monarch and monarchy, to name just a few, Schneider demonstrates that printed letters played vital roles. Some printed letters