help.” He chose a fifteen line hymn to the Trinity, “How Wonderful the Three-in-One,” by Brian Wren, put to music by Marty Haugen.

The book’s major value consists in offering a readable, accurate introductory “genetic approach” to the Trinity in line with the Thomistic tradition. In addition, it provides brief but often incisive comments on a good number of current theological issues: the pre-existence of Christ (61-62); the difference between metaphor and simile in describing God as Father (13, 186-87), the use of “person” for the “Three” in God (175-78), and Father, Son and Spirit as the principle but not the exclusive way of naming the Christian God (186-91). More, however, would be needed to gain a broader, deeper perspective of trinitarian theology today, as provided, for example, by Colin Gunton in his The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, [Second Edition] (T&T Clarke, 1997). Or in stressing the realism of the “first level act of calling on God by the triune name,” as explained in Robert W. Jenson’s “What is the Point of Trinitarian Theology?” in Trinitarian Theology Today, edited by C. Schwobel (T&T Clarke, 1995). Finally, O’Collins’ work, with its stress on the spirituality at the core of all trinitarian theology, could profitably be developed from Michael Downey’s Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality (Orbis Books, 2000). On the other hand, O’Collins’ study could perhaps supply the latter’s minimalist view of trinitarian doctrine as merely a grammar of a gift with a badly needed metaphysical basis.

GOD-SENT: A HISTORY OF THE ACCREDITED APPARITIONS OF MARY
By Roy Abraham Varghese
New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company
Reviewed by John N. Schumacher

The introduction to this book gives an overall view of alleged Marian apparitions, their supposed biblical and theological context, and a definition of terms. Unfortunately, one term that is not defined is the word “accredited”—by whom, with what authority, and
with what credibility? Part two, deceptively entitled "Images of the Virgin as Witnessed in her Appearances," is a collection of photographs of various persons, statues, churches, somehow related to apparitions. The third part organizes the thirty-four apparitions listed into a more or less unified series of messages. Appendixes follow on philosophical and theological questions connected with apparitions, and a list of works cited. These, apart from a few respectable authors and articles on Mariology who do not discuss the apparitions, are publications of various unknown publishers, from which the author has apparently drawn his selected messages.

One should not look for a critical evaluation of the supposed apparitions. Rather, the author has repeatedly omitted key statements from bishops or the Holy See that condemn, or at least warn of the unproved supernatural character of, these apparitions. Thus, to take a current example receiving local attention (and condemnation by the cardinal-archbishop of Manila), Varghese's treatment of the apparitions of "Our Lady of All Nations," reputed to have taken place 1945-84 in Amsterdam, makes no mention of their repeated rejection by the Dutch bishop of the time, and its strong confirmation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Similarly, to take a more widely received apparition, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the thorough study by the well-known Latin American historian, Stafford Poole, C.M., showing that the first mention of the apparition to Juan Diego in historical sources dates from 1648, is ignored. One may judge the general quality of scholarship from the first apparition listed—that of Our Lady to James, son of Zebedee, ca. 40 A.D. in Saragossa [Zaragoza], Spain. Varghese avers that this is rather a case of bilocation, since Mary was still alive (?).

Medjugorje is for the author the culmination, with over twenty pages devoted to excerpts of its messages. For Varghese, "the Vatican's current position on Medjugorje" is a supposed interview with Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. As quoted in fact it simply says that one may evangelize private pilgrimages there (italics mine), like those to any sanctuary, such as Czestochowa. The reference to Czestochowa,
says Varghese, "is surely significant!" (192). Indeed it is, for those who believe that the image was "reputedly painted by St. Luke" (74). But in fact, Bertone’s actual official statement (not interview) pointedly recalled that the bishops of the former Yugoslavia had declared, "On the basis of investigation up till now it cannot be established that one is dealing with supernatural apparitions and revelations." The archbishop reiterated that "official pilgrimages to Medjugorje, understood as a place of authentic Marian apparitions, are not permitted to be organized." The crowds inevitably gathered there should, however, be given sound evangelization.

The technique used by Varghese should be clear from these examples. It is, like that of the many popular works he used, neither historical nor theological. One can only be surprised that a publisher like Crossroad would dignify such a book, even with its gestures toward scholarship. It will surely not serve to enliven true devotion to Our Lady, much less give an insight into God’s supposedly apocalyptic message to the world.