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Joel Robbins

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Theology and the Anthropology of Christian Life

With commentary by

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Book Presentation

Both sociocultural anthropology and theology have made fundamental contributions to our understanding of human experience and the place of humanity in the world. But can these two disciplines, despite the radical differences that separate them, work together to transform their thinking on these topics? I argue that they can. To make this point, I draw on key theological discussions of atonement, eschatology, interruption, passivity, and judgement to rethink important anthropological debates about such topics as ethical life, radical change, the ways people live in time, agency, gift giving, and the nature of humanity. The result is both a sustained reconsideration of important aspects of anthropological theory through theological categories and a series of careful readings of influential theologians such as Moltmann, Pannenberg, Jüngel, and Dalferth informed by rich ethnographic accounts of the lives of Christians from around the world. In conclusion, I draw on contemporary discussions of secularism to interrogate the secular foundations of anthropology and suggests that the differences between anthropology and theology surrounding this topic can provide a foundation for transformative dialogue between them, rather than being an obstacle to it. Written as a work of interdisciplinary anthropological theorizing, this book also offers theologians an introduction to some of the most important ground covered by burgeoning field of the anthropology of Christianity while guiding anthropologists into core areas of theological discussion. Although theoretically ambitious, the book is clearly argued throughout and written to be accessible to all readers in the social sciences, theology, and religious studies interested in the place of religion in social life and human experience.

Zoom Link: TBA