

Book Reviews

Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Critical Appropriation of Russian Religious Thought by Jennifer Newsome Martin (*Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015*), 310 pp.

JENNIFER NEWSOME MARTIN'S *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Critical Appropriation of Russian Religious Thought* is an incredible achievement. It serves both as an elegant scholarly study of controverted yet ill-explored areas of Balthasar's work and as a crucial evaluation of the very foundations of Balthasar's theological speculations. For Martin, to have achieved both at once is remarkable and ought to be praised as such. More concretely, Martin has provided scholars with a portrait of Balthasar often hidden amid recent controversy and old generalizations. Says Martin, "these chapters venture to characterize Balthasar's method as constitutively orthodox, but thoroughly probative, phenomenological, literary-critical, aesthetic-hermeneutic, and—despite his perhaps unjustly earned reputation as arch-*conservateur*—quintessentially non-nostalgic" (2). Martin wants to look at Balthasar's decisions when he himself reads Christian and non-Christian thinkers and, thereby, to learn how to read *him*. Her task is immense. What she is determined to uncover is the interior dynamism that draws scholars to Balthasar, rather than the reactions that violently critique and praise.

Balthasar and Russian Religious Thought offers a sober account of Balthasar's intellectual engagement with four figures: Vladimir Soloviev, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, and F. W. J. Schelling. The first three are members of the "Russian school," and Schelling plays an important philosophical role as a resource for all three, as well as for Balthasar (1, 11–21). "Schelling constellates a point of triangulation between Balthasar and the Russians," Martin writes (19). That is to say, Martin is interested in the complex layers of interpretation provided to the Russians by the ways they each uniquely adjust

Schelling and in Balthasar's critical evaluations of Schelling in both his own work and that of the Russians. Much of Martin's work is devoted to this complex task of "constellating" all five thinkers at various angles.

Rather than taking apart each thinker one by one, Martin divides her chapters according to themes: "beauty and aesthetics" in chapter 2 (39–78), "freedom, theogony, myth, and evil" in chapter 3 (79–116), "thanatology and traditional eschatology from an anthropological point of view" in chapter 4 (117–59), and "apocalyptic Trinitarianism" in chapter 5 (160–97) (thematic arrangement discussed in 3). She begins her study with beauty, continues forward into freedom amid its various contexts, draws together beauty and freedom through a realized eschatology, and super-excessively completes all three movements with the truth of the self-revealing Trinity.

Martin's later chapters bear the weight of an increasingly complex task, for this is not only a study of Balthasar on various thinkers, but also a study of how Balthasar methodically (and methodologically) interacts with Christian and non-Christian thought. Her efforts maintain the same steady tone throughout, which is vital because flickering amid five thinkers can be overwhelming and confusing for a reader. Martin's opening narrations in each chapter become rafts to which to cling in the rush of information. It is hard to criticize her for the possibility of losing her reader given the compound nature of her questions, but it still must be said that this is a constant risk. Readers who are not diligent will find themselves drowning. *Balthasar and Russian Religious Thought* makes its demands from the perspective of profound research made elegant and seamless. Here is Martin's unspoken skill, as she holds the sinews of her study together with a careful, building narrative. That is, the book is a coherent whole.

That whole is as follows: "Balthasar can and does tolerate as well as enact an experimental, probative mode of theologizing, but, like Bulgakov, his profound devotion to and respect for the tradition are what allow him to do so" (196), and, from Balthasar himself, "the *paradox* must be allowed to stand: in the undiminished humanity of Jesus, the whole power and glory of God are made present to us" (quoted on p. 183). So, Balthasar's speculative theology and fearless engagement with the Russians are rooted in devotion to Christian tradition and in Christ himself. This twinned whole needs to be shaded in, but for now, we can note that Martin foreshadows her synthesis already in Balthasar's theological aesthetics, which flows out from a serious consideration of Christ as the concretized archetype

of all things (67), a consideration given to Balthasar by the tradition (66–67), and which leads Balthasar to bear “simultaneous commitment to (and simultaneous ambivalence toward) Classical forms and Romantic forms” (69). Balthasar’s commitment and his ambivalence are rooted in Christ, especially the “metaphysics of the saint.” The saint re-concretizes and re-presents Christ through personal, “foolish” holiness that is both *recognizable*, thanks to the tradition, and distinctly *new*, because of it (71–73). Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s works are essential testimony to the holy fool, and he both foretells the unity of Martin’s work and concludes it (71–73, 174–75).

Dostoyevsky not only confronts the Russians Balthasar is interested in (namely Soloviev) but also struggles with freedom and beauty in light of the Cross. Dostoyevsky uncovers false eschatons, unveils the Antichrist, as when the latter takes the shape of a false Christianity that would bear “total power” while authentic Christianity bears the gift of powerlessness (175). That is to say, Dostoyevsky is sensitive to the ways that speculation within and without Christianity can mimic authenticity without in fact being so. Beauty is legitimately redemptive because it is *real* (cf. 55), and Dostoyevsky sees how tearing beauty away from the true and the good makes it “an awful, devilish thing,” even demonic (cf. 56). When beauty is wrested from the true and the good, it becomes terrifyingly disincarnate—terrible because it is so enticing and disincarnate because it retreats to pure idea. Creative speculation in the Christian tradition is and must be beautiful, lest it become a pantomime of the beautiful.

In the first chapter, Martin argues for a “subterranean” exploration of Balthasar’s thought, a search beneath the surface of Balthasar’s writing to the perspective that informs it. Here is the Rilkean “wonderful mine” that Martin references at the beginning of her chapter, and which she wants to descend into and study. Rilke is a continual guide for Martin at the opening of each chapter. What is true for Rilke is true for Balthasar and his conversation partners: beauty is not a mere interest or addition, but thoroughly involving. Here (ch. 2) is where we see Balthasar’s firm devotion to “classical” aesthetic understanding while he also looks to the modern. Martin rehearses Balthasar’s basic aesthetic perspective, stressing valuable aspects in contrast with Schelling and the Russians. Schelling is fatally monistic, collapsing the analogy of being into an *identitas entis* (63). Yet, Balthasar often resonates with his interlocutors, whether in direct commentary or elsewhere, and shares their concerns. Soloviev and Balthasar place the Incarnation at the very center of their aesthetics (66), and indeed, all

five figures share a desire to reject rationalism on aesthetic grounds (4–6). For Rilke, who again opens the chapter, beauty needs to be transformative as well as interesting. This is what Martin calls her “Rilkean clause” (“there is no place that does not see”) that guides her as she moves forward (75–76).

In chapter 3, we see that Balthasar seeks to maintain real “drama” at all points, and that finite human beings are founded in the brilliant darkness of the infinite God, as ultimately unveiled in the bodily resurrection. “You darkness, where I come from,” says Rilke. This is often what Schelling and the Russians (especially Berdyaev) lose (see esp. 97–98). Bodily resurrection leads into Balthasar’s theocentric, Trinitarian eschatology (ch. 4). This is Rilke’s “real green, real sunshine, real wood.” In other words, bodily resurrection and eschatology are not opposed. In this, Martin is able to emphasize Balthasar’s complex view of time, which is ultimately harmonized in Christ (esp. 155–56), keying his eschatology to the anthropological and simultaneously rejecting Joachimite theologies (166–68). All is fulfilled in the self-revelation (apocalypse) of the Trinity on the Cross (ch. 5). That is, the poverty of God on the Cross, the powerlessness, reveals itself as true wealth and true omnipotence. Poverty is “luminous,” as Rilke says at the opening of the chapter. Here, Martin studies Balthasar’s commitment to theological hope (cf. 165), which is ultimately made sensible through a strong affirmation of divine simplicity, immutability, and impassibility (cf. 183). The chapter excavates Balthasar on one of his most controverted topics, which is the “hope” for all to be saved.

Martin’s work convincingly reveals Balthasar’s “principles of generosity” or “protocols for licit speculative theology,” which she names: epistemic reserve before the mystery of God (200), knowledge of God as always to be “located in its properly Christian context” (200), employing and being cautious toward a plurality of voices (201), and allowing the “mediatory capacity of cultural products” like the arts to function in theology (201–02). These are the characteristics that make Balthasar “as relentlessly uncompromising as he is generous” (199). For Martin, a fundamental analogue for Balthasar is Origen (21, 25–26, 202): both are steadfastly loyal to the Christian tradition and yet creative with it when they speculate.

Martin argues that Balthasar shows us that “there is a direct rather than inverse relation between fidelity to tradition and the capacity for creative, speculative thought” (37). In other words, the more

faithful to (and versed in) Christian tradition a theologian is, the more creative he or she is able to be. This upsets typical expectations, which often part ways with tradition in order to be creative. Martin's work also continually challenges typical expectations—in her case, those regarding Balthasar. She shows us how Balthasar's project is founded on the desire to “[rehabilitate] a sense of the suppleness and fluidity of tradition” (2). Again, this is also what Martin's book achieves through its careful attention to its task.

Though indeed demanding, Martin's book is immensely valuable for scholars looking to understand, evaluate, and expand the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. It is also a remarkable work of scholarship, simultaneously unveiling Balthasar's relationships to the Russian school and Schelling *and* unveiling Balthasar's theological method. By integrating the two, Martin avoids the temptation to create method out of instinct or wishful thinking. She is ever concrete in her study, engaging with Balthasar as he engages with others. What she reveals is the beauty of theology for Balthasar and in his work, and beyond his work. I give her the last word: “for Balthasar the theological task is simply to be as capacious as the Holy Spirit. It is structurally open, fundamentally creative, resolutely brave, and certainly not precious” (204). N&V

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The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas by Bernhard Blankenhorn, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), xxxiii + 495 pp.

THE DIONYSIAN PEDIGREE of high medieval mysticism is often noted but seldom detailed. Bernhard Blankenhorn's debut *The Mystery of Union with God* meets this lack with an accomplished analysis of Dionysian mystical union as adopted and adapted by the most prominent of its Dominican inheritors, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. The book bills itself as a work of historical theology; it is the right description, after all, just to the extent that Blankenhorn advances an argument by curating a section of the theological archive without becoming entombed therein. The section is, as the title suggests,

Dionysian mystical union in the thought of two of its thirteenth-century Dominican scions. And the argument? Attention to Blankenhorn's archival redisplay reveals that he thinks the intellectualist representation of Dionysian mysticism embroidered by Albert and Thomas—for whom Dionysius's "union beyond mind" is finally and principally intellectual, as opposed to affective—the most elegant.

The Mystery of Union with God unfolds in three asymmetrical parts. The first part begins with an expositional engagement with the *Corpus Dionysiacum* (hereafter, *CD*) on themes of anthropology, epistemology, divine naming, and mystical union. These are the nodes around which subsequent chapters on the Dominican Dionysius will coil. Among the book's greatest virtues (there are many) is the historiography displayed in the second chapter. There Blankenhorn lucidly traces the *CD*'s migration from its early Byzantine commentators—namely John of Scythopolis and Maximus Confessor—westward to its Latin translators and glossers. It is here that the book's argument, until now slinking in the subtext, begins to surface. Following others, Blankenhorn argues that Eriugena's translation of the *CD* into Latin (inadvertently?) inaugurates the affective reading that will come to typify the Victorine-Franciscan axis. "None of this can be found in Dionysius," Blankenhorn hastens to add. This "major transformation" acts to "radically reshape" the *Mystical Theology* in particular and "sharply contrasts with the historical Dionysius" in general (43; 46; 45; 444).

Enter Albert the Great, whose thought occupies part II. Chapter 3 assays doctrines apposite to mystical union in the Parisian Albert's work, itself a vertigo-inducing synthesis of Aristotelian, Augustinian, Dionysian, Avicennian, and Averroist patterns of thought. Forged in the heat of polemics issuing from the 1241 condemnations at Paris, Albert's position on the *visio Dei* integrates Dionysian axioms into a broadly Augustinian frame. This introduces the category of created theophany and, so, a created *lumen gloriae*, "the keystone that fuses what he holds to be of lasting value in the Greek and Latin patristic traditions" (106). This innovation, along with his emphasis on created grace, allows the early Albert to interpolate active modes of cooperation into Dionysius's largely passive grammar of union. Blankenhorn next arranges an exhaustive analysis of mystical union texts within Albert's Cologne-era commentaries on the *CD*. A deeper conversion to Dionysian theology marks this era—and this "in conscious opposition to the dominant, more *kataphatic* Augustinianism of [Albert's] day" (206). But Albert's commentaries foreground human coopera-

tion by means of the theological virtues and collapse “union beyond mind” into divine naming. To that extent, the argument runs, Albert’s interpretation still indulges a chastened *kataphaticism*.

With Albert in full view, Blankenhorn turns to Thomas. The first chapter of part III treats pillars of Thomistic anthropology, epistemology, and psychology. Playing Averroës to Albert’s Avicenna, Thomas de-Platonizes many of his teacher’s doctrines, even as he systematizes his own. Chapter 6 considers grace and its concomitants in Aquinas, and Blankenhorn stresses the fundamentally Trinitarian shape of mysticism in Thomas, whose defense of the intellect’s stayed presence in union is of a piece with his defense of *filioque*. The next chapter contributes to the literature on question 13 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae* with a comparison of relevant texts in Dionysius and Albert. The eighth and final chapter offers a sprawling, 124-page gloss on mystical union bits across Thomas’s corpus, a sweep that resists the summary distortions of a reviewer. Blankenhorn shows that Thomas’s *kataphatic* revisions of Dionysius do not just disclose Aristotelian anxieties. Rather, they betray the anxieties of a systematic theologian for whom the nature-grace and faith-reason distinctions cannot be abrogated. There’s much to admire in Blankenhorn’s subtle portraiture of Thomas’s Dionysius. Perhaps most attractive is his careful attention to the historical development of Aquinas’s theology throughout.

An inherent risk proper to the kind of story Blankenhorn tells is the temptation to render one’s protagonists the stronger by flattening other characters. If there exist any imperfections in his presentation, they are where he sometimes yields to this temptation. I offer two examples. The first has to do with Blankenhorn’s invocation of Maximus Confessor, whose undisputed texts are, by my lights, never substantively consulted (the footnotes suggest near total reliance upon the *Scholia* co-written with John of Scythopolis and secondary literature). Maximus’s name appears alongside Albert’s and Thomas’s absent concrete references to his texts. This risks attenuating the threat that the fiercely Christological and vigorously *apophatic* Maximian Dionysius poses to the Dominican one, as recourse to *Ambigua* 5, 15, and 21 or *Questions to Thalassius* 22 might reveal.

A second worry concerns Thomas Gallus, the veritable pied piper of the “Affective Dionysianism” Blankenhorn so distrusts. Gallus spent his intellectual efforts almost exclusively and obsessively commenting the *CD* three times over. But his efforts have long been misread and, so, mischaracterized as anti-intellectualist. It is a tag that

betrays a lack of sympathetic reading, and it is one that Blankenhorn unfortunately rehearses. The oversight is understandable: Gallus's texts are little known, often difficult, and largely untreated. But it is not finally defensible. At one point, Gallus is charged with a kind of mystical Joachimism evinced by his insistence upon the affective apex of union with God, which "may leave behind the Son's mission and center exclusively on the Spirit's" (74). This curious allegation might be chalked up to Albertian-Thomist anachronism—Gallus nowhere, to my mind, conceives mysticism according to the Trinitarian missions, as do Albert and Thomas. Why his affective rendering colors Gallus a mystical Joachite and not the Parisian Albert, who explicitly tethers his mysticism to the missions of the Son and the Spirit even as he insists at points upon the affect's (and so the Spirit's) primacy in union (110), remains unclear.

Still less clear is why Blankenhorn describes Aquinas's total eradication of noetic silence from the *Mystical Theology's* dark cloud as a "quiet" shift (323). "Quiet" and "quietly" consistently soften the Dominican interpretation of Dionysius—nothing like the "major transformation" of the Victorine-Franciscan affective reading of the same, here wholly alien to Dionysius (383). At best, such rhetorical excess intimates an animus against the affectivists, whose alleged interjection of love constitutes an aberration in the history of Dionysian reception. At worst, it makes bits of the book read like an intellectual paternity test. If the intellectualists (Albert and Thomas) stand for Blankenhorn as the rightful heirs to the Dionysian legacy, the affectivists (Hugh of St Victor, Thomas Gallus, and Bonaventure) are its bastards. I confess my fandom for the bastards. But why not admit that both traditions misread creatively? Must admiration of one entail short shrift of the other?

Still, these peccadillos do not amount to much. For students of Thomas, Albert, or medieval mysticism in general, *The Mystery of Union with God* is quite simply imperative. For all others it is enviable. This is, in large part, due to the fact that the book represents nothing less than a rigorous exercise in contemporary Scholasticism. About that last, postmodern scholarship has been highly critical, but Blankenhorn performs it eloquently. His prose stands crisp, precise, and unadorned, and his exegesis learned, cogent, and acute. This has the epiphenomenal effect of rendering many of his chapters intelligible *singillatim*—a rare and welcome gift for such a large volume. In short, Blankenhorn's treatment of mystical union in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas remains very nearly masterly, not to mention

materially unparalleled. Should his efforts here herald what he will teach us in the years to come, we have much to anticipate from Fr. Blankenhorn. N&V

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The Catholicity of Reason by D. C. Schindler (*Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013*), xiv + 358 pp.

BALTHASAR IS THE GUIDING LIGHT in this illuminating book, but Schindler takes his cue from Benedict at Regensburg. “The courage to embrace the whole breadth of reason” is what is wanted in both philosophy and theology. Those who set false limits on reason generate imperial forms of reason. “It is not,” insists Schindler, “the grandeur of reason but its impoverishment that leads to oppressive rationalism and the arbitrary irrationalism inseparable from it” (x). The antidote is catholic reason, “ecstatic” reason—reason that, like being itself, it always open to what is beyond it.

If I understand correctly, the goodness of being is to be found in its openness to God, and the goodness of reason likewise, which means that reason is essentially receptive both of God and of all creaturely being. For Schindler, the mind is not (as for Kant) “constitutionally lonely,” but rather constitutionally engaged with the creaturely other and the divine Other (42). That engagement is what prevents, or ought to prevent, the false modesty that only produces a self-enclosed and, as such, a “totalizing” form of reason—a form that hardly knows what to do with beauty and mystery and volition and love. The latter starts in the wrong place, or rather forgets where it actually started—that is, with the experience (per Balthasar’s meditation on the formation of consciousness) of the mother’s smile. It is just such forgetfulness that renders revelation problematic, that removes the element of surprise, that turns reasons into a cold and abstract calculation.

What Schindler wants us to recover is a sense of the rational soul as a privileged participant in being’s own ecstatic character. Being, just because it is open to God, is always itself “and more,” as is reason. The intellect anticipates its object, as Socrates and Plato knew, but is recast in the encounter. There is an *analogia mentis*, we might say, that constantly takes reason beyond itself, just as the *analogia entis* takes being beyond itself. In this, the rational soul is indeed the very

“paradigm” of being, for it shares in a privileged way in being’s being more than itself.

This kind of reason is not static but dramatic, and revelation belongs to the drama in which it participates—belongs to it primordially and in such a way that theology has priority over philosophy and metaphysics, yet without sublating the latter. This sounds, and is, a rebuke to Kant, to Hegel, and to Heidegger, against whom some telling blows are struck (not least in response to Heidegger’s posing of the problem of onto-theology, and Marion’s handling of it, too, for that matter). Schindler is not all rebuke, however, engaging his interlocutors (especially Heidegger) positively at many points. He does not suggest, as he might have, that perhaps their mothers smiled too little.

Following his mentor, Schindler experiments with the order of the transcendentals. Beauty leads and goodness and truth follow. Or, rather more traditionally, beauty appears as the confluence of goodness and truth, into which it leads us. He thinks we must correlate truth more closely with these other transcendentals and with being itself, finding its locus in “the concrete *Gestalt*” (105) and regarding intellection or understanding as a mutual act of being’s self-manifestation and of the receptive soul. (In a curious reading of Aquinas, *De veritate* q. 1, a. 1, he identifies truth itself as “manifestive and declarative being”[78].) We must also correlate all the transcendentals, and being itself with love. Even Thomists, he thinks, are prone to a fragmentation that tends toward a semi-Pelagian epistemology in which reason does its own independent work as a pre-condition for love and for the revelation that leads to the beatific vision. On his view, “the gratuity of revelation is intrinsic to, constitutive of, the integrity of reason, whether it be the revelation of being in its natural self-disclosure or the revelation of the triune God in history” (55).

Schindler’s treatment of catholic reason—curiously, the relation between “catholic” and “Catholic” is never specified, the subject being broached only on the book’s final page—is elaborated by nine essays in three sections: Truth and Knowledge; Causality; God and Reason. The essays are of independent provenance, with different original audiences, such that his arguments develop at an uncertain pace and without the systematic clarity one desires. Still, the book is full of insight and presents a number of interesting moves in its search for a “non-possessive” concept of knowledge grounded in love and wonder, rather than power (101), and for the “reciprocally excessive character of philosophy and theology” (308).

It is a difficult book to evaluate, but I think it fair to say that it is

more visionary than precise. The section on causality, for example, offers, in conclusion, a Dionysian synthesis of desire and generosity—an ecstatic and excessive generosity, a “radical generosity that provides the inner unity of the diverse orders of causality” (212). Perhaps the real challenge today is indeed to attempt some viable reintegration of these diverse orders, one that again and genuinely “gives cause to wonder” (163ff.). But this is the section’s final chapter, and it is not quite clear how such work is to proceed or how it is to embrace the natural sciences, for example, about which almost nothing is said.

To offer another example (cribbed from my colleague, Garth Green), if we are going to ask with Schindler how “the question of reason’s relation to God appear[s] when thought through the nature of beauty, goodness, and truth rather than simply through the analogy of being” (61), may we not expect more help in correlating the *analogia mentis* with the *analogia entis*? It must be added, since we are sounding a critical note, that terminological and conceptual clarity is often lacking and that conclusions are sometimes reached in un-philosophical haste. That, of course, is a danger in visionary works that may easily frustrate what they mean to inspire.

Perhaps a healthy dose of Anselm, who surprisingly makes no appearance at all, might have helped, though that is to set the bar for precision very high. The problem, however, lies not in the selection of sources, but rather in a Balthasarian flare for the juxtaposition of sources and ideas without the patient probing that a more analytical genre of essay demands.

The strengths and weaknesses of *The Catholicity of Reason* are on display in its final chapters, which return to the relation of philosophy and theology, of reason and faith, of natural and revealed knowledge. Schindler, unfortunately, manifests the common habit of treating these couplets (or their terms) as if they were more or less interchangeable. Philosophy and theology are disciplines, albeit disciplines that generally display a high degree of internal disunity, which makes it difficult to articulate their relation unless one specifies which philosophy and which theology one is talking about. Reason and faith are entirely different operations, though both are modes of receptivity. They are not peculiar to any discipline but essential to every discipline, albeit in quite different ways and forms, and either may (or may not) be aided by supernatural grace. As for natural and revealed knowledge, or (more specifically) natural and revealed theology, it is certainly not the case that one is the product of reason and the other not, but rather that one is the product of reason without

benefit of specific events of revelation and the other the product of reason in receipt of such benefits.

At times, it appears that Schindler knows all this, but too often his analysis is muddled by ignoring such distinctions. *Fides qua* and *fides quae* are run together, as are reason and the fruit of reason. His focus, however, is on the disciplines of theology and philosophy, which have, he says, a “reciprocally excessive character.” Each requires the other to scale its own heights, but their modes of exchange, of mutual giving and receiving, are different. Theology makes room for philosophy in a fashion analogous to the way that God makes room for the world, by kenotic or eucharistic *ascesis*. Philosophy makes room for revealed theology by way of a more Marian *ascesis*—by its *fiat mihi*. According to Schindler, “nature is fulfilled as nature precisely by what surprises it, that is, by the gratuity of grace” (“Hans Urs von Balthasar, Metaphysics, and the Problem of Ontotheology,” *Analecta Hermeneutica* 1 [2009]: 87). Likewise, philosophy is fulfilled by theology.

While there is much to commend in this scheme, there is also a tendency to obscure the differences between philosophy and theology—or rather simply to assume them, since these disciplines as such remain undefined—and what Schindler himself is doing at any given point is debatable. Some will say that he appeals to the “reciprocally excessive character” to justify this, others that he does so to cover for it. Tellingly, he will not even say whether *creatio ex nihilo* is a theological or a philosophical doctrine; one wonders whether he somehow needs it to be both and whether, at some level, the distinction between nature and grace is itself being obscured.

Be that as it may, there are other important issues here. Are we to assume that his characterization of God is right? And are we to pass over questions about the differences between the way God makes room for the world in creation and the way he makes room for it in redemption? These of course are theological questions, though a philosopher might also ask them. Analogous philosophical questions can also be put, even by those not averse to the Marian posture he prescribes for philosophy, a posture that may seem to some to make philosophy into theology. Has Schindler really put the relation between philosophy and theology in a new light, then, as he claims, or has he rather presented a sketch of his own theo-philosophical synthesis?

In sum, this is a stimulating book that can be read with much profit by both philosophers and theologians and is perhaps best read

in just such company. That is no small praise, even if neither (so my experience suggests) will be entirely satisfied. Those who expect it to raise penetrating questions will be more satisfied than those who expect it to resolve them. N&V

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One Body: An Essay in Christian Sexual Ethics by Alexander Pruss (*Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014*), ix + 465 pp.

ONE BODY IS A LARGE, ambitious, and impressive defense of traditional Christian sexual ethics. Its argumentative core is personalist (though dependent on some biologically oriented Thomistic considerations), while its stylistic debts are to analytic philosophy (which so loves imaginative examples: expected but unintended sexual arousal outside of marriage must be permissible sometimes, since it might occur while “rescuing attractive naked people from a burning building” [356]). Like most defenses of traditional sexual morality, *One Body* depends on a central argument whose consequences are then carefully applied to a wide range of cases. Alexander Pruss’s argumentative tenacity (*One Body* “bristles” with arguments, as they say) is extraordinary, and *One Body* will become a standard text in sexual ethics. Here I will concentrate on his central philosophical argument, leaving to one side the many particular applications, as well as his interesting, though subordinate, discussions of Christian revelation and tradition.

Each particular form of love is distinguished by the type of union or consummation that fulfills it. Sexual union, the consummation of erotic love, is, in turn, best understood as an objective “one-body union” (91). This one-body union of two distinct persons is a “biological” or “organic” union and not a literal or metaphysical union. Such biological union “requires coordination and striving for a common goal” (102). These claims are so far fairly benign, and now we must ask, given a standard case of non-controversially unitive sexual activity, what it is about this activity that yields a union as one body and a consummation of erotic love? And what is the common goal movement toward which produces this one-body union? (114)

Pleasure cannot be the common goal of sexual activity, in part because it is neither necessary nor sufficient for union. Even if one

or both persons are unable to feel sexual pleasure during intercourse (perhaps various nerve endings have been damaged), they still seem to be united as “one body”; adultery would be just as problematic despite an absence of pleasure. And if two people could experience sexual pleasure by means of the joint operation of some complicated machine, this would not entail a one-body union. But more importantly, “the most serious reason why striving for mutual pleasure is not what produces the union that romantic love seeks is that the conscious experience of pleasure does not, in itself, have an independent value” (118). Pruss follows Aristotle in arguing that pleasure “is enjoyment of an activity, and is given its form by the activity” (121). But “if sexual pleasure is an affective reflection of a deeper good, then surely it is the deeper good that is more appropriately seen as the goal of the unique striving, at least if the union to be produced is a deeper one—and romantic love seeks deep sexual union” (125). Sexual pleasure is good and should be present in full one-body sexual union, but its nature as pleasure points us to something deeper and more important, and so pleasure itself cannot be the distinctive unifying characteristic of unitive sexual activity.

The second possible cause and goal of one-body union is some higher-level purpose. The problem with higher-level goals is that the striving after these goals is not of itself “the striving that helps make two persons into one body” (128). “All of [these goals] set up the goal that is achieved by the mutual striving at a higher level than the biophysical. The goal in each case is something cosmic, spiritual, intellectual, volitional, and/or emotional. This does not make the union be a fleshly union as one body, since a single body is constituted by the striving of parts to achieve various goals at a biophysical level” (130). Not only is it often the case that a higher goal can be achieved in ways other than sexual union (meaning that the pursuit of this goal cannot specify one-body sexual union as such), but higher goals cannot, of themselves, offer any explanation of the nature or causes of sexual union, since the goal is itself non-sexual.

The third option, which Pruss embraces, is reproduction: “There is, indeed, a natural candidate for the goal toward which the two bodies strive in sexual activity, a candidate that satisfies the twin desiderata that the goal should be at a biological level, so that animals can have this kind of one-body union, and yet be humanly significant. This goal is reproduction. . . . What we see in uncontracepted intercourse, then, is a mutual organic striving for reproduction. . . . I am not claiming that successful reproduction is needed for sexual

union. . . . Rather, it is the bodies' mutual *striving* for reproduction that is involved in union" (132, 135–36).

If we grant that consummation is the culmination of romantic love's union and that this consummation is the mutual striving for reproduction, we now have the resources for defending a long-term personal and mutual commitment. Full organic union, though realized most perfectly in the active operation of the organ as a part of the whole, also includes a "normative aspect of the connection between parts of the body, a normative aspect that is also always present but does not require the united parts to be actually functioning. Rather, it requires each of them to have a directedness at one another. Commitment creates such a normative, teleological connection between individuals" (166). The relation between the eye and the rest of the human body involves more than active seeing; it includes a dense and permanent network of normative relations between the eye and the body such that the eye is part of a larger organic system and, as such, is always related to that system in the ways necessary for the activity of sight. Just so, argues Pruss, a one-body sexual union is only a genuine consummation of romantic love when it is placed within a personal, mutual, and exclusive commitment of the partners that provides the biological and personal requirements necessary for a genuine one-body union. An eye is normatively committed to the body, and vice versa, until "death"; one-body romantic union is likewise possible only when the partners are normatively committed to one another until death.

Pruss's argumentative strategy is a rich and persuasive one and perhaps the best philosophical strategy available to defenders of traditional Christian sexual ethics: each form of love is characterized by a particular kind of union; erotic love is characterized by sexual union; and this union is itself characterized by genuine, mutual, and exclusive striving for reproduction. The plausibility of this approach is evident if we take the thoughts in reverse: it is eminently reasonable that reproductive union is part of a remarkable (and deeply biologically natural) form of human togetherness. If sexuality is indeed meaningful, its most meaningful expression is the personal and biological union of a man and woman joined together in reproductive striving.

But this leaves us, nevertheless, open to some serious objections. Besides the social constructivism objection (sexuality is meaningful insofar as we give it meaning, and the range of possible meanings open to us is quite broad and certainly not constrained in any obvi-

ous way by biology), which Pruss acknowledges but does not address (79), the most important problem is this: granted that the union of reproductive striving expresses a unique form of love, we must also show that expressions of love that make use of human sexuality but do not express full reproductive striving are immoral. Not only are contraceptive sex, homosexual sex, extra-marital sex, masturbation, pornography, and so on *lesser* erotic experiences; they are also *forbidden* ones. I believe that Pruss's arguments against these practices (and he develops many, many arguments) depend on the following foundational argument. On the account of pleasure developed by Pruss, a pleasure is a perception of an apparent good. Sexual pleasure, therefore, is the perception of an apparent mutual striving for reproduction. But in all cases other than the central acceptable case of sexual intercourse, this perception is an illusion, and "the deliberate induction of sexual pleasure without a one-flesh sexual union, or only in conjunction with some variety of union that lacks the full value of a sexual one-flesh union (e.g., holding hands), is morally wrong. It follows that masturbation, oral sex, and anal sex, at least when done for the sake of sexual pleasure outside the context of unitive intercourse, are wrong. These activities divorce one from sexual and interpersonal reality by making one or one's sexual partner feel what is not there" (330).

Pruss acknowledges that it is fine in some contexts to "cheat" to bring about a pleasure without the particular good to which the pleasure is naturally joined, but then he claims that "in sexual contexts we need to hold ourselves to a higher standard of integrity in the treatment of our bodies and of each other than in many other activities" (334). Why is this? "In sexual union, a couple is united through their bodies. To cheat the body in that context is to oppose oneself to one's body, in a context in which one is trying expressly to unite with someone through that same body. In order for the biological union to be the basis for personal union, one must live the sexual union in an embodied manner, at least in respect of the sexual faculties" (336). The contracepting couple experiences sexual pleasure but has intentionally suppressed their reproductive striving, and so their personal union loses its appropriate biological foundation. In other words, if you want the personal union made possible by reproductive striving, you cannot actively frustrate the reproductive striving.

But this is insufficient for the couple who says they instead want the personal union made possible by the mutual enjoyment of their

reproductive faculties. We need to show that, in the case of our erotic lives, any and all “cheating” (intentionally causing sexual pleasure outside of the context of genuine reproductive striving) is not only deceptive (we already know this, if we grant Pruss’s Aristotelian account of pleasure), but destructive. I cannot see how to show this given the resources at Pruss’s disposal. Many of his arguments show that sometimes and for certain reasons it will be destructive and will frustrate genuine personal union, but this, of course, will leave open the possibility that, in many cases, the cheating is perfectly acceptable. As long as we respect and love our partner(s), we might say, we can achieve (a form of) erotic consummation through sexual expression. It is certainly a different expression than full reproductive striving, and perhaps it indeed results in pleasures that cheat in one fashion or another the natural connections between erotic pleasure and reproductive striving, but unless we have decisive reasons to avoid all such cheating, we are left with the possibility that such cheating is not bad—and might even be very good—and that the human relationships it makes possible are also good, and even, in their own way, as good as the most perfect mutual reproductive striving we can imagine.

I agree with Pruss in rejecting this conclusion, but I cannot see how *One Body* shows that it must be rejected. A homosexual couple will argue that sexual expression allows their relationship a type of erotic consummation that, though perhaps “cheating,” is nevertheless interpersonally rich and satisfying and, though certainly different from the union made possible by reproductive striving, is not obviously wrong, or even less good. I suspect that this problem exists not because we must do more philosophy—*One Body* is a remarkable accomplishment and should be standard reading for anyone thinking about sexual ethics—but instead because, when it comes to controversial moral claims, the devil is always in the concrete, lived details. This is a criticism of abstract sexual ethics as a whole and not just *One Body*, but it is also an acknowledgement of its limits and a pointer towards what we who would champion the challenging and rich tradition of Christian sexual ethics should still be looking for. N&V

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Heaven Opens: The Trinitarian Mysticism of Adrienne von Speyr by Matthew Lewis Sutton (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), xvi + 244 pp.

IN 1968, HANS URS VON BALTHASAR famously wrote the following lines: “On the whole, I received far more from [Adrienne von Speyr], theologically, than she from me, though, of course, the exact proportion can never be calculated. . . . Today, after her death, Adrienne von Speyr’s work appears far more important than mine.”¹ Such a powerful statement from one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century ought to give pause: who was Adrienne von Speyr, and what is so important about the writings that she has left to the Church? In his recent study, *Heaven Opens: The Trinitarian Mysticism of Adrienne von Speyr*, Matthew Sutton offers a scholarly and lucid answer to this pressing question. The careful work of this young scholar occasions a watershed moment in von Speyr studies and will demand the attention of anyone interested in the mystic’s life and work.

Sutton’s text has the merit of offering the first book-length introduction in English to von Speyr’s works and mystical experiences (besides, of course, the English translation of von Balthasar’s *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*). In a manageable eleven chapters spread over 244 pages, the author has achieved a noteworthy feat: he has provided a broad introduction to von Speyr’s voluminous work without sacrificing the depth that accompanies a more focused theological investigation. The lynchpin of Sutton’s success is his prudently chosen focus of study: the doctrine of the Trinity in von Speyr’s writings and mysticism. The selection of such an arterial theme for a theological study allows Sutton to touch all the essential threads that wind their way through von Speyr’s immense corpus of writings. In this sense, Sutton’s book harmonizes nicely with Balthasar’s explication of the many major themes in her writings given in his *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr* and his “General Introduction to the Posthumous Works” in *The Book of All Saints: Part One*.

Unfortunately, Sutton’s book lacks a thematic index, which would have certainly added to its appeal as a general introduction to von Speyr’s work. Nonetheless, it is appropriately structured according to the requirements of his theological inquiry, which necessitates that the remarks upon other threads of von Speyr’s thought are scattered throughout the chapters of the text. The author embellishes his chap-

¹ *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1981), 13.

ters with the poetry of T. S. Eliot, who was greatly impacted by von Speyr's *Commentary on John*.

A glance at the bibliography reveals that Sutton is working with over eighty published and unpublished works of von Speyr in the original German. He offers his own articulate English translations throughout the text, in consultation with those English translations already published. Importantly, the texts engaged by *Heaven Opens* include the entirety of von Speyr's posthumously published works (the *Nachlassbände*), which are of great importance for an understanding of her mystical and theological contribution to the Church despite the fact that they are unknown to most English readers. The breadth of von Speyr's sources employed by Sutton further secures the text's place as a reliable introduction to the whole of von Speyr's work. In refreshing opposition to some popular discussions of von Speyr, Sutton never cherry-picks quotes, but always understands particular passages in light of her whole oeuvre. The footnotes are strong and often locate apt places for future research.

After a thorough overview of von Speyr's life and work in chapter 1, chapters 2–3 provide a theological analysis of “von Speyr's theory and experience of Trinitarian mysticism” (3). Since the remainder of the book will address theological topics that form the content of von Speyr's mysticism (Sutton approvingly cites Balthasar's claim that her mysticism is an “experiential dogmatics”) these crucial chapters offer a “methodology of interpretation for the rest of the book” (85). A particularly insightful contribution of von Speyr's account of mysticism is her identification of two distinct aspects that constitute a mystical experience: the “subjective” and the “objective.” Sutton articulates the significance of these terms: “In using subjective mysticism, one tries to understand the mystical experience as it relates to the subject experiencing the heavenly object and also how that perceived object affects the subject. In using objective mysticism, one tries to understand the object revealed in itself” (49). A proper account of a mystical experience will entail a proper understanding of both aspects. The convergence of the subjective and the objective constitutes the drama of the mystical encounter of God and man, as well as the uniqueness of each mystic throughout the ages. For von Speyr, this encounter with the heavenly object is authentic only if it presents an unfolding of the revelation preserved and handed on by the Church. The spatial metaphor of the center and periphery of a circle is here used to great advantage in order to express the distinction between “necessary-for-salvation revelation” (center) and

“authentic mysticism” (periphery) respectively: “‘everything that stands in the periphery is a supplement and a decoration and must always be read from the center.’ Mysticism occurs on the periphery as supplement and decoration to the central revelation of the Trinity and the church. The value of the mysticism comes only from its interpretation in light of this center” (79). Nonetheless, “though mysticism is on the periphery of revelation, it must be allowed to pierce into the center with its new insightful understanding and its new fervent love” (*ibid.*).

The remaining chapters of the text assess von Speyr’s writings on the immanent Trinity (chs. 4–5), the economic Trinity (chs. 6–8), and two aspects of ecclesial life that flow from the Trinity (chs. 9–10). Chapter 4 sets the tone of Trinitarian discourse by establishing two principles important to von Speyr: “the economic Trinity provides the only viewpoint for the immanent Trinity,” and “the only substantive content of the mystical vision is the immanent Trinity, and this content commands all other aspects of the revelation of the heavenly world” (99–100). In chapter 5, Sutton evaluates von Speyr’s Trinitarian theology as a “love theology” that follows in the footsteps of Augustine, Richard of St. Victor, several contemporary theologians (the late Ralph del Colle among them), and others in affirming that “the divine essence is love, and love is the divine essence. Each Person is love because each Person is nothing but the divine essence” (104).

Those familiar with von Speyr will be gratified to see “obedience” and “mission,” two ubiquitous notions in von Speyr’s work, placed at the heart of the following chapters (6–8) on the economic Trinity. Chapter 7, the longest and perhaps most compelling of the book, features an exploration of the Son’s mission of obedience over the entire historical arc of his earthly life, death, and Resurrection. Sutton’s treatment of von Speyr’s theology of Holy Saturday persuasively defends the compatibility of her insights with the Catechism and contends that “von Speyr’s account . . . maintains that the Son even in the absolute night of forsakenness always has the essential beatific vision of the Father” (183).

Since von Speyr views the sacraments and the mysteries of Christian life as having their origin in the Trinity, chapter 8, on the Holy Spirit’s economic mission, leads seamlessly into chapters 9–10, on the sacraments and prayer, respectively. As Sutton writes, “the descent of the Holy Spirit is the insertion of the church into the triune life of love” (204). The sacraments are the primary means of this insertion;

they “are the outward gift of heaven to humanity and the inward return of humans to heaven” (210). The sacrament of confession takes pride of place in chapter 9, followed closely by the Eucharist. Readers familiar with von Speyr’s corpus of writings will again be pleased by the primacy of confession in this chapter, as it adequately reflects the importance of the theme of confession in von Speyr’s work as a whole: Sutton notes that “the importance of her thoughts on [confession] for her Trinitarian mysticism cannot be overstated” (*ibid.*). Chapter 10, on prayer, rounds out Sutton’s study by illustrating the extent of von Speyr’s Trinitarian hermeneutic. He quotes von Speyr, who writes: “Everything [including prayer] happens within the triune substance of God and can be traced back to it” (227). The Trinity, then, “is the foundational dialogue of prayer” (226). As the perfection of prayer, the Trinitarian dialogue is the perfect integration and simultaneity of contemplation and action.

While I found Sutton’s study to be essentially accurate and often quite penetrating, a slightly perplexing and potentially misleading aspect of the work surfaces in chapter 4 amidst his attempt to situate von Speyr’s understanding of the relationship between the economic and immanent Trinity within “the contemporary Trinitarian theological debate” (94). Sutton here employs three degrees of interpretation of Rahner’s famous Trinitarian axiom—“the ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity”—as the plot line for the contemporary Trinitarian debate. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (among others) is offered as an example of the minimalist interpretation of the Rahnerian axiom, David Coffey as an example of the moderate interpretation, and Adrienne von Speyr (and the Greek Fathers) as an example of the maximalist interpretation. Sutton’s reasoning for the last placement is the suggestion that von Speyr has an axiom of her own—“everything manifested by the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity”—in which she “is emphasizing the fullest possible identity between the Trinity’s economic and immanent life” (97).

Crucially, however, Sutton does not discuss or plot those interpretations of the relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity that would propose so close an identification of the two that the distinction between them all but disappears. It is precisely these latter interpretations that may arise in the reader’s mind as fittingly “maximalist” interpretations of the Rahnerian axiom, since it is they who truly emphasize “the fullest possible identity between the Trini-

ty's economic and immanent life" (97) through dissolving the immanent into the economic. As the remainder of chapter 4 shows, Sutton in no way wishes to confuse von Speyr with such interpretations. He clearly argues that von Speyr's own axiom "does not mean theologians should abandon the categorical difference between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. Rather, [it] means there is a new, open access to God as immanent Trinity" (ibid.). By suggesting somewhat naively that von Speyr is a maximalist interpreter of Rahner's axiom, he seems to mean that for her the economic Trinity gives us maximal access to the immanent Trinity while *presuming* the distinction between the two. Sutton's treatment of von Speyr's Trinitarian theology is better than the tool he uses to aid its explication in reference to the contemporary Trinitarian debate: while von Speyr's place on the Rahnerian plotline may bring confusion, it touches the rest of Sutton's effort hardly at all.

A Catholic theologian is undoubtedly acting properly when he exhibits a discerning attitude toward unconfirmed mystical experiences. Nonetheless, allowing such an attitude to slip into a skepticism that presumes a negative judgment without investigation can, in some cases, be more detrimental than an uncritical embrace of any supposed mystical experience. The corresponding requirement, then, to an attitude of discernment is surely an attitude of investigation in which the theologian takes steps to explore a mystical experience, to inquire whether the Lord is in fact expressing himself through a servant in such a fashion. With regard to Adrienne von Speyr specifically, Sutton's book gives English-speaking theologians a great deal of help in taking a first step towards such a discernment. N V

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Entering into the Mind of Christ: The True Nature of Theology edited by James Keating (Omaha, NE: Institute for Priestly Formation Publications, 2014), xiii + 268 pp.

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, Deacon James Keating is a very busy man. He is not only the Director of the Diaconate Office for the Diocese of Omaha; he also directs the Theological Formation Program for the Institute of Priestly Formation there, and now he has started this very welcome series exploring the intersection between solid Catholic

theology and robust priestly spirituality and practice. The title of this compilation is a hint of how each author will argue in his or her own way that to do theology truly is to assimilate the mind of the Incarnate Logos and, as such, *Entering into the Mind of Christ* contains ten solid essays. This collection of articles is preceded by a foreword by the President of Catholic University of America, John Garvey, as well as an introduction by the ubiquitous John Cavadini of Notre Dame.

Tracey Rowland is the Dean at the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Melbourne, and she opens with her question, "How Does Spirituality Supply Theological Study with the Correct Method?" The answer provided comes mainly from the many works of Joseph Ratzinger. In short, if theology is the task of beholding the divine, purity of heart is thus demanded for those who long to see God rightly: "Sound theological work requires a pure heart (the heart in this context being something like the place of integration for the intellect, will, imagination, passions, senses, body, and soul in pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the good)" (30). Solid Christology stands at the heart of her response to the question of how this is fostered, the only way true friendship between humanity and divinity is realized.

Fr. D. Vincent Twomey, S.V.D., taught morals for years at Maynooth College in Ireland and is now Professor Emeritus. He continues the mining of Ratzinger's riches with his "Ratzinger on Theology as a Spiritual Science," wherein he draws from the essential hermeneutical continuity of our rich tradition to show why Ratzinger is such an important link in the Church's way of seeing both God and the human person.

Daniel A. Keating, of Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, writes mainly on soteriological issues in the Fathers, and here his "The Essential Interrelation between Theology and Spirituality" takes from his masterful appropriation of the tradition. Drawing mainly from Louis Bouyer, Keating wants to help his readers avoid the "dryness" that inevitably creeps into the theologian's day. One can lose the wonder that originally arose with the discovery of theology, and Keating addresses how to approach the immensity of God in an intelligible way, how to navigate serious theological controversy, how not to be swamped by the larger culture and ever-oppressive media (anyone who has ever taught an undergraduate who has the History Channel in his or her dorm room will need Keating here), and how best to use theology in the kaleidoscopic life of a modern day university.

In my favorite essay of all, Sr. Gill Goulding, C.J., of Regis College at the University of Toronto, uses Hans Urs von Balthasar and the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola to help us see “Holiness of Mind and Heart: The Dynamic Imperative of Conversion and Contemplation for the Study of Theology.” The fullest of our epistemological capacities demands a life of prayer and study, the only means by which the creature will be elevated into the Trinitarian life. Michael Paul Gallagher, S.J., is now Emeritus at the Gregorian University in Rome and is currently serving as the rector of the Jesuit Bellarmine Community there. His “Realization of Wisdom: Fruits of Formation in the Light of Newman” focuses us on the sermons where Newman stresses both the importance of a theologically trained mind and a vulnerable heart longing to grow closer to God.

The essays in the second half of the volume are more directed toward seminarians still in priestly formation, and Monsignor John R. Cihak of the Archdiocese of Portland offers us “How Faith Forges a Reason Suitable for Theology According to Saint Bonaventure.” Cihak looks at the need to have one’s human intellect transformed by sanctifying grace, using the Seraphic Doctor to highlight the need for the Holy Spirit’s Gifts and Beatitudes. Fr. Chris Collins directs the Office of Mission and Identity at Saint Louis University. He has also worked extensively in Pope Emeritus Benedict’s thought, and his “Doubt and the Task of Theology in the New Evangelization” is an expert exhortation to God’s people for them to see their needs and lacks not as failures but precisely as the places (quoting Paul Claudel) where they are asked to cling to the Cross of Christ as their only hope. Peter Casarella teaches at the University of Notre Dame, and his “Priestly Ministry: Searching for True Life” draws heavily from Latino literature (e.g., Félix Varela’s *Letters to Elpidio*) to show an obvious but neglected point: the joyful and, thus, effective priest is he who administers through love and lives incessantly in a Spirit-filled gratitude. Larry Chapp retired from teaching theology at DeSales University to manage The Dorothy Day Catholic Worker Farm in central Pennsylvania. In “The Union of Sanctity and Theology in the Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Implications for Seminary Formation,” Chapp confirms that holiness must be recovered as a constitutive part of doing theology, that this theology must be Christologically-centered, and that this centering must, in turn, be rooted in an orthodox and ecclesial pronouncement of Scripture. A priest from Eichstätt, Germany, Emery de Gaál now teaches theology at Mundelein Seminary outside Chicago and rounds out this collection

with “The Unity of Spirituality and Theology in Priestly Existence: Joseph Ratzinger’s Homilies at a Newly Ordained Priest’s First Mass.” De Gaál very cleverly selects the homilies Ratzinger preached over many decades at various first Masses to show how Pope Emeritus Benedict (of all the things he could have preached about) chose to stress the priest as a fleshy, human conduit of Christ’s incarnate mercy. The paradoxical interplay between joy and the Cross and the beauty of the Church’s teaching on human dignity are themes that come to the fore.

This volume gathers an invaluable collection of theologically profound pieces. It will prove valuable to anyone taken with the convergence of Catholic theology and priestly spirituality in general and the thought of Ratzinger and von Balthasar in particular. **N&V**

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Union with Christ in the New Testament by Grant Macaskill
(Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 353 pp.

GRANT MACASKILL’S *Union with Christ in the New Testament* is an ambitious and rare work of New Testament scholarship. Rarely do modern scholars dare to suggest that the writings of the NT as a whole offer a cohesive vision of a topic as broad as union with Christ. Moreover, although there have been welcome moves in recent years recognizing the usefulness of reception history for understanding the NT, many modern biblical scholars accuse the writings of the patristic period of distorting rather than elucidating the Gospel message. But the rarest element of all in Macaskill’s work is his engagement with questions of ontology, particularly the ontology of the Incarnation. Even NT scholars whose work is in many ways compatible with traditional Christological orthodoxy often deny the legitimacy of using ontological categories for understanding the NT, dismissing them as foreign. It is the rare combination of approaches so often held apart or dismissed that makes Macaskill’s work so exciting and promising.

Despite the resistance his method is bound to encounter in some quarters, Macaskill makes an intriguing historical case for the legitimacy of treating the NT documents together in this manner. For all their obvious diversity, the writings of the NT come from a narrow historical timeframe as part of a movement unified, if by nothing else,

by allegiance to Jesus Christ. This historical and religious proximity alone warrants a comparative study of these writings to determine whether, amidst their diversity, they also evidence some unity of thought. As Macaskill shows, such a comparative reading by no means excludes consideration of other contexts. Indeed, one cannot fully grasp the relation between the writings of the NT without considering their broader historical setting.

The book divides into two parts consisting of five and seven chapters, respectively. In the first part Macaskill treats both reception history and the historical background of the concept of union with Christ. A survey of modern scholarship shows that discussions of union with Christ have been restricted, for the most part, to the field of Pauline scholarship. Within this stream of scholarship, however, there has been a wide array of approaches. Macaskill offers insightful summaries and analyses of the major works from Deissmann up to the recent work of Constantine Campbell. Among the more significant conclusions, Macaskill rightly notes the imprecision that plagues so much use of the term “apocalyptic,” as well as “mysticism” (though the latter has largely fallen out of favor in many circles).

The following two chapters focus on participation in the Greek Fathers and the Reformers, as well as Karl Barth. Relying on the recent work of Norman Russell, Macaskill traces the theme of deification in some of the major figures of the first five centuries of Christianity. This review yields a number of insights that inform his consideration of the NT documents in part II. In particular, he stresses the importance of the sacraments and ecclesial life in patristic accounts of deification and the ontological claims that undergird these accounts. The role of the sacraments is particularly significant in that it shows that patristic conceptions of deification were closely tied to the narrative of Christ’s death and Resurrection. As such, they are not simply derived from Platonic thought, as some allege. The concern for incarnational ontology surfaces also in the writings of the Reformers, for whom participation must be understood in light of a more fully developed trinitarianism. Additionally, the Reformers lay great emphasis on the personal presence of Christ, through which one must understand the forensic dimensions of their accounts of justification. Moreover, Calvin and Barth underscore the importance of covenantal categories for understanding the believer’s relation to Christ.

Chapters 4–5 explore the historical background to the notion of union with Christ, with chapter 4 offering a general survey and chapter 5 focusing on the question of Adam. Particularly significant for

Macaskill is the role of covenant, a central theme of the Old Testament, and the closely related notion of glory. Glory is commonly associated with the presence of God, principally in the temple. Macaskill shows, moreover, that these themes play an important role in apocalyptic thought, thereby (rightly) calling into question the dichotomy so often posed between apocalyptic and covenant. No less bold is Macaskill's discussion of messianism in general, and more specifically a messianic reading of the Isaianic servant. With respect to Adam, Macaskill argues against Dunn and others that most traditions concerning the glory of Adam post-date the New Testament and are actually derived from associations of glory with the presence of God in the temple and that, thus, Adam traditions are of little use for understanding union with Christ in the New Testament.

Having explored the foreground and the background of union with Christ, Macaskill turns in part II to the NT documents themselves. The opening chapter (ch. 6) deftly shows how both temple and body function as governing images for union with Christ across a wide swath of NT material, including both undisputed and disputed Pauline letters, 1 Peter, and the Synoptic tradition. The two images often complement one another, as for example in 1 Corinthians. Macaskill offers an intriguing proposal with regard to how this association came about. Noting that a number of NT texts draw on Psalm 118:2 for temple imagery, he points out a commonly recognized pun in the Hebrew of the psalm between the "stone" (*'eben*) and the "son" (*bēn*). Significantly, Jesus is presented as drawing on this Psalm in the parable of the vineyard, a parable set against the backdrop of his action in the temple. Macaskill suggests that, particularly in light of the Resurrection, early Christians drew on this connection to see Jesus not only as the Son but also as the cornerstone of the new temple. This reading has considerable explanatory power and merits further consideration.

Temple imagery functions in different ways in other NT writings, particularly the Johannine corpus and Hebrews, with different connotations. In the Gospel of John, temple language shapes his account of the Incarnation: the body of the Messiah is the temple of the Logos, the presence of God on earth. For Macaskill, John's incarnational theology bears affinities with the later theology of Athanasius, with the presence of God serving to divinize humanity. While an accurate account of John's Christology, this section could have been more fully fleshed out. Surprisingly Macaskill treats neither John 7:37–39 nor John 19, with their allusions to Ezekiel's temple vision, or the

potential implications of John 7 for union with Christ. The accent of Hebrews falls on Christ's role as high priest in the heavenly temple. The text does not have the common Pauline "in Christ" language, but it does, on Macaskill's reading, emphasize the importance of Christ's humanity and divinity in establishing communion between human beings and God. Macaskill rightly recognizes the importance of temple imagery in the last two chapters of Revelation, as well, but puzzlingly claims, "the account does not provide a temple-governed image of human participation" (187)—an odd statement to make in light of Revelation 3:12 (a verse discussed nowhere in the study).

Chapter 8 treats Baptism and Eucharist. Macaskill argues that these sacraments, which appear in some of the earliest strata of the NT, most likely played a pivotal role in shaping the NT understanding of union with Christ. Given the weight Macaskill attaches to these sacraments, the analysis of some of the texts is disappointingly brief, particularly baptismal passages. Moreover, Ephesians, which plays such a prominent part earlier in the study, receives no mention in this chapter despite the close connection the letter makes between baptism and the unity of believers. One might also have expected the baptismal traditions of 1 Peter to receive treatment here, rather than in a later chapter.

The Lord's Supper traditions receive a more substantial discussion. Macaskill rightly notes both the constitutive role this sacrament plays in union with Christ and its close connection with the working of the Spirit. As the words of institution show, the Eucharist is heavily shaped by covenantal categories. Given its centrality in early Christian praxis, then, Macaskill plausibly suggests that covenant is a crucial lens through which to view the NT presentations of union with Christ.

Chapter 9 treats a variety of participatory elements in the Pauline corpus. Building on his analysis of temple imagery and the covenantal framework of the Lord's Supper, he argues that covenantal categories play a significant role in Paul's thought. Indeed, the notion of covenant lies in the background of adoption language in Galatians, as well as the images of new creation and the Spirit in both Galatians and 2 Corinthians. In addition, Macaskill argues for a close connection between glory, the image of God, and noetic healing, themes noted by patristic figures like Irenaeus and Athanasius. But noetic healing and new creation are brought about through participation in Christ's crucifixion, the heart of union with Christ for Paul. Suffering and faith thus go together in Paul's vision.

Noetic healing by means of revelation plays a significant role in the Johannine writings as well, which constitute the subject of chapter 10. In John, this healing comes about through union with Christ, in particular through the personal presence of the Son and the Spirit. This emphasis on revelation is evident in the “I am” sayings, which indicate both the Son’s divinity and his role as the revealer and eschatological messiah. His personal presence calls forth a response of faith and obedience, as well as love, characteristics of those united with Christ. This love is to be embodied in the Christian community, a community marked by the glory of God’s presence (John 17).

Although union with Christ is less prominent in other writings of the NT, chapter 11 briefly surveys some of those texts, finding themes similar to those in Paul and John. First and Second Peter receive the bulk of the discussion, taking up roughly half of the chapter. Once again, Macaskill finds covenant, revelation, and suffering as key ideas connected with participation. Likewise, martyrdom in the Book of Revelation is cast in a participatory mode. Since the most significant passages for union with Christ appear in the Last Supper narratives, the Synoptic Gospels receive briefer treatment. The passages discussed, the easy yoke of Matthew 11 and the teaching about the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, are surprising. While it is true that both texts have apocalyptic and revelatory themes elsewhere associated with participation, they are not the most obvious passages illustrating union with Christ. Moreover, in light of the significance of suffering in Paul, 1 Peter, and Revelation, it is puzzling to see no mention, let alone discussion, of Mark 8:34 and parallels, one of the clearest calls to participation in Christ’s Cross.

A concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the study under eight categories, emphasizing how central union with Christ is for the NT as a whole. In light of some of the themes Macaskill highlights, it is surprising how little attention Colossians receives throughout the work, given that it combines notions of union with Christ, image Christology, suffering, noetic healing, and baptism. More also could have been made of marital imagery in texts such as Ephesians 5 and the culminating vision of the Book of Revelation, and a discussion of Paul’s vision on the road to Damascus (“Saul, why do you persecute me?”) would not have been out of place.

These omissions notwithstanding, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* is a welcome contribution. Its refreshing openness to ontological questions and boldness in bringing together approaches too often held apart are a hopeful sign of real progress in the field of

theological interpretation. One hopes that such openness will inspire others to further the work of bridging the gap between biblical studies and theology. N V

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