

Book Reviews

Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible by John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno (*Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005*), xii + 156 pp.

IN SPITE of the proliferation in the last five decades of research in the field of patristics, which has given rise to critical editions, contemporary translations, and detailed commentaries on the writings of the Fathers of the Church, these venerable texts often bewilder those approaching them for the first time. Much of this, John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno rightly suggest, is due to the unavoidable presence in such works of “biblical citation, paraphrase, and exegesis,” which they deem “the great common denominator” (3). To take a notorious example, one they allude to in their work, how many teachers have had to respond to an objection raised by students reading the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, surely the most accessible work from the patristic era, that the scriptural citations woven into so many paragraphs threaten to extinguish the vividness and relevance of the personal voice they seem to hear from the bishop of Hippo? Indeed, many of the writings of the Fathers, even those that are not formal commentaries upon biblical books, seem at first glance to consist of little more than vast expanses of scriptural citations, often with little or no intervening commentary, and thus with little explicit guidance for a reader seeking to discern their purpose. According to a 1958 study by Wilhelm Krause, the works of Origen and Irenaeus contain more than one thousand direct citations from Scripture, as do the writings of Clement of Alexandria, whose well-known receptivity toward Hellenic *paideia*—manifested in frequent citations of Greek poets and philosophers—in no way eclipsed his reverence for Sacred Scripture, which alone was paramount because its author was the Holy Spirit. But apart from the staggering number of scriptural citations, it is the overall approach to the Bible on the part of the Fathers, especially their apparent lack of concern with its historical import, that troubles many readers today. This has resulted in the neglect of many of the exegetical works of the Fathers and confusion about the role of Scripture in works that are not

overtly exegetical.

The purpose of the work under review, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible*, is to render intelligible the patristic reading of Scripture. In this, O'Keefe and Reno, two associate professors of theology at Creighton University, have admirably succeeded. They have written an engaging, stimulating, and thoughtful work that could well serve as an excellent introductory text for undergraduates or seminarians who are approaching the Fathers for the first time, but it should also prove useful to graduate students or even seasoned scholars in theology and related fields who may not have first-hand knowledge of the writings of the Fathers. Most people, to be sure, are aware of the contributions of the Fathers to the unfolding of Christian doctrine, and they perhaps sense that there is hidden treasure in their writings, but they may have found such works difficult to read from cover to cover and opted instead for excerpts in anthologies. *Sanctified Vision* is not, however, a history of early Christian exegesis; the authors pointedly and boldly decline to offer a chronological survey, for they perceptively maintain that "to know the history of patristic exegesis is not the same as knowing *how* that interpretive tradition functions with its own inner logic and cogency" (5). Nor, again, is the work centered on the emergence of Christian doctrine, for O'Keefe and Reno rightly maintain that the depth of early Christian interpretation of Scripture can be missed by one who reads the works of the Fathers solely with an eye toward creeds and councils.

O'Keefe and Reno do not seek to defend the truth of patristic exegesis—they repeatedly make this disclaimer—although it is clear that they have great admiration for the Fathers and are disturbed by the negative assessments, some of which they mention, of the patristic reading of the Bible. They seek, rather, to establish that the exegesis of the Fathers is coherent, mature, and worth reading, all of which are not immediately apparent, especially to beginning readers. To overcome the alienation such readers experience, O'Keefe and Reno descend to the level of first principles, those assumptions and presuppositions that are often left unstated, but which animate any work, ancient or modern. The difficulty in reading the Fathers, then, is the incongruity between our assumptions and theirs. "Our assumptions about what is meant by literal and spiritual, as well as our notions about the relationship between doctrine and Scripture, made the Church Fathers seem disorganized, ineffective, and even contradictory" (6). One virtue of the book is that O'Keefe and Reno often employ the first-person plural pronoun, especially as they narrate

their own struggles to learn how to read the Fathers.

The first two chapters, "Scriptural Meaning Modern to Ancient" and "Christ Is the End of the Law and the Prophets," are devoted to making this disconnect explicit, to identifying and coming to terms with those aspects that render patristic exegesis frustrating or even tedious to read. The principal discrepancy between assumptions, they argue, is that "most modern readers hold a referential theory of meaning, which assumes that our words and sentences are meaningful insofar as they successfully refer or point" (8), while for the Fathers "the arrow of analysis is directed toward and through the literal particularity of the text and not beyond it" (18). The Fathers did not strive to get behind the Bible, to the historical circumstances or influences that in the eyes of modern readers conditioned the text and are therefore essential for a proper understanding of it, and sometimes indeed can even become more important than the text itself; rather, the Fathers looked "into the text" (12). Certainly they were not oblivious to historical or doctrinal implications of Scripture, but the Bible "absorbed" their attention:

Scripture was, for them, the orienting, luminous center of a highly varied and complex reality, shaped by divine providence. It was true not by virtue of successfully or accurately representing any one event or part of this divinely ordained reality. Rather, the truth rested in the Scripture's power to illuminate and disclose the order and pattern of all things. (11)

With particular attention to Irenaeus, O'Keefe and Reno give cogent explanations of three terms, *hypothesis*, *economy*, and *recapitulation*, the understanding of which is fundamental for any student of the Fathers, inasmuch as the Fathers sought an overall interpretation of the Bible, a coherent, unified truth about God's relationship with creation and with mankind in particular. The core of the book consists of chapters three, four, and five, each of which takes up a different "strategy" by which the Fathers developed this overall interpretation of Scripture, with Christ as the cornerstone: "Intensive Reading," "Typological Interpretation," and "Allegorical Interpretation." As illustrations of these strategies, each chapter contains discussions of passages from the Greek and Latin Fathers, from Ignatius of Antioch to Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret. Augustine, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Origen are favorite authors. As befits an introductory work, all passages are in translation; endnotes provide references; and there is a brief bibliography and an index.

Under the heading "Intensive Reading," O'Keefe and Reno discuss the perplexing ways in which the Fathers move "within, across, and

through” the text of Scripture (12), making associations between words and passages in ways that disenchant modern readers. They show the exceptional scrutiny that the Fathers lavished upon every single word of the Bible, perhaps best illustrated in Origen’s well-known, lengthy discussion of the prologue to the Gospel of John, but really ubiquitous in the writings of many Fathers. It would be difficult to accuse the author of the *Hexapla* of careless philology or of inattention to the details of the text! Two claims, in particular, stand out in this chapter. The first is the assertion that we should give more attention to the role of exegesis in early disputes over doctrine. For example, the authors assert that Athanasius did not invoke Scripture as a mere polemicist looking to prove his doctrine concerning the relationship of the Son to the Father; rather, they suggest, his doctrine was more effective for exegesis than that of the Arians. It explained more verses. “Thus, for Athanasius, what is prior is the urgency of a unified, coherent reading of Scripture, a reading that maximizes the number of unstrained interpretations of individual words, verses, and episodes. Doctrine ‘follows’ from that priority” (61). The second is the notion that for the Fathers “Scripture [was] always worthy of more intensive scrutiny” (67). They quote from a homily of John Chrysostom:

For, just as with grains of incense, the more they are moved about with your fingers, the greater the fragrance they give out, so it is with the Scriptures in our experience; the more you devote to studying them, the more you are able to discover the treasure hidden in them, and thereby gain great and unspeakable wealth. (67)

In chapters four and five, O’Keefe and Reno take up typology and allegory, respectively. They recognize that devoting separate chapters to these may not meet with universal approval. They assert, for example, that the distinction between allegory and typology in many ways hardened during and after the Reformation, when Protestant scholars sought to distinguish sharply typology, which “rightly operated within the literal atmosphere of Scripture,” from allegory, which was thought to entail “a willful abuse of the literal sense” (20). And they conclude their preface with a plea that Robert Wilken, whose assistance they gratefully acknowledge, nevertheless pardon them for maintaining this distinction (xii). But according to O’Keefe and Reno, although allegory and typology both belong to the “same family of reading strategies,” they differ “in the amount of work the reader must put into the interpretation” (90). A failed typology requires explanation, while an allegory involves much “interpretive ambition” and requires “significantly more interpretive investment capital” (90). One

hopes that scholars continue to debate the merits of this distinction.

O'Keefe and Reno distinguish three patterns of typology and three uses of allegory. At times a typology traces the prefiguration of Christ in the Old Testament; on other occasions it connects a Christian practice such as baptism with an event in the Old Testament; and there are still other instances in which a typology provides a way for a Christian to interpret his own life and experiences and those of his fellow Christians (such as the martyrs) in the light of Christ's life. An allegory, in turn, sometimes enables one to make sense of a scriptural passage that seems not to make sense; at other times it facilitates a deeper reading of a text; and there are still other occasions when it enables one to map a new reading onto a text, as Origen does with the Song of Songs. Sensitive to the difficulties that readers today have with typology and especially with allegory, which according to some is a "betrayal of the reality of texts" (89), O'Keefe and Reno offer two responses. On the one hand, they provide analogies from contemporary culture to illustrate the above strategies. For example, efforts to make sense of the pop singer Don McLean's cryptic "American Pie" exemplify allegory "making sense of nonsense"; again, the interpretation of C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* is adduced as an illustration of "allegory adding to the sense"; and baseball, *The Brady Bunch*, and Martin Luther King provide an approach to the discussion of typology. On the other hand, O'Keefe and Reno offer a refreshingly frank diagnosis of what they understand to be the real obstacles to tolerating, much less accepting, these strategies. The real difficulty with typology, they argue, is that it depends upon a conviction, no longer shared by many readers today, that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are somehow more real than our own lives (88):

When contemporary readers object to patristic typology, we are convinced that the true target of their objection is not typology itself but the presumed divine economy across which patristic typology functioned. In other words, the objections are theological rather than methodological. (85)

Again, contrary to modern estimations, allegory, which is not a flight from the text but is actually the result of careful attention to details, makes the heads of many readers spin not because the method is irksome (for O'Keefe and Reno rightly note that allegories are not altogether foreign to our contemporary culture), but because "the persuasiveness of allegorical readings depends very much upon the economy the interpreter presupposes" (107). O'Keefe and Reno consistently dissuade us

from a fixation on method and instead concentrate on the underlying assumptions that make the patristic reading of Scripture coherent. Of course the ultimate assumption behind patristic exegesis, as they recognize, is faith in Christ. They also happily steer clear of the insidious fixation on hermeneutics of power.

The sixth and final chapter, "The Rule of Faith and the Holy Life," underscores the importance of discipline for the exegete, not only a personal commitment to asceticism, but also the discipline of living in a community, the Church, and being receptive to the Rule of Faith. It is here that one sees the ramifications of the underlying assumptions that O'Keefe and Reno have discerned and made explicit thus far in the book. For example, there is the claim, vital for any understanding of patristic exegesis, that the Fathers sought not to assess Scripture, that is, to probe its accuracy or its origin, but rather to interpret it, and of course to contemplate the ineffable mysteries revealed therein. One also finds in this chapter Augustine's startling stipulation that Scripture should be memorized even before it is understood, as well as his conviction that exegesis is profoundly linked to one's moral life. There is Clement of Alexandria's claim that an exegete will lapse into heresy and will misread Scripture if he extracts himself from the discipline of the Church; an exegete needs her guidance. This is deserving of further comment, inasmuch as it evokes a striking difference between ancient and much modern exegesis: For the Fathers, exegesis was inseparably linked to, and was at the service of, the tangible, everyday realities of sacramental life in the Church. There is also Origen's notion that the exegete must conform his mind and heart to Scripture, and Irenaeus's conviction that all of Scripture produces a marvelous harmony, even if one has not worked out the implications of every verse. And one encounters the notion from Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* that certain books of the Bible should not be read indiscriminately, and the related point that some passages of Scripture are deliberately obscure so as to confound a superficial reading. The book concludes with a discussion of Origen's rich understanding of the profound link between anthropology and exegesis. Though sure to provoke some readers, such notions will at least now be intelligible in light of the earlier chapters in *Sanctified Vision*.

It remains to be said that the book, which is certainly the result of several years of teaching and reflection as well as scholarly research, is very well organized and clearly written. Its brevity and price should make it attractive to professors looking for an introductory text that takes the Fathers seriously, and not just as interesting landmarks on the way to a more enlightened reading of the Bible. A few readers perhaps will take

umbrage at some of the analogies that the authors persistently raise. These, indeed, should not be pressed too far. For example, in the concluding chapter the authors repeatedly press an analogy with modern science in order to explain the way in which the Rule of Faith or Rule of Truth served as a control on individual exegesis. The authors recognize the limitations of this analogy. It probably was designed to evoke for the typical undergraduate a discipline that requires no justification, even if it remains opaque to many laymen; although few understand the particulars of scientific research, rarely does anyone dispute that, as a discipline, science possesses internal logic or coherence. This, then, is what these authors hope students will grasp about patristic exegesis: One should **N V** take its strangeness as a sign of naivety or immaturity.

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Toward a Christian Conception of History by M. C. Smit, edited and translated by H. Donald Morton and Harry Van Dyke (*Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002*), xi + 426 pp.

MEYER CORNELIS SMIT (1911–1981), a Dutch thinker whose theological and philosophical roots are in the intellectual milieu of the neo-Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), Herman Bavinck (1845–1921), and Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977), taught history and philosophy in the *Universitas Libera Reformata* at Amsterdam for a quarter century (1955–1980). This collection of his wide-ranging writings spans a thirty-year period—from his 1950 doctoral dissertation, titled *The Relation Between Christianity and History in the Present-Day Roman Catholic Conception of History*, to published and unpublished articles, addresses, and lecture notes, inter alia, on the nature of history and historical study; God and history; history, meaning and knowledge; Christ, redemption, and culture; the relation between faith and reason; and the epistemological significance of faith for philosophy as well as scholarship in general.

Of particular importance to readers of *Nova et Vetera* is the sympathetic but critical attention Smit pays in part one of this book to the chief representatives of *la nouvelle théologie*—Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, and other Catholic thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century such as Maurice Blondel, and the neo-Thomism of Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson. The hermeneutical context of his interpretation of these thinkers is the problem of the two orders of nature and grace, of the natural and the supernatural. The position one takes on the

relation of these two orders informs the answer to questions such as the following: What is the relation of God and the world? Of salvation history and world history? Of Christ and culture? Of Christ and history? Of faith and reason?

Smit begins his study with the assumption that nineteenth-century Catholic thinkers interpreted the relation between these orders as a two-story system: nature being either the purely passive substratum for grace or a self-enclosed order with its own natural ends, to which is then added the freely given gift of grace (*donum superadditum*) essential to attaining man's supernatural end. These two orders of nature and grace are regarded as *parallel* levels having only an *extrinsic*, but non-contradictory, relation to each other. Nature and grace existed in a harmonious relation in man's prelapsarian condition. The postlapsarian state is such that nature is wounded by sin in the sense that it loses the extra-added gift of grace, of original holiness and righteousness. Redemption in Christ then means that nature regains that supernatural gift of grace. According to Smit, however, this understanding of the relation that nature has to grace deprives sin as well as Christ's redemptive work of its radical character. Since the loss of grace only effects the second story and not the lower first story, then "Nature as such [is not affected by the fall] and [hence] does not need to be restored through God's work of redemption" (22; 82). Smit rightly sees the core problem with this view: It fails to consider that grace directs, orders, and transforms nature *from within* rather than alongside of or above nature. Now, since the lower order of nature and culture is left untouched by sin and hence untransformed by the grace of redemption, this results in a kind of naturalism at that lower level: a nature and culture without God's transforming presence, running their own course separately from any contact with grace, and hence a nature and culture not ordered from within their depth to God become increasingly independent and autonomous. Smit correctly judges, "Here [the dualism of nature and grace] we have one of the sources of the secularization of culture."

In contrast, argues Smit, by the mid-twentieth century, especially since 1930, Catholic thinkers shifted their focus of attention to "the synthesis and intimate union of the two [orders of nature and grace]" (9). One might say that for them the key idea in the theology of nature and grace of, for example, De Lubac, Gilson, and Maritain is that *grace restores nature in its own order* rather than grace flanking or supplementing nature (33).

Smit holds that this shift in thinking about nature and grace happened for three reasons. One, as a result of the transition from a classicist world-view to historical-mindedness, that is, from the abstract to the concrete, from the static to the dynamic, from some state of pure nature to a nature

that is, in the order of history, concretely, fallen and redeemed (7, 28, 186). Two, "in close connection with the 'discovery' of history as an essential element of concrete reality stands the *rediscovery of the religious dimension of reality*." Religion is neither simply a higher level of human life, nor something added to human life. Instead, "religion . . . integrates and synthesizes the whole of human life" (9). Three, present-day Catholic thought is decidedly Christocentric rather than theocentric partly due to the movement of *ressourcement* with its return to the Church Fathers (10–12).

Smit has deep appreciation for the efforts made by the Catholic thought of *la nouvelle théologie*, neo-Thomism, and other lesser-known Catholic thinkers (for example, Oskar Bauhofer, Alfred Delp, Leopold Malevez, and Gustave Thils) in the first half of the twentieth century to overcome the dualism of nature and grace. Yet, he remains critical of this thought because it still fails, he holds, to grasp the "inner unity of creation [broadly including human beings, history, culture, and society], fall, and redemption" (81). Smit attributes this failure to the untenability of their view regarding "a strict boundary between a natural order and a supernatural order." He adds: "The former may be regulated by the latter, and be peacefully and harmoniously connected to it; in reality there is a polar tension between the two, since what is actually rooted in each other is here *first* placed side by side and only *thereafter* brought into connection" (72). In consequence, he argues that regarding the relation of Christ to history, specifically what the *intrinsic* value of Christ's redemptive work is for history as well as for learning, society, and culture, Catholic thought, possibly except for Maritain, "does no better than posit an *external* connection" (58). If they start with the fall in thinking about history, this results in setting up an opposition between Christ and history. If they start with redemption, they end up ascribing a mere instrumental value to history, culture, and so forth. On this view, which Smit attributes to Daniélou, "religious history is total history, in which profane history fulfills only a subordinate role . . . it has no intrinsic value or goal" (56). If they hold that history has an intrinsic value and not merely an instrumental value with respect to Christ's redemptive work, then we are back to the question whether there is an intrinsic connection between Christ's work of salvation and history. Indeed, this question arises again in connection with the theme of how world historical progress is related to Christ who is "conceived concretely as the inner unity and decisive turning point of world history" (94, 260).

Even Maritain ultimately disappoints, Smit claims, because he too fails to arrive at a deeper unity of Christ and history, including culture, despite his best efforts at showing their intimate union. Yet, Smit's dissatisfaction

with Maritain is puzzling. He acknowledges that, for Maritain, the goods of creation, of the temporal order, have intrinsic, and not merely instrumental, value. He also acknowledges that Maritain's incarnation theology seems to be free from the nature-grace dualism because in the mystery of the Incarnate Word the highest possible union of God and man, of nature and grace, took place. Furthermore, the full effect of the Incarnate Word's universal significance is not merely that man's nature is elevated and oriented toward its supernatural end. Rather, the transforming efficacy of Christ is *within* rather than alongside or above man's nature—his grace penetrates and perfects and transforms nature. Thus, integral humanism, according to Maritain, is the *humanism of the Incarnation*. "The grace of the incarnation draws to itself all that is human," including history, culture, and society. In reply then to the following questions Smit raises of Maritain's position one must say "yes." "Is this a definitive break with the notion of an autonomous natural domain *alongside* a religious reality? Is 'profane' history imbued with religious significance?"

Nevertheless, Smit is persuaded that the source of mid-twentieth-century Catholic thought's failure to break fully with the nature-grace dualism is that it did not grasp (as Herman Dooyeweerd puts the matter) "the *indivisible* unity . . . of the divine Word revelation, that of creation, fall, and redemption through Jesus Christ." In Dooyeweerd's own words, "Whoever denies the *radical* character of the fall and redemption cannot but hold an unscriptural view of creation. The reverse is also true: whoever maintains an unscriptural view of creation cannot but arrive at a view of fall and redemption that shortchanges the Word revelation" (81). According to Smit, then, sin is radical because it influences the whole of creation, and redemption is, accordingly, equally radical because the whole fallen creation "is reconciled in Jesus Christ and is opened to the re-creating work of God's Spirit." "The effect of sin is radical and deep," adds Smit, and "deep and universal is likewise the effect of salvation in Christ" (75–76). The failure to grasp the radical character of the fall and redemption is reflected in an unbiblical view of creation. That is to say, the fundamental dependence of creation on God is compromised because of (a) a strict boundary between the "natural" and the "supernatural," and (b) "a certain autonomy and independence [is granted to the natural realm] with respect to God" (75).

In this light, Smit alleges that the Catholic tradition as expressed in the thought of Gilson, Maritain, Blondel, and others is intellectually committed to "rational autonomy," or the "autonomy of natural thought" in the natural realm (133, 135, 137–38, 187–88). In addition, he alleges that the mid-twentieth-century crisis of Catholic thought that Pope Pius XII

sought to avert in his 1950 encyclical, *Humani generis*, reaffirmed, not only the Church's intellectual commitment to rational autonomy, but also Thomas Aquinas's philosophy of natural reason where man's rational autonomy establishes a rational foundation on which to build a Christian superstructure of faith (185–88). And although he acknowledges "Catholic thinkers [such as, Gilson, Maritain, Blondel, de Lubac] are serious in their quest for an integral Christian philosophy," their inability to develop an "intrinsically Christian philosophy" is due to their "unwill[ingness] to relinquish the autonomy of rational thought" (187).

These typical neo-Calvinist allegations about rational autonomy are indefensible in my judgment, not only as a characterization of the Catholic tradition *as a whole*, but also, in particular, of the thought of Aquinas and neo-Thomists like Gilson and Maritain. Although terms like "rational autonomy" or "autonomy of rational thought" are much used by neo-Calvinists like Smit, their meaning is ambiguous. Briefly, we know that "rational autonomy" does not mean the self-sufficiency of "absolute reason" as the source and basis of all truths. Human reason's self-sufficiency is rejected by Pius IX in his 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*: "Human reason, without any reference whatsoever to God, is the sole arbiter of truth and falsehood, and of good and evil; it is law to itself, and . . . hence reason is the ultimate standard by which man can and ought to arrive at the knowledge of all truths of every kind" (see also Vatican Council I [1870]).

I would also argue that for Pius XII in *Humani Generis* the "autonomy of rational thought" could mean neither "pure reason" nor its logical corollary, namely, the so-called state of pure nature. For he refers to the concrete situation in which we exist as fallen human beings and the noetic effects of original sin, which leaves the proper ordering of our intellectual powers to the truth in a precarious, confused, and disordered state. In this, Pius XII is echoing Aquinas who argues that the knowing powers of human reason suffer the wound of ignorance and are deprived of its direction toward truth; additionally, that the disordered state of our intellectual powers also affects "man's desire to know the truth about creatures," for he may wrongly desire to know the truth by not "referring his knowledge to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God" (*Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 85, a. 3, c.; q. 109, a. 2; II–II, q. 167, a. 1, respectively).

Now, suppose that by rational autonomy one means "natural reason," which is not self-sufficient and is rather finite, fallible, and fallen, and which includes, I take it, the belief-producing human capacities of intuition, reasoning, sense perception, memory, introspection, testimony, moral intuition, and what Calvin and others like Luigi Giussani call the *sensus divinitatis*. Then, arguably, all of these capacities are still reliable,

because, whether one is a believer or an unbeliever, natural reason can apprehend truth. For example, the human reasoning of an unregenerate individual can still construct valid arguments; he can correctly remember what he had for breakfast this morning, he can see, hear, feel, taste, and smell things like flowers; he can have rational insight into self-evident truths; he can affirm the reliable word of another; he can know that it is wrong to steal, murder, commit adultery, and so forth. Furthermore, he can know God, albeit that this natural knowledge of God has vast errors and confusions. Indeed, St. Paul in Romans 1:18–21 speaks of men who are inexcusable because “*having known God*, do not glorify Him as God.” He adds: “For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” This text suffices to show that, according to St. Paul, men are rendered inexcusable precisely because they know God. Without this natural knowledge, St. Paul’s whole doctrine collapses. Lastly, contra Smit, I would also argue that Pius XII clearly reaffirms the teaching of Aquinas and Vatican Council I that natural theology is *sufficient to show* that belief in God is rational but not *necessary* to having rational, justified, knowledge of God, or for *knowing* that the Christian faith is true.

About half of part two of Smit’s book contains his own constructive reflections on a Christian conception of history. In concluding this review, I want to identify three claims at the heart of Smit’s reflections as well as some problems with them. First, Smit affirms God’s integral presence in history (231), and hence he objects to the view that “puts God in a dual relation to his creation” (228). That is to say, objectionable, for Smit, is the notion that God relates to history *indirectly* and *directly*. This direct/indirect scheme means that God not only relates to history mediately through the “[natural] forces and laws at work in the world-order [that are] expressions of the divine will,” but also that he intervenes “immediately and supernaturally to give things a different turn than might have been anticipated in the natural course of events” (227, 229). Smit argues that this scheme has dualistic implications: (1) the natural process of history comes to be viewed as autonomous of God, focused on human beings deliberating and acting, and human intentions and motives, with God being pushed to the margins except for “fragmentary interventions in the form of surprising and unusual events” (232); and (2) “if [the reality of] God is no longer regarded as *concretely* knowable in his [historical] acts, he recedes from our vision to the periphery of existence, in spite of our *general* confession of his guidance” (229). In contrast, Smit claims that God is intimately present in this world, acting in it existen-

tially and integrally relating all things to himself. If this claim is true, then we “would [not] be able to say anything true about history while leaving God out of account” (231). Indeed, adds Smit, historical facts are *constituted* only in relation to God (243).

Smit’s view that God is actively involved in the constitution of historical facts, indeed of all creaturely things, has the appearance of being a version of the metaphysical doctrine called *occasionalism*. Let me put the critical point this way: In an effort to break with a dualism between God and creation, Smit not only holds that God is the primary or first cause of all creaturely things, but also seems to imply that he is the only cause of such things. This doctrine of divine causation holds that the created order, which would include the actions of human beings, has no secondary causation of its own. God causes whatever happens in the world, creatures being merely occasions for his activity. Smit is right to break with the dualistic implications that (necessarily?) follow from the direct/indirect scheme by affirming the necessary, existential dependence of creaturely reality upon God for its existence, preservation, and power. But his rejection of the scheme itself seems to entail a depreciation of the created order with the proper causal powers and laws of created things, and hence it appears that Smit fails to do justice to the self-subsistent existence of created beings in their relation to God. Of course I am not suggesting that the anti-scholastic strand of the Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition explicitly embraces occasionalism. Still, I should add that this criticism of neo-Calvinists is a recurrent one, mostly made by Catholic thinkers, namely, that the stress on the immanence of God’s activity in the world amounts to depreciating the proper being of creaturely activity. This criticism is aimed at the neo-Calvinist opposition to the traditional metaphysical notion of substance.

In addition, reason needs faith, and thus faith has epistemological significance in two ways, according to Smit. First, faith is a way of knowing God and his Revelation, and the knowledge singular to faith is perfectly certain (188). Does Smit regard such knowledge to be rational, justified knowledge? Furthermore, how does such faith-knowledge relate to the project of giving reasons for one’s Christian beliefs? In other words, does faith need reason and, if so, in what sense? That is to say, I think Smit is right to claim that (in Etienne Gilson’s own words) “we can *know* the Christian faith to be true without showing it to be true” through arguments. Still, is there no place for the project of showing the reasonableness and truth of Christian beliefs to those who are not Christians?

Second, faith is an integral aspect of *all* human knowing; it is no more optional to knowing than is thought. In particular, says Smit,

That which faith tells us . . . is an *integral part* of the fabric of scientific knowledge. Faith is not an ornament added to knowledge acquired in another way; nor is it a subjective prejudice. . . . Faith, rather, when oriented to God and divine Revelation, is a conscious ingredient of the scientific method that the researcher employs to open us his "field." (233; see also 381, 393)

Here too, Smit is correct in claiming that faith is an "integral part" of all knowing, in particular, scientific knowing, or scholarly inquiry. Yet this intriguing claim raises some questions that Smit leaves unanswered.

For one thing, Smit's claim suggests a certain resemblance to Augustine who held that faith is the condition of knowledge: *credo ut intelligam*. Of course Smit has in mind not only the knowledge of God but also, indeed, especially knowledge acquired through the disciplines generally and not just theology. But that only makes the question more pressing: How is one to understand the claim that faith is an integral aspect in the process of all human knowing?

For another, Smit may be taken to imply that there is no such thing as religiously neutral scholarship. Scholarly practice always operates under certain presuppositions, such as an individual's faith-commitment in the autonomy of rational thought (138–39). In general, Smit assumes the legitimacy of religiously based scholarship on the grounds of something like the following argument. All reasoning is limited and relative to one or another set of ultimate presuppositions, which are themselves "a-rational principles" requiring *faith* commitment. The Christian (or anyone else) has an epistemic right to making that ultimate commitment. The problem with this position is that Smit makes no effort to distinguish it from *fideism*. Furthermore, fideism presupposes some version of epistemic *relativism* because, according to Smit, "reason too must be intrinsically *historical*" (381). Thus, Smit leaves disconcertingly open not only the question regarding the role of reason in justifying ultimate presuppositions, but also whether he rejects the aspirations of human reason to grasp some kind of universally valid and objective truth.

Lastly, Smit enthusiastically informs us that he aims to give a full and coherent acknowledgment of the reality of historical consciousness. He confidently affirms the ontological thesis that the nature of things is thoroughly historical (390). Furthermore, he holds that man is a "thoroughly historical being, and that thought and the other forms of knowledge are therefore likewise of an historical nature" (388). "Knowledge is intrinsically historical. It is not only in history," Smit adds, "but is itself history" (393). In other words, the whole of created reality is constituted through

and through as “history” (366). The chief problem with Smit’s thesis is that it lacks clarity on how he can make (in the editors’ words) “an unqualified avowal of the thoroughly historical nature of things without acceding to historical relativism” (v).

This concern is lessened with understanding that by “history” Smit means to express, it would seem, the *dynamic power of God’s act of creation*, which not only includes bringing things into existence but also keeping all things integrally related to God (366–67). Smit calls this integral relation to God “first history” or “transcendental history,” and also the “transcendental relation,” because history in its totality, indeed, “the whole of reality and the whole of life . . . are oriented to the *transcendental Origin*” (367; see also 325). Now, the very nature of this transcendental relation is such that it constitutes the *meaning* of all things (391). By meaning, Smit refers to a “phenomenon’s origin, ground, rich variety, and value” (369). For example, the meaning of justice, of freedom, of love, of goodness, and so forth, is a fundamental *given* of existence rather than something we create; in short, meaning is not made, it is discovered. Meaning is given directly in the divine act of creation, with its mode of existence being such that it exists totally apart from human beings, ever having a *claim* on us, indeed, ever retaining its unity, its identity, its integrity and constancy (370–71). Furthermore, although meaning is given to us in the transcendental relation of all creation to the Origin, our *knowledge* of the meaning of, say, justice has its context, being thoroughly historical. And yet, given Smit’s anti-essentialism, with his emphasis on the rich variety of expressions of justice, one wonders how “justice retains its identity throughout all the changes it undergoes” (368). In a reassuring manner, Smit writes, “*However strongly it may be tied into history, it nevertheless has its own originality*. If it did not have this—if it were purely historically determined—then it would not even have its ‘being’ ” (346). In other words, without such an identity, the meaning of justice, its “essential element” (369), would be a product of human history, swallowed up by historical particularity, sheer historical flux.

Let me conclude by asking two questions of Smit’s view. *One*, with all Smit’s reflections on history and meaning, he, disappointingly, never asks how history and truth are related, or how meaning relates to truth. If the meaning of justice is, as Smit claims, “immune to fleeting, annihilating time, changeable, certainly [in light of being always imperfectly realized, often violated, and constantly threatened], but ever retaining that most essential element” (369), that is, its self-same identity, is not that because the truth about justice is objective and its validity is universal, which is something that holds everywhere, and at all times? *Two*, if meaning is not made, but found, because of the objectivity and universality of truth, and

if truth is a property of propositions expressing the meaning, that is, *stable content* of justice, then surely it makes sense to draw the form/content, context/content distinction? Without some such distinction, we must conclude that a change of context (or form) necessarily results in a change in content—that is, meaning, truth. Indeed, without such a distinction, historical particularity is so “constitutive of knower and known that ‘knowledge’ is mere human construct” (as Aidan Nichols critically remarks). This is historical relativism, which Smit much to his credit never accepted.

Nevertheless, for all my reservations and criticisms, this book is worthy of study. It raises challenging issues between Catholics and neo-Calvinists that neither can afford to ignore. As the French Dominican Yves Congar put it a half-century back: “Smit demonstrates great skill at perceiving the different currents [in recent Catholic thought] . . . grasping them at their deepest roots.” N V

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Morality and the Human Goods: An Introduction to Natural Law Ethics by Alfonso Gómez-Lobo (*Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002*), xvii + 142 pp.

ALFONSO GÓMEZ-LOBO, in a brief and readable volume, provides perhaps the best summary of the (new) natural law ethics available. It covers both the nature of practical reason, moral norms, and basic goods as well as the pressing questions of abortion and euthanasia. Gómez-Lobo mentions his debt to Germain Grisez and especially John Finnis, whose influence “is obvious on every page of this book” (129). Gómez-Lobo’s introduction will make an influential interpretation of natural law readily accessible to a wider audience.

It is clear that this work is the fruit of years of teaching and reflects the background and concerns of college students today. Gómez-Lobo begins with Plato’s *Crito*, recalling one “of the oldest (and finest) examples of the practice of moral philosophy” (xi). Like the *Crito*, Gómez-Lobo’s work appeals to objective reasons rather than subjective feelings in the quest to decide what is right or wrong. “Our goal is to obtain agreement in moral matters” by means of appeal to reasons that are in principle compelling to all human beings (even if in a particular case circumstances of age or disability exclude a class of human beings from being able to actually

participate in the discussion). This agreement on morals is not merely a contractual creation in which what is good and right becomes good and right because we agree to it. Rather, “we should agree on something *because it is true*. Therefore, our efforts in search of agreements should aim at finding reasons to think that what we agree on is indeed true” (3, original emphasis).

In chapter one, Gómez-Lobo treats the first principle of practical reasoning, that good is to be done and evil avoided. He calls this the “Formal Principle,” which is not itself moral but rather a general principle of practical rationality. Why should we believe in the Formal Principle? The Formal Principle is not known to be true in virtue of empirical observation and experimentation. The Formal Principle is not a claim about what is the case, but rather is a claim about what *ought* to be the case. The Formal Principle is a normative principle, not a descriptive one. Rather, the “first principle of practical rationality is true by virtue of the meaning of its terms” (5). The truth of the Formal Principle is therefore analogous to the truth that a bachelor is an unmarried man, in that it is by definition true. These truths tell us, *formally* speaking, that something is the case, without pointing out which instances of men or possible goods actually instantiate this formality.

Some readers might ask further questions at this point. Do we have reason to so sharply distinguish between what is normative and descriptive? Even if the Formal Principle is normative, isn’t the Formal Principle arguably also descriptive, in that every agent pursues only that which is taken to be in some sense (albeit sometimes mistakenly) good? One might also ask about the rationale for accepting the Formal Principle. If the Formal Principle is true by virtue of the meaning of its terms, isn’t the meaning of terms discovered precisely by means of empirical observation and discovery of the way language is actually used in the world? However, to ask and answer these kinds of questions may have taken the author too far from his target undergraduate audience and into direct debate with critics of Germain Grisez’s interpretation of Thomas Aquinas.

In chapter two, Gómez-Lobo treats the list of “basic goods” that together make up human happiness and flourishing. He deftly pits two competing intuitions of students (subjectivism and fallibilism) against one another.

What seems good to me may actually not be good for me simply because I can make mistakes. Indeed, one of the most notorious domains for self-deception is that of one’s own good. When I want something badly, I have little trouble convincing myself that it will be for my own good. Some people are known for buying beautiful, bright red “lemons.” (7)

Although students widely believe that “what seems good to me is good,” they perhaps even more strongly believe that no one is infallible. Gómez-Lobo does them the service of pointing out the tension between these two beliefs.

Also helpful is his analysis of the basic goods, in particular his defense of the claim that basic human goods are good without exception.

Health, we agree, is the good of the body. The fact that here is a war going on and that young, healthy men are going to be drafted and sent to die in a foreign land is not part of the concept of health. It would be better, indeed, for a young man to be ill when the summons arrives, but this does not affect the notion of health. What is bad is not the health of the recruit but the draft and, ultimately, the war. Health by itself, we must admit on reflection, is still a good. (36)

Similarly, life is always a good, though sometimes evils are made possible on account of life. Gómez-Lobo’s distinction between qualified and unqualified consideration of a good helps avoid the pitfalls of such contemporary notions as “wrongful life.” The fact that good can come from evil or evil can come from good does not change good into evil or evil into good.

In chapter three, he handles certain questions about whether money, beauty, freedom, or pleasure should be considered basic goods. In coming to a negative conclusion, his discussion of whether pleasure is a good is particularly instructive, allowing this text to be fruitfully read in class along with the classic *Utilitarianism* of John Stuart Mill, whose views are explicitly raised in the penultimate chapter of the book.

In chapter four, Gómez-Lobo provides “guidelines for the actual attainment of goods, some of which provide the link between the foundational and the specifically moral domain” including vigilance, commitment, inclusiveness, detachment, impartiality, care, and respect.

In chapter five, “Agents, Actions, and Consequences,” perhaps the most challenging part of the book, the author tackles the problem of defining the “act itself” or, as it is sometimes called, the “object of the human act.” Drawing perhaps implicitly on *Veritatis splendor*, he focuses on the “main immediate goal of the action itself” in distinction to “immediate partial goals of an action” and “the more remote or further goal of the agent” (51). Not all consequences define an action as a certain kind of action, but rather “[a] consequence is non-accidental if it is so linked to the nature of the action that an adequate description of the action would account for it” (53, emphasis removed). One wonders how Gómez-Lobo would apply this criterion in a variety of cases, for example the separating of conjoined twins Jodie and Mary, the use of

methotrexate to treat ectopic pregnancy, and craniotomy in cases of cephalo-pelvic disproportion.

This leads into a discussion of “double-effect” and moral norms. Gómez-Lobo justifies moral norms in terms of goods. The moral life is not a matter of “rule worship,” but rather the rules enlighten what is or is not truly fulfilling. The exceptionless negative norms, for example, not to kill the innocent or commit adultery, protect and promote the human flourishing of all. Also of great value in his discussion are the seemingly tangential remarks throughout the text, such as the following:

An individual who shies away from commitments simply will not be able to enjoy certain goods. If you never sign a contract committing yourself to the purchase of a house, you will never own a house. A person who is “free” from all commitments inevitably will end up empty-handed. (63)

This important book may indeed prompt a commitment in those who read it seriously, a commitment to think deeper about the purpose of life, the nature of the human good, and the role of reason in both. Through *Morality and the Human Goods: An Introduction to Natural Law Ethics*, Gómez-Lobo’s experience in the classroom now will benefit an even wider audience. N.V

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Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans by J. Ross Wagner (*Leiden: Brill, 2002*), xxii + 437 pp.

CONTAINING APPROXIMATELY one-quarter of Paul’s citations of the Old Testament, Romans 9–11 has puzzled interpreters through the ages. Although C. H. Dodd may have put it more bluntly than others, he certainly is not alone among New Testament scholars in his assessment of Paul’s argument in these chapters as “the weakest point in the whole epistle.” Like many, Dodd suggests that in Romans 9–10 Paul sets out an argument that he eventually abandons in Romans 11 for an encomium on the mercy of God. In *Heralds of the Good News*, J. Ross Wagner sets for himself the ambitious task of systematically examining each of Paul’s citations of and allusions to the Book of Isaiah in the Letter to the Romans, focusing primarily on Romans 9–11 and 15. The result is an impressive work that makes considerable progress toward untangling the knot of Paul’s dense and perplexing argument.

Wagner begins by laying some methodological groundwork in two interrelated areas: the question of Paul's *Vorlage* and his hermeneutical strategy. The study seeks to integrate these two issues by demonstrating the points at which Paul does and does not consciously reshape his scriptural citations to support his argument. In addition, Wagner consistently compares Paul's interpretations with other exegetical traditions, not to suggest dependence, but rather to set the letter more firmly in its historical and cultural background. Further, the study also pays close attention to the broader context of the Isaianic passages Paul cites to determine how that context sheds light on Paul's argument. Following this discussion of methodology, Wagner sets forth his primary thesis: Paul read portions of Isaiah as pointing to his role as missionary to the Gentiles in the eschatological restoration of Israel. The majority of the book (263 pages out of 359 in the main text) consists of three densely argued chapters that address, in turn, the three major issues in Paul's argument in Romans 9–11: the apparent failure of God's word (Rom 9:1–29); the puzzling phenomenon of Gentiles attaining to righteousness while many Jews have not (Rom 9:30–10:21); and the status of God's inheritance (unbelieving) Israel (Rom 11:1–36). The fifth chapter discusses Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans 15 in light of the results of chapters 2 through 4, and a concluding chapter summarizes and ties the argument together.

Chapters 2 through 4 thus form the heart of the book: a close examination of Paul's use of Isaiah and the way the Isaianic texts interact with and relate to other scriptural citations in Romans 9–11. One of the primary goals of this main section is to demonstrate that rather than being a failed argument to be abandoned by Paul in chapter 11, chapters 9 and 10 actually anticipate the final discussion of God's mercy and fidelity to his people Israel. In chapter 2, Wagner addresses Paul's first major assertion in the argument, "it is not as though the word of God has failed" (Rom 9:6), showing how Paul's references to Scripture underscore the continuity in God's dealings with Israel. Initially Paul refers to two foundational narratives, the call of Abraham and the Exodus, in order to remind his readers that God has distinguished between individuals within Israel in the past, calling some and hardening others. This retelling of the two narratives leads to the first quotation of Isaiah, a conflation of Isaiah 29:16 and 45:9. Seen in the broader context of each of these two verses, the potter/clay imagery that Paul employs acts simultaneously as an affirmation of Israel's election and a rebuke of Israel's questioning of God's chosen means of redemption, two themes that recur throughout Romans 9–11. The exodus motif of hardening continues to undergird Paul's argument, particularly the discussion of the vessels of mercy and wrath in 9:22–24. Wagner, however, points

out that Paul never equates the vessels of wrath with unbelieving Israel, a fact that becomes important when one considers the rest of Romans 9–11. The second quotation of Isaiah in Romans 9 is used, in Paul's hands, to interpret an oracle of Hosea to include the Gentiles. This observation supports Wagner's suggestion that in order to understand Paul's use of Isaiah one must pay close attention to how Isaianic texts interact with the other scriptural passages that Paul uses. The chapter closes by arguing that Paul's citation of these texts actually points forward to the restoration of all Israel, since Paul never replaces the nation Israel with the remnant.

In the third chapter Wagner examines Paul's explanation of why the Gentiles have attained righteousness while many in Israel have not. The analysis hinges on two key points: Paul's identification of Christ with the end/goal of the Law in Romans 10:4, and the broader context of the scriptural passages that Paul uses to support his argument. Paul's use of a conflation of Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 makes better sense of his argument in light of the function of each passage in its context. Both passages envision a division in Israel between a faithful remnant and the majority of Israel. Moreover, the latter group seeks deliverance for the nation apart from God. Finally, the two groups are divided by their trust or lack thereof. All three of these themes form a crucial part of Paul's argument from Romans 9:30–10:4, in which Paul wrestles with the reasons for the stumbling of many in Israel and the success of Gentiles in attaining righteousness. The Isaianic passages provide him with a precedent to critique his fellow Israelites for not pursuing the Law on the basis of faith. Following his complex reinterpretation of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Romans 10:5–10, Paul once again cites Isaiah 28:16, though this time with a change: By adding the adjective "all" to the verse, Paul connects the Isaianic verse with Joel 2, thus signaling the inclusion of Gentiles in the number of those who are saved by responding to Paul's message. The apostle's next citation of Isaiah (52:7 in Rom 10:15) points to his own role in the plan of salvation and his understanding that the eschatological salvation promised to Israel in Isaiah has begun to take place, though again including the Gentiles. Not only does Isaiah point to this eschatological deliverance, however; Paul's citation of Isaiah 53:1 in Romans 10:16, as well as his allusion to Isaiah 40 in the following verses, shows that he also believes that Isaiah's message anticipated the obstinacy of a large part of Israel. Paul concludes this section of his argument with partial citations of Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1–2, texts that at the same time castigate Israel for her disobedience, speak of the inclusion of the Gentiles, and yet envision this inclusion as working out the salvation of Israel and demonstrating the covenant faithfulness of Israel's God.

Chapter 4 rounds out the discussion of Romans 9–11 by exploring Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans 11 and seeking to demonstrate the continuity of his argument throughout this section of the epistle. In the opening verses of Romans 11, Paul denies that God has forsaken Israel, by interpreting his own faith in Christ in light of the scriptural precedent of the Elijah narrative. Paul's descent from the nation of Israel combined with texts affirming the faithfulness of God to his people points to the reliability of God's election, since it does not depend on the faithfulness of Israel. In 11:2–6 Paul applies the Elijah narrative to his own situation to show that a remnant of Israel has believed. Yet, Wagner argues, Paul does not thereby equate the remnant with Israel. Rather, "'Israel' is an eschatological category for Paul." Following this scriptural application, Paul returns to the question of the hardening of Israel, a motif first developed in Romans 9. As there, so here also he does not assert the sovereignty of God as some arbitrary use of power, but rather as a part of God's plan to restore Israel and to bless the Gentiles through that restoration. Again appealing to Isaiah to interpret his own times, Paul asserts the faithfulness of God "to restore those whom he has rendered insensible." Indeed, the hardening of Israel is just one step in the plan of God to rescue all of Israel, a step Paul supports by appealing once more to Isaiah in tandem with Deuteronomy to interpret his own mission. The reason for his ministry to the Gentiles is to provoke his fellow Israelites to jealousy and thereby bring them back. Paul's reticence to equate either the elect or the rest of his fellow countrymen with "Israel" suggests that his statement that "all Israel will be saved" in Romans 11:25–27 refers to both groups, envisioning a restoration of the whole nation. To the end, Paul's letter maintains a tension between God's sovereignty and mercy, which drives him to remain firm in his mission to preach Christ and in his confidence in the faithfulness of God. Thus, as Wagner notes, Paul's "theodicy gives way to doxology" in which his voice blends indistinguishably with that of Isaiah to praise the goodness, the mercy, and the incomprehensibility of God.

The final substantive chapter considers Romans 15, arguably the climax of the epistle, in which Paul appeals one last time to Isaiah to confirm his own mission. Picking up themes already treated at length, Paul once again explores the significance of Christ's ministry and Paul's own mission for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. By putting together a complex combination of scriptural citations, he reasserts God's purposes through Christ to bring about one community of Jews and Gentiles praising God together for his faithfulness and mercy. Not least significant in this web of scriptural texts is Isaiah 11:10, which appears in a broader

context that envisions the restoration of Israel leading to a blessing for the Gentiles and all of creation. Finally, in Romans 15:14–33, Paul once again gives the rationale for his missionary strategy. His final quotation of Isaiah (52:15) reaffirms his purpose in preaching to the Gentiles for the sake of the restoration of Israel.

In chapter 6 Wagner takes stock of the results of his study and draws together conclusions about Paul's citation technique and interpretive strategy, as well as the significance of Isaiah among the various Scripture passages that Paul cites, specifically in the Letter to the Romans. Of particular importance in Paul's epistle is the way in which he reads Isaiah and Deuteronomy in tandem as narratives of God's faithful purposes for his people Israel, a faithfulness that will ultimately succeed in spite of Israel's own unfaithfulness. It is this confidence that undergirds Paul's mission and enables him to hold out hope that one day "all Israel will be saved."

It is scarcely possible to do justice to such a rich work in such a short space. The skill with which Wagner interacts with the various versions and textual traditions is impressive, only to be outdone by the way in which he puts this technical expertise to the service of grappling with Paul's argument. Wagner repeatedly offers insightful readings of Romans that grow naturally out of detailed, technical work, thus providing a model of how meticulous scholarship can be used to further our understanding of the biblical text. Nevertheless, questions remain concerning the broader Pauline corpus, the inner logic of Romans 9–11, and the significance of this key Pauline text for Christian theology. First, looking at the broader Pauline corpus, one wonders what to make of the apostle's affirmation of Israel's worth in Romans in light of the rather negative assessment he makes of his own status as an Israelite in Philippians 3. To be sure, Paul's statements there compare his former life with what he has gained in Christ Jesus, but this is precisely the point: If for Paul his own status as a member of Israel means nothing apart from Christ, then how, according to Paul, can the status of other Israelites who have not gained Christ be of any value? Returning to the narrower scope of Romans 9–11, although Wagner makes a strong case for the integrity of the argument of the section as a whole (*pace* Dodd et al.), at least one puzzling feature continues unresolved, namely, how does Paul's assertion that "all Israel will be saved" relate to the examples he uses in chapter 9, which seem to suggest that *not* all Israel was saved in the past dealings of God with his people (cf. Rom 9:6)? Finally, Wagner makes an impressive case for the ongoing significance of the remainder of Israel, but one is left wondering exactly what role unbelieving Israel qua Israel plays for Paul. Equally pressing in this regard is how Christians reading Paul two thousand years later are to

deal with the same problem with which he struggled. Granted that this question has perplexed Christians through the centuries, it would have been appropriate for a work that (refreshingly) does not quarantine theological questions from biblical scholarship to address the issue more explicitly. Nevertheless, none of these criticisms should take away from the considerable merits of the book, which goes a long way to resolving a number of the difficulties in Romans 9–11. **N V**

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