

Book Reviews

Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture by Christopher R. Seitz (*Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001*) xii + 228 pp.

ROMAN CATHOLICS eager for a genuinely theological and spiritual revitalization of biblical exegesis may be surprised to discover that they owe a significant debt of gratitude to their “separated brethren.” Indeed, there is a touch of irony in the fact that Protestant scholars stand in the vanguard of a movement to reacquaint the Church with patristic exegesis and to tap into its riches. While he draws only minimally on the work of the Fathers as such, Christopher R. Seitz, an Anglican Old Testament scholar, is intent on developing a mode of biblical interpretation akin to theirs in important respects. Seitz identifies himself as part of a circle of Yale colleagues, “all of whom are trying to understand and perhaps even reinstate something that has gone missing” in biblical exegesis and the Church’s life (x).

Figured Out is a collection of essays on various topics, each of which contributes in some manner to the author’s critique of “historicism” in contemporary biblical scholarship and his promotion of “figural” exegesis. A preface situates Seitz’s efforts *vis à vis* a series of vital issues and questions, including the relationship between the Old and New Testaments and the relationship between exegesis and theology. His goal, a laudable one, is to reconnect “the two testaments of Christian scripture . . . without harm to their literal or plain sense” (vii). Between an introduction (chapter 1) and a conclusion (chapter 14), five essays (chapters 2 through 6) are devoted primarily to Seitz’s critique of contemporary exegesis and

its ramifications, and seven essays (chapters 7 through 13) attempt to model a more satisfactory approach.

In chapters 2 and 3, Seitz critiques the “tradition-history” approach to Old Testament interpretation and argues for the adoption of a “canonical” approach, pointing out certain blind spots inherent in the former. For example, why does a scholar of the caliber of Gerhard von Rad not see that the canonical combination of sources that constitutes Genesis possesses its own “theological integrity” and warrants a serious theological interpretation at least as much as does any one of the hypothetically reconstructed sources taken in isolation (25)? According to Seitz, a tradition-historical attempt to unite the two testaments fails because it severs historical Israel from “the final form of its [own] scriptures as theologically relevant.” Von Rad “built a bridge of tradition from Old to New Testament that could then not account for the New Testament’s own specific hearing of the Old in its final form” (26).

Chapters 4 through 6 deal, ostensibly, with inner-Anglican controversies. But in fact, the issues treated here transcend Anglicanism and, more importantly, illustrate well one of Seitz’s central theses. To wit, a mode of exegesis that relegates biblical meaning to a bygone age, reducing Scripture in effect to a repository of artifacts of Israel’s religious development, serves only to prop up a new version of “Christianity”—one in which revelation is no longer an operative category. In such a case, neither Leviticus nor St. Paul can tell us anything about modern homosexual behavior since the latter is a radically new phenomenon, completely unknown to the biblical authors. Thus it devolves on “the Spirit” to show us, through reflection on our “experience,” that our inclination to embrace such behavior is quite justified. Seitz rightly scoffs at this hermeneutic, which “cut[s] the Bible free from its own genre of sacred word in order to speak of religions of the past, of which we are the most enlightened, recent incarnation” (64).

Seitz is certainly correct to point out that a developmental view of Israel’s religion *as adopted by many biblical scholars* (which he labels “gradualism”) tends toward a reductionism and “minimizes the ongoing role of the Old Testament as first-order theological talk”

and as Christian Scripture (8). But he seems to imply throughout the volume that no developmental view of Old Testament faith is appropriate. Is this necessarily so? The Roman Catholic reader is left to wonder how Seitz might assess the Magisterium's use of the expression "divine pedagogy" (*Dei Verbum* no. 15), especially when it is defined in terms of a gradual revelation that culminates in the Incarnation (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 53).

Chapter 7 is one of Seitz's forays into New Testament scholarship and a major disappointment. Seitz promises great things: "an alternative way of reading the fourfold Gospel" based on the category of "testimony" or "witness" (91). What he delivers is an improbable and often muddled interpretation of the final verse of John's Gospel (21:25). By referring to "many other things that Jesus did," the author of this passage (alternatively identified as "John" or as "the editor") "wishes us to see his account" as "but one of many" and "as without any sort of priority." Indeed, he composed the verse "to tell the reader not to focus on his [account] alone, or his especially" (94).

In his zeal to find evidence of "canonical shaping" in the biblical text itself, Seitz supposes that John 21 was "composed with an awareness . . . that John's Gospel is appropriately in the fourth position" (92). Even more anachronistic is his claim that "John is . . . aware of the potential for a quest of the historical Jesus as a quest for some distillate below the record that exists in its present fourfold form" (99).

In chapter 8, Seitz returns to more familiar territory—the Book of Isaiah—and provides a clear and compelling treatment of the famous "Servant" question. Following the lead of Hugh Williamson and other recent scholars, Seitz does not deal with four hypothetically isolated "Servant Songs." Rather, he does justice to the use of the term "servant" throughout Isaiah 40–66, demonstrating nicely the fluid and yet organic manner by which this word designates: the post-exilic remnant of Israel as commissioned by Yahweh to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 40–48), an individual prophet who through his ministry and death takes up this vocation and realizes something of its efficacy (Isaiah 49–53), and the disciples of that prophet (Isaiah 54–66). Most importantly, Seitz shows how an interpretation that takes seriously the

question of what the Book of Isaiah meant to its first readers is quite compatible with, and indeed elucidates, the New Testament's typological reading of the same book.

Ironically, even where he is most clearly indebted to the tools and concrete results of modern historical-critical scholarship, Seitz continues to speak of this approach in highly generalized and pejorative terms, biting as it were the hand that feeds him. Worse yet, he is sometimes irresponsible in his critique of individual scholars. N. T. Wright's work on the historical Jesus, for example, may be open to criticism on several fronts, but to suggest that it "sever[s] earthly Jesus from the testimony of Israel's scriptures" (106) is simply unfair. Few contemporary scholars have done more to reconnect Jesus to the Old Testament than Wright.

In chapter 9, Seitz returns to the issue of homosexuality and biblical authority. He unmasks the specious exegesis and tendentious hermeneutic by which Acts 15 (Luke's account of the "Jerusalem Council") is purported to validate the "Spirit endorsement" of same-sex unions. The real problem here is that "scripture is not consulted for divine guidance but for correlation with what has bubbled up in the realm of experience in the community" (121). Seitz then offers a far more satisfying explication of Acts 15 and what this text in fact teaches us about the Holy Spirit. Aside from an occasional faux pas (e.g., Seitz seems unaware of the technical sense that the Greek word *porneia* possesses in Acts 15), this is a fine essay.

Next, Seitz takes up a topic that he rightly judges to be critical to developing a genuinely theological mode of exegesis and to illuminating the relationship between Old Testament and New (chapter 10). That is, he explains how the God of Israel has "handed over" his Name to Jesus (cf. Phil 2:9–11, with its allusion to Isaiah 45:22–25). This valuable essay is somewhat marred by Seitz's strenuous but one-sided argument against any attempt to vocalize the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). To his mind, "Yahweh" and "Jehovah" are equally invalid (cf. 142), and the convention of replacing YHWH with "the LORD" in Old Testament translation must be respected. This highly complex and delicate issue deserves to be treated with a scalpel, but here Seitz wields an axe (which he grinds in other essays as well; cf. 161 and 189).

The thesis of chapter 11 is that the Old Testament provides important background for understanding the major New Testament theme of “mission.” Israel’s election “is the means by which sinful creation receives the blessing originally intended for it, for all nations and people. Mission understood in Old Testament terms, then, is the address of blessing to the deficit and forfeit brought about by rebellion” (148).

In attempting to “sketch out . . . in broad brush . . . a comprehensive picture of prayer in the Old Testament” (160), Seitz, once again, takes up an eminently worthwhile topic but unfortunately bites off more than he can chew in a short essay (chapter 12). His treatment suffers from a careless or superficial interpretation of several biblical passages. For example, Enosh’s invocation of “the name of the LORD” in Gen 4:26 (the text which Seitz takes as his point of departure) is said to represent prayer “outside God’s covenant relationship with his people” (163–64). A more fruitful exegesis might have resulted from careful attention to the context, where two distinct genealogical lines descend from Adam, and Enosh belongs precisely to that line which will bear the covenant—a feature of the text noted by Augustine (*Civitas Dei*, Book 15) and modern commentators alike.

In his final essay, Seitz deals with the relationship between Scripture and Creed, contrasting the approach of John Pearson (a turn-of-the-century Anglican) with that of the speakers at the “God at 2000” conference a century later. The quotations taken from the latter source would be laughable if they were not so pathetic (e.g., “Surely there is no one participating at this conference who really believes that this conference is about God at 2000. This conference is about us at 2000” [179]).

In sum, it is refreshing to see a biblical scholar unabashedly treat the Old Testament as “Christian scripture” and as a serious theological witness to divine realities. Seitz is no slave to fashion! But it must be said that his critique of contemporary biblical scholarship would be far more effective if it relied less on inflated rhetoric about “higher-critical acids” (146 *et passim*) and more on substantive and cogent argumentation. For example, without citing a shred of corroborative evidence and without specifying the sort of causality he has in mind, Seitz goes so far as to blame

the Holocaust on modern biblical scholarship's faulty way of construing the relationship between the testaments (146).

Finally, some readers may find the title of this book misleading since for Seitz "typology" and "figural" exegesis involve above all a demonstration of how "the literal sense of the New Testament derives from the *literal sense* of the Old" (194; emphasis added). Indeed, about the only Old Testament texts that Seitz expounds in a manner that would normally be called "typological" are Genesis 22 and Isaiah 53. This can hardly be said to be breaking new ground! But in the opinion of this reviewer Seitz's instinct in this regard is on target and his cautious approach warranted. The organic relationship between the two testaments at the level of *sensus literalis* must be more clearly explicated before we moderns are quite ready to practice anything like the exegesis of the Fathers. Seitz does well not to let the cart get ahead of the horse. N V

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Le désir de Dieu: Sur les traces de S. Thomas by Georges Cottier, OP (*Paris: Parole et Silence*, 2002) 285 pp.

GEORGES COTTIER, a Swiss Dominican, has been for many years the theologian to the Papal Household and general secretary to the International Theological Commission. He serves in addition as editor and regular writer for the quarterly *Nova et Vetera*—a journal founded by the eminent Charles Journet. As a former professor of philosophy at the universities of Fribourg and Geneva, Cottier is the author of many previous works.

The present book consists of a collection of articles on the selected aspects of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. They are arranged in a sequence beginning with philosophical anthropology (the human soul and the human intellect) and passing through metaphysical principles into natural theology. The volume concludes with chapters on natural law and on the theology of history. Except for the final chapter, which deals with salvation history, the book is philosophical rather than theological in method and content. It does not deal with revealed mysteries or argue from the data of revelation.

As anyone familiar with Cottier's work would expect, his scholarship is impeccable and his exposition luminously clear. He writes, as one might hope, from a definite point of view. Rejecting every hint of Platonism and ontologism, he emphasizes what I would call the Aristotelian side of St. Thomas: a reliance on sense data and abstract conceptualization, a teleological understanding of nature, a trust in deductive argument, and an insistence on the priority of the intellect as the defining characteristic of human existence.

Cottier gives no indication that St. Thomas incorporated Platonic elements in his synthesis. He does not speak of the divine ideas, of the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius, or the metaphysics of participation. Although he alludes briefly to participation, he does so only to show that it can be reduced to a combination of efficient, formal, and final causality rather than to a kind of quasi-formal causality, as the Platonists held. A considerable number of distinguished Thomistic scholars, however, maintain that St. Thomas, while giving due attention to the Aristotelian causal principles, borrows elements from the Platonic tradition to account better for the similarity of many individuals to one another and to a source that possesses their shared perfection in an eminent degree.

In many respects, Cottier stands close to Jacques Maritain, from whom he picks up the idea that our initial insight into reality depends on an intuition of being which precedes any formal judgment based on concepts. Also from Maritain he takes over the idea that our awareness of the natural law is in the first instance given preconceptually, through connaturality. But because he is not here writing as a theologian, Cottier does not speak of the higher connaturality given through divine grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

If there is a central theme to the volume, it would seem to consist in the natural desire of any created intelligence for the vision of God. Only that vision could appease the intellect's capacity for knowledge. This natural desire, according to Cottier, does not amount to a genuine need or exigency that God would be obligated to fulfill. Cottier accordingly parts company with Henri de Lubac, whom he understands as rejecting the concepts both of pure nature and of a natural beatitude that would correspond to it. He repudiates de Lubac's assertion that there can be

a “natural desire for the supernatural,” even though his own concept of the natural desire for the vision of God is very similar to this.

De Lubac reappears in the final chapter of the book, dealing with the Holy Spirit and history. Drawing abundantly on de Lubac’s two-volume work on the spiritual posterity of Joachim of Fiore, Cottier shows how the theology of Abbot Joachim was progressively secularized until it arrived at Hegel’s doctrine of the self-genesis of Absolute Spirit through the immanent dialectic of history.

As a secondary theme running through the book, the author insists on the superiority of Thomist intellectualism over the rationalism typified by Hegel and the anti-intellectualism of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Enlightenment rationalism and Hegelianism, he holds, make reason the measure of reality, rather than the reverse. But Cottier gives salutary warnings against the post-metaphysical philosophy represented by Martin Heidegger, which easily sinks, as he notes, into historical relativism and post-modern subjectivism.

Cottier’s engagement with modern philosophy in this book is, however, sporadic. He is generally content to present the merits of the Thomistic system, which is marked, in his opinion, by confidence in reason, by courage in adhering to the truth, and by submission to reality, which imposes itself on the mind by its own truth. Like John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*, Cottier pleads for a revival of metaphysics in the style of the grand tradition stemming from the ancient Greeks.

The ethical principles that emerge in this volume are teleological and, one may say, eudaemonistic. Cottier holds that the human person is oriented toward happiness, which consists in a gratification of the natural tendency to achieve union with God through the beatific vision. This ethics of self-realization seems to leave little place for obedience to the stern voice of duty and for a pure desire to serve. Here, as on other points, I would have liked to see Cottier enter into debate with positions opposed to his own. But the dominant tone of this book is expository rather than argumentative. The author is primarily concerned with showing what Thomas Aquinas held, especially in his more Aristotelian moments.

Several chapters in this book, the reader should be warned, are highly abstract. They deal, for instance, with technical questions such as the doctrine of opposition, the concept of nothingness, and the order that obtains among the transcendental properties of being. Exhibiting the author's exceptional capacity to work comfortably with razor-thin Scholastic distinctions, these chapters help to expose the very roots of the differences between Aristotelian Thomism and modern philosophers such as Leibniz, Hegel, and Bergson.

Reading this book from my own perspective as a theologian, I regret that this and so many other expositions of St. Thomas concentrate almost exclusively on his philosophy, even though he undoubtedly thought himself to be first of all a theologian. As a theologian, St. Thomas thinks of the human person as oriented toward a supernatural beatitude through communion with Jesus Christ. Although the light of reason is surely fundamental to any Thomistic epistemology, believers enjoy a light of faith, and in some cases a prophetic light, both of which elevate the light of reason to a higher plane and prepare it for the light of glory in the life to come. As a theologian of the first rank, Cottier is not unfamiliar with the theology of the Angelic Doctor, as readers of the French edition of *Nova et Vetera* are well aware.

Although I would have liked to hear more about Aquinas the theologian, I recognize the importance of the philosophical foundations that are so solidly set forth in the present volume. A firm grasp of these principles can greatly help for the right understanding and defense of the faith in the face of modern rationalism, individualism, and cultural relativism. Because Cottier arms the reader against these threats, his volume deserves close attention on the part of scholars who believe, as I do, that the study of St. Thomas can help to restore a philosophical realism that transcends the limitations of particular eras and cultures. N V

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Introduction to Moral Theology by Romanus Cessario, OP (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001*)
xxiii + 268 pp.

T. S. ELIOT famously wrote that the greatest treason is “to do the right thing for the wrong reason.” The interplay of doing “the right thing” for the right reason could be said to be the overall marching orders of Fr. Cessario’s splendid book on moral theology. *Recta ratio*, rather than oughtness, constitutes the rule of morality. This book depicts in a grand style and well-argued fashion what shape reflection on moral theology must take when one embraces moral realism. Cessario does not reduce the moral life to will and obligation, but embraces the totality of the human person made in the *imago Dei* who seeks beatitude as part of a created world.

I should first comment on Cessario’s overall project as the general editor of the Catholic Moral Thought Series of which this book forms the initial volume. The introduction of this book limns a grand portrait of what will characterize succeeding volumes. They share a common vision of fidelity to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and of heeding Vatican II’s call for renewing moral theology along more biblical roots, thus setting aside the earlier manualist tradition’s predilection for forms of casuistry. Inspired by the scholarship of the Dominican Servais Pinckaers, and the direction of *Veritatis Splendor* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the series hopes to provide an authentic retrieval of the breadth and depth of the millennia-old tradition of moral inquiry inspired by the God of Israel revealed in Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, as this first book aptly demonstrates, any such authentic retrieval shines in its contemporaneity as it allows for, as well as demands, thorough engagement with current issues in culture and scholarship.

Now to the book itself. How to characterize the moral realism to which the author so frequently avers? Moral realism begins with the conviction that human nature exists and that it has certain inherent structures proper to it. Moreover, human nature and the world in general are intelligible to human beings. Underlying this is the deeper conviction that the world has been created by an intelligent Creator who has infused the world with patterns of intelligibility. The moral realist thus not only begins from a sound

philosophy of human nature, but also accepts that human action is guided by the intellect's appropriation of the world surrounding us. Neither intention nor circumstances can describe human action. Evaluations and descriptions of human actions must include the moral object—namely the structure of the performed act as grasped by the agent. This is how Cessario distinguished moral realism from the voluntarist tradition. For the latter, agency follows the choice of the will confronted with goods or obligations. For the moral realist, moral acts are acts in accord with right reason so that reasoned appetite—not a naked free will—determines human activity.

The book contains five chapters. A quick overview of the structure of the book reveals much about its content. The first chapter, "The Starting Point for Christian Moral Theology," indicates that moral theology must begin where all theology begins, in the revelation of God through Jesus Christ passed down through the Church's living tradition and sacred Scripture. Moral theology is not an autonomous discipline, but is placed within the whole of *sacra doctrina* and thus includes the revelation of man as the *imago Dei* and his vocation to beatitude. The second chapter, "Moral Realism and the Natural Law," gives due attention to the importance of natural law placed within the context of God's wise creation and providence over the universe. This ordering of man to God through the very structure of his nature provides grounds for the prohibition of certain actions. The third chapter, "The Origin and Structure of Virtuous Behavior," analyzes human action focusing on the primacy of prudence—that virtue both intellectual and moral—in virtuous action. The fourth chapter, "The Form of a Good Moral Action," provides an excellent analysis of the traditional manner of analyzing moral action in terms of its object, end and circumstances. Here is where one sees the tremendous value of the moral realist approach as the author provides an excellent criticism of many revisionist moral theorist simply by showing how the moral object cannot be set aside from the evaluation of the action. The final chapter, "The Life of Christian Virtue and Freedom," brings moral theology to its completion in the life of the Christian led by the Holy Spirit as a member of the Body of Christ. This is a robust and attractive of the Christian moral life. One wonders what would have happened to Nietzsche's famous criticism of Christianity as a

slave morality if he had encountered this morality centered around the perfection and true beatitude of the human person.

Although—or perhaps one should say because—Cessario presents moral theology from the commitment to moral realism, he continually provides accurate descriptions of and insightful engagements with alternative ways of construing the moral life. A constant companion is the voluntarist approach arising from strands of Bonaventure's thought and from nominalist influence, and finding its home in much post-Tridentine forms of casuistry. The author recognizes that the voluntarist approach is compatible with the doctrines of the Catholic faith and that it has formed the warp and woof of great spiritual traditions within the Catholic Church. One example he gives is the much beloved *Imitation of Christ* that emphasizes—almost to the point of reduction—the life of holiness as the renunciation of self.

Readers will enjoy Cessario's brief, but elegant, discussions of significant debates such as the natural desire for God, the character of the goods sought by practical reason (in dialogue with the Grisez-Finnis approach), and the defense of the Church's teaching on intrinsically evil acts. Advanced undergraduates, seminarians, and graduate students will benefit greatly from the fact that Cessario always notifies the reader of areas of significant disagreement and nonetheless provides a reasoned argument for navigating these areas in favor of moral realism. The book includes thorough footnotes and an extensive bibliography that provide an excellent starting point for students and scholars alike to deepen their acquaintance with the voluminous secondary literature on St. Thomas Aquinas and moral theology. An appendix contains a useful analysis of the flight from virtue by the casuists and subsequent post-Vatican II flight from casuistry.

Some readers may be disappointed that the book rarely considers concrete moral issues except as asides. One expects that the future volumes in this series will show the fruitfulness of the more general approach to moral theology provided in this book as it shapes the extended consideration of issues in moral theology. N V

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Recherches thomasiennes. Études revues et augmentées by Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP (Paris: Vrin, 2000) 386 pp.

THE SIGNIFICANCE of Jean-Pierre Torrell's contribution to Thomist research requires little comment. His advances have helped recover Aquinas's standing as first and foremost a theologian. To this end, the appearance of *Recherches thomasiennes* is especially valuable, since it combines in one work numerous articles Torrell has published over the past twenty-five years in a wide range of journals and collections. Here one finds all the signature traits by which Torrell has made his mark in the field (traits that figured prominently, to which I can personally attest, in his classroom teaching in Fribourg as well): his textual critical and historical critical accomplishments, his studies on Aquinas's Christology, and his efforts to bring to light a lesser known Thomas Aquinas, viz., Aquinas the lover of Scripture and the devoted Christian and Dominican friar ("St. Thomas was not only a high-soaring thinker, he was also a friar preacher and a man of prayer," is how the back cover puts it).

Torrell's skills as a textual critic, which result from his years of service on the Leonine Commission, are on display in the opening pages of this work. Published for the first time in a critical edition, along with an introduction and notes, is Aquinas's sermon on the Decalogue, the *Collationes de Decem Preceptis* (47–117). Torrell has prepared this text for volume 44 of the Leonine edition of *Opera Omnia*. Happily, while this volume awaits completion of the other texts to be included in it, permission was granted for the advance publication of the *De Decem Preceptis* in *Recherches thomasiennes*.

As for his historical erudition, Torrell shows at nearly every turn of the page that his knowledge of trends in high- and late-medieval thought is second to none. By identifying precisely what Thomas does and does not inherit from his predecessors and contemporaries, Torrell gains a more accurate grasp of the originality of Aquinas's thought and of the ways in which the Master from Aquino distances himself from other scholastics.

Another area of Thomist thought pioneered by Torrell is in Christology, to which his recent two-volume publication on the mysteries of Christ's life from *tertia pars*, qq. 27–59 of the *Summa Theologiae* attests. (Torrell has also recently completed a new French edition of the Christological part of the *tertia pars*.) In *Recherches*

thomasiennes, Torrell puts forward a “reexamination” (“une relecture”) of Aquinas’s doctrine on Christ’s human knowledge (Study VI). In a controversial move, Torrell performs a critical reading of Thomas’s position on Christ’s earthly possession of the beatific vision and follows with an alternative position. In another study (Study VII), Torrell investigates the evolution of Aquinas’s thought regarding the causal role of Christ’s humanity in our salvation. Here we learn in detail the reasons for which St. Thomas could affirm only late in his career that Christ’s humanity acts as the instrument (in the sense of instrumental efficient causality) of his divinity.

When it comes to Aquinas’s use of and reliance upon Scripture, we find ourselves at the heart of Torrell’s endeavor to underscore the fact that St. Thomas at all times thinks, writes, and reflects theologically (Study III). One of Torrell’s recurring themes is that Thomas’s thought is much more biblically based and oriented than has been traditionally acknowledged. Evidence for this is found in the circular *exitus-reditus* structure of the *Summa Theologiae* whereby all things begin and end with God, the inspiration of which has been largely attributed to neo-Platonic thought. Torrell amends this view, noting that the structure of the *Summa* is more biblical than neo-Platonic in inspiration, since it follows particularly upon the testimony of the Book of Revelation that “God is the Alpha and the Omega of the universe and of history” (126).

Reminding us as well that Aquinas’s actual teaching title was *Magister in sacra pagina* rather than *Doctor in sacra theologia*, Torrell makes the important observation that Thomas’s teaching “consisted in commenting on Scripture” (299–300). At Paris this teaching began with two years of lecturing on the Bible in which a rapid and basic commentary that avoided digressions was pursued (these two years were followed by another two years of teaching on Lombard’s *Sentences*, after which point one lectured more extensively on Scripture as a *Magister in sacra pagina*). Aquinas’s very first work, the *Super Isaiam*, is the text written by Thomas for a course he taught precisely during his first two years in Paris. Practically ignored by modern scholarship, the *Super Isaiam* receives a much-needed analysis in this work (Study VIII). Here we discover that this text offers important themes that remain present in Aquinas’s writings throughout his entire career.

Finally, Torrell includes several articles aimed at sharpening our understanding of Thomas Aquinas, the concrete man of flesh and blood (rarely does the title “Angelic Doctor” come from Torrell’s pen). To do this, he examines Aquinas’s little known yet readily accessible collection of sermons (Studies IX and XII–XIII), and unearths a side to St. Thomas that few know, e.g., that through his evocative manner of preaching, the Dominican Master was able to move a congregation to tears (286). We learn as well that in his sermons Aquinas delivers “a teaching that is much more concrete than one would expect to find, a mode of expression that is quite experiential and which is rooted in a social context that comes through loud and clear in a whole quantity of details. His preaching is furthermore guided entirely by the movement of the Word of God” (301; cf. as well 15).

Torrell also focuses on Aquinas’s spirituality to help the cause of shedding the image of a man who was nothing more than an abstract thinker suspended in time and space (Studies X–XI). Emphasis is placed on Thomas’s appreciation of the Christo-conforming element of the Christian life; as Aquinas writes in his commentary on Matthew’s Gospel: “No one attains perfection in this world if he does not walk in the footsteps of Christ (*nisi qui sequitur vestigia Christi*)” (331). Torrell observes that the indispensable role of Christ as model to imitate “is certainly one of Aquinas’s great spiritual themes” (333). Torrell then closes his work with a meditation on the *Adoro Tē*, “the most beautiful prayer of St. Thomas” (Study XIV). Here Torrell notes that the one who “prayed this [Eucharistic] poem that is so rich is very much the same learned theologian of the doctrine of transubstantiation” (16).

Though Torrell’s method of beginning his articles with a technical historical and/or textual analysis followed by a more speculative study may not be for everyone, this work offers a mine of important yet little known features of St. Thomas’s thought. It is therefore a must read for those interested in deepening their understanding of Aquinas.

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Le christianisme est-il un monothéisme? ed. Gilles Emery, OP and Pierre Gisel (*Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001*) 396 pp.

THIS VOLUME emanates from an interconfessional and interdisciplinary program involving the theology faculties of Fribourg, Lausanne and Neuchâtel, and so offers a fare richer than one might otherwise have expected, judiciously combining perspectives from religious studies as well as historical theology. Which means, of course, that most readers will not read everything, but will at the same time be tempted into regions new and perhaps unfamiliar, like Cristoph Theobald's (Centre Sèvres, Paris) bold foray into "God and postmodernism," which limns current cultural crises as a way of probing "holiness as the mystery of the world." Indeed, contributions of this sort display admirably the potential of our Christian confession of divine triunity for interdisciplinary conversation. Other contributors, like Fritz Stolz (Zurich) and Thomas Römöre (Lausanne), offer conceptual and historical elaborations of "monotheism" respectively, the first treating it as a system, the second as a development within Israelite religion. Together with Klauspeter Blaser (Lausanne), who focuses on missionary endeavors, these initial essays set the stage for what one might mean by "monotheism." Not an easy task, actually, since the term as well as the idea are in fact constructs, by way of contrast with polytheism (which Olivier Abel [Protestant faculty, Paris] eloquently praises) or development from a religious tradition. So one cannot find a "First Monotheistic Church" at which to worship—even in America!

Thus we are directed to the second section, where Joseph Wolinski (l'Institut Catholique, Paris), Gilles Emery (Fribourg), and Bernard Rordorf (Genève) help us to retrieve the Christian tradition from early church to medieval to Reformed traditions. These essays are magisterial, offering in each case a precious précis of their more extensive works displaying the cogency of the continuing struggle to articulate a triune God, and in the case of Rordorf, a trenchant tracing of Calvin's problematic "double predestination" to a deficiency in his treatment of divine triunity, together with Karl Barth's prescient correction of reformed thought in this regard.

Dominic O'Meara (Fribourg) shows clearly the cogency of Plotinus' seminal argument to divine ineffability as a backdrop for

the difficulties involved in affirming any kind of plurality in the One. And “struggle” remains the watchword as the essays broach modern and postmodern treatments of this issue. Dietrich Korsch (Marburg) and Marc Boss (Montpellier) each provide scenarios of Protestant labors in the wake of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Schleiermacher, assessing the task of probing divine triunity in that philosophical climate. Roland Jaquenoud (Abbey of Saint-Maurice) offers a welcome summation of the fascinating thought of Sergij Bulgakov, whom Rowan Williams has introduced into the anglophone theological world. His reflections parallel those of Gilles Emery, though from an independent Orthodox perspective, to show how the ineffable relation of creation to creator reflects the procession of Word from God, in this case, via the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit as orderer of the created universe. Indeed, the theme of creation from God mirroring procession in God permeates these contributions, offering yet another testimony to the fruitfulness of the struggles to affirm divine triunity.

Martin Leiner (Neuchâtel) sets the stage for Theobald’s postmodern explorations by offering a *tour d’horizon* of contemporary treatments of divine triunity, beginning with Nicholas Lash’s observation that “the doctrine of the Trinity simply is the Christian doctrine of God,” which he can assert in the face of modernist objections to its “abstract” character by reminding us that this doctrine affords “the summary grammar of the Christian account of the mystery of salvation and creation” (Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*). Again, the theme of struggle returns, reminiscent of Newman’s dictum that theology proceeds by continually revisiting our uncertainties. Pierre Gisel’s valedictory essay reminds us forcibly of this potential in theological inquiry today by noting how recurrent efforts to explicate the triunity affirmed in Christian tradition return us to God’s transcendence in the midst of a dramatic revelation, in the face of the ineffable relation of creation to creator. What this volume displays so effectively is the cogency of theological reflection at this juncture of human thought and sensibility, notably by anchoring it in traditions which continue to show their fruitfulness. N V

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The God of the Gospel of John by Marianne Meye Thompson
(*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001*) x + 269.

HARD ON THE HEELS of her other recent study, *The Promise of the Father*, comes now a full and learned monograph on what is said to be a neglected topic—namely how God is viewed and presented in the Gospel of John. There are clearly a variety of concerns which have led Thompson to such a study, not the least of which is a concern that Christocentric readings of the Fourth Gospel have led to a neglect or even a distortion of other aspects of Johannine theology. Indeed on the last page of her monograph she says explicitly, “It is the failure to make the theological correlates of Christology explicit which has led to the neglect of the figure of God in NT theology” (240). By “God,” here and elsewhere in this study Thompson means the one called some 120 times in the Gospel of John, “Father.” She is not suggesting that the study of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel has been neglected, but she is suggesting that such Christological study has led to distorted understandings of the Fourth Evangelist’s concept of God, as we shall see.

The book, which is framed with brief introductory and concluding remarks, consists of five chapters—1) The Meaning of God; 2) The Living Father; 3) The Knowledge of God; 4) The Spirit of God; and 5) The Worship of God. It needs to be borne in mind that Thompson has long been a tiller of the Johannine soil, and she brings this long and profound time of reflection on this material to bear in this book. She clearly has concerns that later Christological and dogmatic issues in early church use and interpretation of John have led to distortions in understanding what this Gospel itself originally intended to say. Thompson is not addressing the issues of the pre-history of the text of the Fourth Gospel, nor is she concerned about the theologies that may lie behind it. Her concern is with the concept of God that lies within the present form of the text.

In the first chapter of the book she states up front perhaps the most crucial question—What does the New Testament mean when it calls Jesus God? It seems clearly to be her position that the term *theos* when predicated of Jesus does not mean exactly the same things as when it is predicated of the Father. As she says, “God” is not a proper name, but rather a term which makes a predication about a particular being or reality. Thompson works

through various ways the term *theos* was used in early Judaism, presumably on the assumption that the Fourth Evangelist might use it in more than one way as well. She shows that sometimes the term refers to those endowed with divine power or life or functions, who are not in themselves properly called "God" with a capital "G." For example, Philo's use of the term "god" to refer to the logos of God comes to mind. Thompson seeks to build a case that something or someone which is a manifestation of God in some way, could be called god. This is of course true, but it begs the question as to whether the Fourth Evangelist is using the term in this way. As with her book *The Promise of the Father*, Thompson tends to assume and then emphasize that it is the continuity with early Jewish ideas, not the discontinuity, which most shapes the way the Christian author speaks about God. In other words, she is not entirely comfortable with large assertions about the Christological reformulation of monotheism in John and elsewhere in the New Testament.

Thompson is of course right that normally the term God in the New Testament refers to the Father, with only about seven or eight possible exceptions. And she is also right that one should not simply assume that the same thing is meant when the term is applied to Jesus as when it is applied to the Father. But in fact at the end of the day her case breaks down not least because the Johannine literature itself—including the Gospel, epistles, and the Revelation—inculcate a worship of Jesus, not merely because he is a manifestation of God on earth, or the temple in which God is made present to us, but because the Son of God existed before all worlds, was the only begotten of the Father, and so was not properly speaking a created being like angels or humans or animals, but rather was co-creator with God, and shares in the divine identity. To call the Son of God the logos or Wisdom incarnate, means far more than "to say that he is God's self expression, God's thought or mind, or God's interior word spoken aloud" (135). How very differently John speaks about the Son in comparison to what Philo or Josephus were prepared to say about another historical figure, Moses, to whom they readily ascribe divine power, and even a reflection of divine glory. Moses was not to be worshipped; Jesus, as John insists, is.

The second chapter is something of a capsule summary of some of Thompson's *The Promise of the Father*, and since Laura Ice and I have given a detailed critique of this work in our *The Shadow of the Almighty*, I will not pause to offer that critique again here. Basically, Thompson is wrong to suggest that the use of the term Father in the New Testament owes more to its Jewish background than to its Christological foreground. To the contrary, Father and Abba are both terms now viewed chiefly through the eyes of Christ and his relationship with the Father in the New Testament, a point made especially emphatically in the Fourth Gospel which stresses the unique and distinctive relationship between the Son and the Father.

Thompson next offers a lengthy discussion of the knowledge of God. What comes of this discussion is a willingness to admit that Jesus is the embodiment of God's presence, but not a willingness to assert that he is the incarnation of God in person. This becomes evident when she asserts "John does not collapse Jesus into God, or vice versa, but there is no separate and distinct knowledge of one without knowledge of the other" (141). But while there is truth in this remark (no one is contending that John thought the Son was the Father), she quite fails to grasp the point that John is indeed saying in a whole variety of ways that there is more than one person in the Godhead, and Jesus is the manifestation of one of those persons. A statement like "before Abraham was, I am" is certainly a claim of personal pre-existence before the time of the incarnation. It is not a claim that the Son was merely a thought in the mind of God before all creation.

Disconcertingly, Thompson also seeks to denude the Spirit of the Spirit's personal identity, by downplaying the Paraclete passages, and playing up the more generic discussions of the Spirit in John 3 and elsewhere. She concludes, "By definition, Spirit refers to the mode of God's presence, power, action. Hence the Spirit in John is the Spirit of God, who comes from the Father (15.26)" (187). It is precisely that "who" part that Thompson neglects or avoids in her discussion. It is not just that "Spirit is a distinct way of envisioning God's activity and presence in the world . . ." (187). The Holy Spirit is no mere personified function or divine attribute in this Gospel, any more than Jesus is. The fact that Jesus and the Spirit are both called Advocate and personal attributes are

credited to both needs to carry far more weight than Thompson will allow. The Spirit is seen as the personal emissary of Jesus who is able to convict, convince, convert, as well as illuminate or bring to mind the truth. The Spirit in John is far more than “the life-giving force or power of God” (229).

Perhaps one of the most disturbing aspects of Thompson’s study is the way she tries to minimize the importance of the Prologue and the climactic narrative in John 20 where Jesus is worshipped as Lord and God. Most scholars see the prologue as setting up the terms of discussion for the rest of the narrative, so that the reader will go through this Gospel recognizing that the Word that became flesh was indeed part of the divine identity, while not exhausting that identity, and therefore is worthy of being called God with a capital G. Thompson also fails to take into account that we have a crescendo of confessions in the Gospel of John climaxing with the one that reiterates the high Christology of the Prologue when Jesus is proclaimed Lord and God. It is not because Jesus should not be confessed to be God during his earthly ministry (see 233–34) that it does not happen before the resurrection. It is because the Spirit had not yet been given to confessors of Jesus prior to Easter. As C. K. Barrett once said, the Word became flesh without ceasing to be the divine Word. But without the Spirit, no one could confess Jesus is Lord from the heart.

At the end of the day Thompson’s argument does not really make a new or unfamiliar case. What is perhaps surprising and distinctive about it is that an evangelical scholar would want to make such a case, and one has to ask why. “Methinks she protesteth too much” when it comes to the issue of how many persons the Fourth Evangelist may have believed to be part of the Godhead. The problem of anachronistically reading later Trinitarian ideas into the Gospel of John is of course a potential danger. But it is equally dangerous to underestimate, for example, the argument of someone like Richard Bauckham about what it actually means to say Jesus or the Son of God is part of the divine identity. It means far more than just Jesus embodies the divine power and presence in a unique or supreme way. It means that there really was an Incarnation, which presupposes the pre-existence of the Son of God as a person within the Godhead. It is no accident that

centuries of exegetes of the Fourth Gospel prior to the twentieth century understood that Incarnation was part of John's argument. It is wrong to sell that birthright for a mess of pottage. N V

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Retracing Reality: A Philosophical Itinerary by Marie-Dominique Philippe, OP, trans. Dominique F. Peridans (*Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999*) 178 pp.

CAN ONE ATTAIN a knowledge of things that is universally verifiable in human experience? Such a question would seem naive for many contemporary intellectuals, who would be inclined to answer in the negative. Whereas a certain rationalism in modernity boasted of purely objective knowledge, a concomitant idealism and the skepticism of post-modernity reduce claims about truth to revelations of one's subjectivity. Thoughts are held to be merely opinions or preferential viewpoints. In the philosophical realm, the love of wisdom finds itself without a guide to navigate serious disagreements. Too often, the Socratic confession of ignorance degenerates resignedly into intellectual license for self-assertion—for viewpoints are rooted in choice and not in recognition, as the story goes—whether openly avowed or masked in confessional piety. Widely accepted as the justification for this state of affairs is the assumption that no philosophy can free itself from a priori biases. These biases are held to be a thinker's impositions upon reality, sometimes freely chosen and sometimes unwittingly espoused.

The French philosopher Marie-Dominique Philippe, OP asks whether this assumption is itself not an a priori bias. He contends that this premise denies the possibility that any philosophy can operate from "the most radical starting point, which imposes itself on our knowledge and excludes any possible choice" (7). According to Philippe, the refusal to accept this most radical starting point entails the rejection of any realistic philosophy. Instead, there can be only ideologies (fideism, etc.) with which one may or may not "agree."

Interestingly, the prevalence of idealistic and skeptical philosophies provides a breeding ground for their apparent opposite, materialism.

With no hope of attaining the real, modern man limits his horizons to progress and pleasure. Pragmatism reigns or rather *pragmatisms* war amongst each other as competing arbiters of value (socialism, extreme capitalism, and so forth.). Fr. Philippe takes issue with these idealistically and materialistically reductive approaches, arguing that man has the capacity for genuine contact with the real. *Retracing Reality* presents an overview of philosophy anchored in a starting point that is not reducible to wish, fancy, or pragmatic concerns.

Contemporary philosophers, Philippe argues, too frequently dismiss the possibility of a realistic philosophy and reflexively accept the inevitably “biased” nature of their enterprise. He discerns four fundamental starting points upon which contemporary philosophers base their work—interior spiritual experience, rational consciousness, poetic inspiration, and historical or comparative surveys. These starting points, though valid in themselves for certain purposes, do not provide an “a priori-free” philosophy. Philippe offers an alternative to these a priori. In the spirit of Aristotle, he grounds philosophy in an analysis of sensory human experience ennobled by a judgment of existence. The key moment of realism is this judgment of existence, by which the human knower recognizes that a given reality exists apart from (or as distinct from) his own thought and existence. Philippe offers much by way of experiential verification of this intellectual capacity, which is commonly critiqued as being illusory. Moments of realism impose themselves through experiences of suffering, of matter’s resistance to transformation, of a friend’s death, and so forth.

Once imbued with a realistic approach, the philosopher recognizes that what confronts him is greater than what first appears. Seeking knowledge, he asks questions about what he perceives: what is this, of what is it made, whence does it come, why does it exist, upon what model is it based. These questions initiate journeys towards the discovery of the proper principles underlying experienced reality. These efforts to discover fundamental and indemonstrable principles culminate with inductions. Philippe emphasizes induction because the veracity of demonstration depends upon the principles into which one’s argument is resolved. When induction is ignored, the “starting principles” of demonstration are but reflexively or willfully chosen a priori,

elements of a creed or whim. Philippe's inductive approach and attention to the judgment of existence breathe life into the perennial philosophy. This vitality, however, involves realistic philosophy's difficult but rewarding task: the student must undertake his own journey, for inductions can be neither communicated nor imposed. Rather, the thinker must experience and encounter some reality, with the guidance of a thinker like Aristotle but with the personal conviction rooted in an analysis of and judgment about this reality.

Retracing Reality is carefully structured, comprehensive, and profound. It consists in roughly four sections, although they are not delineated as such. The first two chapters lay out the starting point and the method of inquiry. The next five chapters take up various human experiences: work, friendship, community, physical being, and life. In each of these five chapters, a certain realm of human experience instigates questions that lead to inductions of principles, which in turn can be pondered anew in experience. Each stage of inquiry unveils some aspect of man. But within each of these aspects there lies something more fundamental, the experience of existence: "I am." To ignore this experience "would be an a priori, the most terrible of all, for it concerns what is most fundamental and primary" (92). The next two chapters discuss the judgment of existence, metaphysics and the Creator. Philosophy reaches its height in its effort to discover the First Cause of all existence; upon this lofty peak contemplative wisdom is born. Philippe concludes his work with a presentation of the rightful place of critical reflection and logic.

As its subtitle suggests, *Retracing Reality* is not an exhaustive treatment but an "itinerary." It is an invitation for a friend to seek wisdom (the French title translates literally as *Letter to a Friend*). The book's vast breadth and relatively brief length, acknowledged in a prescript, do not undermine this intention. Philippe does not work out arguments in detail but simply traces the stages and approaches of philosophy that promise of fecundity. Consequently, the book demands engagement and rumination. Aristotelian and Thomistic students will be the best equipped to read it. Personalist philosophers may be pleasantly surprised to find the human person at the heart of metaphysical inquiry. Anyone with a philosophic spirit and the willingness to ponder, rather than merely ingest, will bene-

fit from walking with Philippe and examining life's fundamental experiences, especially the mystery that opens up within each of these experiences: existence itself.

The chief drawback of the book is a lack of additional annotation to assist those without any philosophical background. In this regard, the spread of the Brothers and Sisters of St. John, founded by Fr. Philippe, should provide laborers to help guide those who would seek wisdom. Located in Laredo, Texas and Peoria, Illinois, the Brothers offer several retreats each year on philosophical and religious themes. Hopefully, the publication of *Retracing Reality*, Philippe's philosophical debut in the English-speaking world, will awaken a spirit of realistic inquiry. N V

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The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas by Paul Gondreau (*Münster: Aschendorff, 2002*) 516 pp.

ONE RARELY ENCOUNTERS the topic of Christ's passions in theological literature. Though St. Thomas gives a central place to it in his Christology, Thomist studies have for the most part neglected this topic. It would take a work of historical theology, in which this question is placed within the entirety of St. Thomas Aquinas's theology and within the theological developments of the 13th century, to show its interest and value. To this end, Paul Gondreau devotes his work to an historical and speculative study of Question 15 of the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. There we find Aquinas's treatment of the *defectus* assumed by Christ in his human nature: the weaknesses of the body and, especially, the weaknesses of the soul. This theological work thus concerns the *passibility* of Christ, in the fullest sense of the term as given it by St. Thomas. In underscoring the anthropological and soteriological significance of Christ's passions, this study brings to light a completely original element of St. Thomas's Christology.

This work includes six chapters. The first two are consecrated to Aquinas's sources on the matter (35–135). There we learn of the predominant influence of St. Augustine and St. John Damascene, as

well as the importance of other patristic authors (Nemesius of Emesa especially) and medieval thinkers (Alexander of Hales and Albert the Great in particular). The third chapter (136–189) offers a fundamental Christological reflection concerning the passions. Here we enter the domain of speculative theology. In this chapter, Paul Gondreau enumerates five theological principles that guide St. Thomas's reflection on Christ's passions: the divine dignity of the person of Christ, the full integrity of Christ's human nature, the sinlessness of Christ, the economical finality of the Incarnation (the "principle of economy," or that which has our salvation in view) as well as Christ's perfections (the "principle of perfection," which follows upon the hypostatic union), and, finally, the "fittingness" of the weaknesses assumed by the Son of God. This chapter provides a whole set of criteria that would be extremely valuable to any examination of Aquinas's Christology. The author then offers an analysis of St. Thomas's teaching on Christ's passible soul first from the perspective of the realism of the Incarnation and, second, as it concerns the moral quality of Christ's passions (191–374). A final chapter details Aquinas's treatment of certain particular passions in Christ: sensible pain, sorrow, fear, wonder or amazement, and anger (375–455).

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas considers the passions as a necessary element in the life of virtue and in the pursuit of human happiness, without depreciating them in any way: in this sense, Aquinas looks upon the passions as good by nature, even if in his moral theology he gives considerable attention to the evil that the passions can take on. It is for this reason that St. Thomas constantly insists that "the passions were in Christ otherwise than in us," since Christ experienced movements of passion in a state of perfect holiness (ch. 5). Here we see in a most striking manner the repercussions of anthropology in Christology: in contradistinction to other theologians for whom the role of virtue requires the "submission of the passions," St. Thomas emphasizes the profound synergy of reason and sensibility in the virtuous activity of Christ.

It is of historical note, as Paul Gondreau observes, that Aquinas's interest in Christ's passions has no comparable parallel among his contemporaries (26 and 375). Furthermore, an examination of St. Thomas's works shows that he always gave a greater place to Christ's passions, and that his thought on the matter underwent a

notable evolution: whereas in his earlier works St. Thomas attributes a passion to Christ's soul only on account of his body, in his mature works he affirms without hesitation movements of passion and suffering in Christ's soul on account of its proper operation (*passio animalis*), that is, a passion which arises from the proper movements of Christ's soul (ch. 4 and ch. 6). Against all forms of Stoicism and docetism, St. Thomas has enriched Christian theology by shedding light on the psychical truth of Christ's passions and on their salvific value. The reader will notice in several places that, after having pointed out the value and coherence of Aquinas's thought, the author reproaches St. Thomas discreetly for placing too great an emphasis on the glory of Christ's soul before his resurrection, particularly in the area of the perfections of Christ's knowledge. These remarks arise less from an exegesis than from an interpretation of St. Thomas, and they undoubtedly demand another study. Yet they rightfully draw our attention to the close bond that unites Christ's cognitive activity with his virtuous activity as it involves his sensibility: these two aspects of Christ's "psychology" cannot be separated. In conclusion, Paul Gondreau does not limit himself to simply repeating St. Thomas, but instead presents a historically documented and theologically reflective reading. From this point of view, as Fr. Jean-Pierre Torrell notes in his Preface (16), this work is exemplary. N V

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Virtue's Splendor: Wisdom, Prudence, and the Human Good
by Thomas S. Hibbs (*New York: Fordham University Press, 2001*) x + 246 pp.

IN A STRING of earlier articles, Thomas Hibbs has attempted to exorcise the Cartesian ghosts that continue to haunt contemporary philosophy. In *Virtue's Splendor*, Hibbs draws together the insights of these articles. Yet, his study is far more than just a restatement of his earlier views. With Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle as his guides, Hibbs applies his earlier insights to an extended analysis of the cognitive components of human action.

The work is divided into four chapters. In the first and longest chapter, Hibbs addresses the “anthropological foundations” of Aquinas’ moral thought. Guiding the reader away from the most common misinterpretations of this aspect of Thomistic thought, Hibbs brings us to the heart of Aquinas’s anthropology: rationality lived in and through animality. Indeed, this chapter is fundamentally an extended effort to return animality to the definition of the human, to move from the Cartesian “thinking substance” to the Thomistic “rational animal.” As such, it also attempts to study the human person within the context of nature and the finality of natural things toward their completion. In other words, it is a plea to place anthropology once again within a coherent philosophy of nature.

In chapter two, the focus turns to practical reasoning and the moral good. Here again, Hibbs guides the reader away from common misreadings of Aquinas. From the Cartesian perspective, practical reason is basically a form of speculative reasoning, providing the agent with almost mathematical certainty, in isolation from his character or emotions. Hibbs shows how profoundly this perspective differs from that of Aquinas. For Aquinas, practical reasoning is the product of our inclinations (of our emotions and loves) as well as of our intellect. As such, it requires both knowledge and virtue. It requires the virtue of prudence and the other (moral) virtues that make prudence possible. In explaining the centrality of prudence, Hibbs avoids the error of some recent commentators who separate prudence from law. Instead, Hibbs notes the pedagogical role of the natural law in Aquinas’s theory of practical reasoning. For Hibbs, Aquinas’s position cuts across modern dichotomies between deontology and teleology, autonomy and heteronomy, or between the categorical and the hypothetical. From the Thomistic perspective, prudence is grounded on divinely instilled natural principles, the primary precepts of the natural law. These precepts, however, are general, while human action is particular. In order to live from these principles—to apply them to particular actions—we must develop prudence and its related virtues. It is here that Hibbs underlines the social component of Thomistic virtue. The development of virtue requires experience and training, both of which only occur within a social

context: within local communities of friendship and larger communities of law and public order for the common good. The natural law both reveals the general goods constitutive of the good life (through the negative precepts) and functions pedagogically by inculcating the virtues that enable us to embody these goods in a particular life. In short, if the first chapter attempts to return animality to the definition of the human, the second chapter seeks to recover the social (and thus virtue-based) character of this animality. For Aristotle and Aquinas, humans are social animals. We develop the virtues within communities of a certain sort: communities that promote the true common good and respect the pedagogical role of law. Consequently, the study of ethics is inseparable from the study of politics.

In chapters three and four, Hibbs considers the question of happiness and human fulfillment. Retracing arguments he advanced in his earlier book, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas*, Hibbs underlines the disparity in the *Nicomachean Ethics* between Aristotle's initial description of the requirements for happiness (book one), and his subsequent portrayal of the happiness attainable by humans (book ten). This disparity reveals a natural gap (*aporia*) between desire and attainment. From the Thomistic perspective, this gap provides an opening to the gospel and the action of grace. It opens the way for a "dialogical engagement of nature by grace" and also for a "dialogue between philosophy and theology." The gospel message reveals that God's grace heals and elevates human nature to enjoy a happiness that was unknowable and unattainable for the philosophers. Hibbs develops here his understanding of Thomistic pedagogy and the place of narrative in Christian moral development. For Hibbs, the healing grace accessible to us through the revelation of Christ draws the philosophical life into a narrative of redemption. In Hibbs's view, the Christian narrative has a comedic structure that overcomes the tragic elements of human existence, elements revealed by philosophy itself in the *aporia* between desire and attainment. This narrative also enables us to understand the place of beauty and of the divine artistry in St. Thomas's theology of creation and redemption.

In analyzing St. Thomas's theology of happiness, Hibbs gives special attention to the role of contemplation. Once again, Hibbs

guides the reader away from common misreadings. Contemplation is not something lifeless or inert. Nor is it a covert form of power and exploitation. For Aquinas, the primacy of contemplation rests on the centrality of wonder and the desire to know. The contemplative life is the best life because it most fully corresponds to our natural desire to know and love the truth. At the same time, however, Hibbs rejects the notion that from the mere recognition of the contemplative life as the best life, we could then deduce how to live here and now. The judgment concerning contemplation's primacy is a theoretical judgment. It must be "enacted" in a particular life through the practical judgment of prudence. Contemplation cannot constitute a human life simply and in its entirety—which alone is the true gauge of complete virtue—because it is only sporadically possible in this life. Hence, contemplation, although it is superior to prudence and the moral virtues, is nonetheless governed by them. Prudence alone can judge whether contemplation is the appropriate action in a given situation.

Central to Hibbs's attempt to recover the priority of contemplation is his awareness of its profoundly limited character on the natural level. For Aquinas, metaphysical contemplation is the highest of the speculative sciences. It is the study of the ultimate causes that underlie these sciences. Yet, the results of its inquiry are sparse. The "darkness of metaphysics" and its "restless incompleteness" prepare the philosopher to encounter a different type of contemplative wisdom. It prepares the philosopher for the Thomistic insight that the primacy of contemplation becomes fully intelligible only within the context of our graced vocation to attain the beatific vision in heaven. Moreover, from the Thomistic perspective, the highest form of Christian living in this life is a mixture between contemplation and action. It is the life of charity lived in the imitation of Christ.

Hibbs's recognition of the central role of grace and of Christ in the Thomistic account of the moral life is a welcome corrective. St. Thomas has too often been portrayed as almost exclusively a philosopher, when in fact he was primarily a theologian. Recognizing this, Hibbs outlines the key role played by the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Aquinas's theology. This account, however, contains one unfortunate feature. It does not explicitly acknowledge Thomas's teaching concerning the infused

cardinal virtues. In fact, when Hibbs refers to “infused virtue,” he seems to employ the term as a synonym for “theological virtue.” For example, when treating Thomas’s distinction between the acquired and infused virtues, he leaves the reader with the impression that, in his view, Thomas is distinguishing between the acquired cardinal virtues and charity (188). In fact, the distinction is between two different types of cardinal virtue: infused and acquired. St. Thomas states clearly that the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) function in a way analogous to the natural principles underlying the intellect and will (*ST* 1–2, q. 63, a. 3). The natural principles rightly order us to our natural end, but must be specified by the acquired cardinal virtues concerning the means to this end. Similarly, the theological virtues rightly order us to our supernatural end, but must be specified by the infused cardinal virtues concerning the means to this supernatural end (*ST* 1–2, q. 63, a. 3, ad 2). Hibbs nowhere explicitly recognizes this core feature of Aquinas’s thought. The slip is unfortunate. The recognition of infused prudence and of its importance for the life of charity would have strengthened Hibbs’s overall account of the role of prudence in the moral life.

There are perhaps other features of Hibbs’s account about which specialists might wish to quibble. This, however, should not distract us from recognizing the overall excellence of Hibbs’s study. Hibbs has laid the groundwork for a threefold recovery: the recovery of human nature, the recovery of prudence, and the recovery of contemplation. Hibbs proposes to recover human nature by reasserting its animality and natural teleology; to recover prudence by explaining its relationship to natural law and the life of a community; to recover the priority of contemplation by portraying its natural limitations as well as its dialectical openness to fulfillment in Christ. This threefold recovery offers us a renewed understanding of St. Thomas’s moral pedagogy. It provides us with a powerful instrument for exorcising the Cartesian ghosts that continue to haunt us. For anyone wishing to understand the Thomistic perspective on human action, this book is well worth a careful reading. N V

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