

Book Reviews

Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell by Alyssa Lyra Pitstick (*Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007*), xvi + 458 pp.

ALYSSA LYRA PITSTICK'S revised Angelicum dissertation on Balthasar's theology of Christ's descent into hell hardly needs introduction after her debate with the Jesuit Edward Oakes in *First Things*. Few newly minted doctors have garnered such attention in the theological community. Yet the international debate can easily move in one of two directions: either a polemical war focusing on claims of heresy or orthodoxy, or a much more serious dialogue that centers on how Balthasar's key philosophical principles, biblical and patristic exegesis, and theological tools come together in his doctrine of the descent. The nature of Pitstick's argumentation places us at this crossroads, whence Balthasar's critics and defenders must choose a path.

Perhaps the most disappointing part of the book is the author's treatment of Scripture and the Fathers. She does not engage contemporary exegetical studies on the key biblical passages. Rather, she focuses on select patristic, medieval and magisterial commentators. She does not adequately acknowledge the immense exegetical difficulties surrounding 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6. Her treatment of numerous Old Testament texts tends to focus on the allegorical meaning, with little attention given to the literal sense (for example, Hosea 13:14). Such a methodology would be hard to justify even in Thomistic exegesis, where the allegorical sense depends on the literal sense.

Pitstick also hesitates to acknowledge a real diversity of interpretation among the Fathers. For St. Justin Martyr and St. Irenaeus, Christ's descent into hell was an act of liberation for the deceased righteous persons of the Old Testament.¹ For St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen, 1 Peter

¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho* 72; Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 3.20.4, 4.22.1, 4.33.1, 4.33.12, 5.31.1.

3:19 refers to Christ preaching to the deceased of Noah's generation in order to convert them, preparing the way for universal salvation.² For St. Augustine, it refers to the pre-existent Christ preaching to Noah's contemporaries *within* their lifetimes, whereas the descent of Christ's soul into hell was only for the liberation of the just.³ Pitstick hardly mentions this patristic debate. Rather, she concludes that "the traditional Catholic doctrine" presents Christ *only* descending to the limbo of the righteous. But it could be that Christ's victory procession through the realm of the damned (without a final offer of conversion) is the very teaching of 1 Peter 3:19. None of the magisterial documents that Pitstick cites seem to exclude the latter interpretation proposed by some of the Fathers. Ironically, despite all of their differences, the Fathers agree that Christ's descent was triumphant. By acknowledging this diversity, the author actually would have strengthened her case that Balthasar's doctrine clashes with the Fathers on central points. For while they diverge significantly on the nature of Christ's descent, none of them comes close to Balthasar's vision.

The book's stronger arguments are found in part two, which presents her synthesis and analysis of Balthasar's proposal. She consistently points to the absence of an adequate doctrine of analogy in Balthasar. This absence can be discerned in multiple theological themes, such as (1) Balthasar's original vision of intra-Trinitarian life that remains inexplicable without three divine intellects and wills (115–24); (2) his tendency to collapse the immanent and economic Trinity (chapters 7–8); or (3) his perplexing exegesis of the Letter to the Philippians on the kenosis of the Son and the Father (148–51). Balthasar's Barthian vision of kenosis seems to go hand-in-hand with voluntarist notions of obedience and freedom (150–52, 157–64, 212–13, 227–29, 238). She clearly shows Balthasar's programmatic connection between the portrayal of Christ's experience in hell and the portrayal of the inner life of the Trinity (chapters 6–8). She demonstrates the consequences of an event ontology replacing a substance ontology (chapter 7, esp. 154–55, 198–202, 214–15). For example, Balthasar appears to transform sin into a positive metaphysical reality, instead of the classical deficiency of being (122–23). She suggests that for Balthasar, Christ's charity becomes virtually insignificant for the work of redemption, having been replaced by an ultra-juridical approach (109, 113). She points to Balthasar's apparent willingness to dismiss key elements of the patristic and artistic traditions on the descent, not to mention the subtle yet immense

² Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, 6.6; Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.5.3; Cf. W.J. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18–4:6* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 29–32.

³ Augustine of Hippo, *Epistle to Evodius* (Epistle 164), 21.

changes Balthasar introduces into various patristic doctrines (96–97, 113). Pitstick's meticulous research also highlights many possible tensions within Balthasar's own thought, such as inconsistencies in his theology of Redemption, where Christ's suffering goes well beyond solidarity with sinners and can no longer be imitated by the saints (99–112, 253, 271).

The author's explicit intention is to deal with the doctrinal issues in Balthasar's thought, not its sources. Yet one does wonder to what extent an archeological approach to the Swiss theologian might advance a doctrinal analysis. Pitstick hardly mentions two of Balthasar's crucial sources: Adrienne von Speyr's private revelations and Martin Luther's doctrine of substitution. Granted, the key text on this topic from von Speyr remains virtually inaccessible. At the heart of his Holy Saturday teaching in *Mysterium Paschale*, Balthasar simply mentions in a teaser of a footnote: "On all this, A. von Speyr, *Kreuz und Hölle* (privately printed, Einsiedeln, 1966)."⁴ As Peter Casarella recently pointed out, von Speyr's influence on Balthasar's doctrine of the descent only increased in his later years.⁵ While the two colleagues undoubtedly influenced one another, von Speyr's proper contribution to their collaboration also greatly influenced Balthasar's portrayal of Christ's experience on the Cross and the dramatic life of the Trinity, two doctrines that are closely connected to that of the descent. It would seem that the answer to the question, "where do these doctrines come from?" could be a tremendous help in pondering the question, "how tenable are these doctrines?" For example, Pitstick identifies the doctrine of quantitative atonement as a problematic premise in Balthasar. But is quantitative atonement simply the justification Balthasar uses for his excessive reliance on one aspect of von Speyr's private revelations? Does the theology follow the visions, or at least seek its justification in their concreteness? Or does the theology shape the interpretation of the visions, which surely cannot be direct windows into Christ's consciousness in hell that are easily translatable into human language? What is the determining factor behind Balthasar's conclusions?

The author concludes part two with a synthetic interpretation of Balthasar, showing the close connection between his theology of the descent and still other key doctrines, including creation, ecclesiology, eschatology, Mariology and especially soteriology. The difficulties she manifests in Balthasar's Christology have ripple effects throughout his thought. Still,

⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, trans. by Aidan Nichols, O.P. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 185, fn 87.

⁵ In his paper "The Descent, Divine Self-Enrichment, and the Universality of Salvation," presented at the conference "Love Alone Is Credible: Hans Urs Von Balthasar As Interpreter Of The Catholic Tradition," April 14–17, 2005.

the greatest problems continue to be found in his Christology and Trinitarian theology. But the author's evaluation of the Swiss theologian is more analytic than synthetic. Throughout the work, she interrupts her own skillful synthesis of Balthasar's thought with very pointed critiques. At times, she seems to leave him little room to speak. In the end, her polemics set up an obstacle to a just evaluation of Balthasar's thought. She does not show how some of his insights might at least highlight the ways in which Christology still needs to develop, even if Balthasar's original proposal for such a development is not altogether successful. Does Balthasar really have nothing to teach us about Christ's suffering and death?

For example, while Balthasar's vision of the Father's radical abandonment of the Son on Good Friday and Holy Saturday seems to go too far, is it not too hasty of a judgment to propose Christ's constant beatific vision in via as a settled teaching of "the tradition" (171), when in fact it was a scholastic consensus that followed a real diversity of patristic positions? Despite Aquinas's insistence, it is not clear that Christ's constant beatific vision is the necessary consequence of the Johannine Prologue, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, as no less an authority on medieval Christology as Jean-Pierre Torrell has pointed out.⁶ Could it be that a lower Christology which refuses some of Balthasar's more adventurous speculations might present a more adequate account of the biblical witness as read through the great Christological dogmas? Was the communion that Christ's human soul enjoyed with the Father during the Transfiguration essentially the same as during the Passion?⁷

Despite her disappointing treatment of Scripture and homogenous reading of the patristic tradition, Pitstick's relentless critique demonstrates that Balthasar's doctrine of Christ's descent into hell is hard to reconcile with important elements of the liturgical, artistic, theological, and magisterial traditions, both eastern and western. Strangely, a more objective synthesis of Scripture and the Fathers would lend greater support to some of her critiques.

⁶ See his *Le Christ en ses mystères: La vie et l'oeuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*, vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée, 1999), 135–42; idem., "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et la science du Christ : Une relecture des questions 9–12 de la 'Tertia Pars' de la 'Somme Théologie'," in his *Recherches Thomasiennes* (Paris: Vrin, 2000), 198–213.

⁷ See the recent debate between Thomas Joseph White, O.P. and Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap.: White, "The Voluntary Action of the Earthly Christ and the Necessity of the Beatific Vision," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 497–534; Weinandy, "The Beatific Vision and the Incarnate Son: Furthering the Discussion," *The Thomist* 70 (2006): 605–15. The best synthesis of Aquinas's doctrine of Christ's beatific vision during the Passion is found in Matthew Levering's *Christ's Fulfillment of Temple and Torah: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, 2002), 58–79.

One hopes that the Balthasarians will look past the author's extreme polemics and recognize a serious, scholarly challenge to various aspects of their master's overall theological method, not to mention his Trinitarian theology and Christology. A balanced, critical engagement with Balthasar by disciples and critics would move the discussion towards an increasingly fruitful and genuine theology of the Paschal Mystery. **N V**

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Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychosocial Sciences by Craig Steven Titus (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006*), xii + 411 pp.

A BOOK of four hundred and seventy pages, with a plenitude of footnotes, synthesizing several disciplines, psychosocial science, philosophy, and theology is rather daunting and an excellent challenge for the reader (and this reviewer), Thomist or not. Fr. Benedict Ashley writes on the back cover that "I know of no other reading of Aquinas's treatment of fortitude that is more thorough and nuanced." He is certainly correct.

Resilience is composed of three parts (ten chapters) all combining Aquinas's virtue theory and resilience research. Part one looks to the issues of resilience as such in tandem with Thomas's philosophy of the emotions and moral development. Part two examines more thoroughly the Thomistic vision of the virtue of fortitude and resilience from a more philosophical perspective. Finally, part three examines fortitude and resilience from a theological perspective, not excluding reason but seeing it from the point of view of revelation.

The beginning of the book, Titus sets up the thematic he will be covering. Why is it that suffering, difficulties, failures, negative experiences become the stuff of growth or regress in the life of a person? What is constructive to one person becomes demoralizing to another. Chapter one takes up the question: what are the causes of either success at integration or disintegration of the human personality? Resilience as a word comes from steel's ability to resist destruction. Psychosocial thinkers use the metaphor to study why and how certain people do not implode when faced with moral or physical challenges.

After summarizing authors of the field too numerous to mention in this review, Titus gives a definition of resilience from their point of view:

First, resilience is the ability to cope in adverse conditions; it either minimizes or overcomes hardships. Second, it consists in resisting

destructive pressures on the human person's physiological, psychosocial and spiritual life; that is, it maintains capacities in the face of challenges, threats and loss. Third, resilience creatively constructs and adapts after adversity; it implies recovering with maturity, confidence, and wisdom to lead a meaningful and productive life. (29)

In chapter two, again summarizing psychosocial thinkers, Titus shows that temperament, emotion, intelligence, family ties, religion, and the environmental factors surrounding a child all have a part to play in aiding or hindering resilience whether in extreme or ordinary cases of trials and difficulties of life.

Chapter three is a summary review of the fundamental moral theology of St. Thomas: the ultimate end of human beings, human acts, the role of the emotions and virtue, human inclinations to good ends, grace and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Of course, this presupposes faith, but human experience is also involved in knowing about virtue and character formation. The psychological scientist's studies and findings become a supplement to moral theology's conclusions. Aquinas's virtue theory especially enables one to understand the moral life far more deeply than a norm-driven moral theology, which can lead people into moral minimalism.

In part two, Titus attempts to integrate resilience studies with Aquinas's treatment of the virtue of fortitude, which is both a general and a specific virtue. Resilience can resemble this virtue in many ways. As a general virtue, it looks to dealing with lesser difficulties of life and is a condition for all virtues; as a specific virtue, it is courage in the face of death and its attendant fears. He then gives a schematic calling magnanimity and magnificence the virtues of initiative taking, while calling the virtues of resisting the traditional patience, longanimity, perseverance, and constancy. In both cases, he goes on to show that the virtuous person needs strength of mind, affection and action in pursuing a just cause. From the field of psychosocial science the words used to describe fortitude are hardiness, dauntlessness, intrepidity, pluck, spirit, heroism, daring gallantry, bravery, valor, bravado, security, self-confidence, self-efficiency. The emotions opposed would be panic, phobia, rashness, recklessness, and indifference. Mastering future fears is the stuff of fortitude. Living by unreasonable fear produces laziness, shamefacedness, shame, amazement, stupor, and anxiety, all of which are explained by Titus. To overcome fear one needs to act with reasoned daring or patient endurance, the latter being the primary act of fortitude. However, experience and calm reflection, friendships and self-confidence have very important roles to play in overcoming obstacles by the virtue of fortitude as well.

Chapter five analyzes Aquinas's notions of magnanimity and magnificence in face of achieving great goods in all matters for self and great goods for others. Truly humble people need doses of these virtues lest they tumble into doing nothing but self-abasement (which Titus speaks about at length in chapter eight). It requires confident risk-taking, special concentration because the objectives are not easy. Later in the chapter, Titus brings out how the desire for great deeds revolves around the notion of honor and the desire to pursue excellence according to one's capacities. In an interesting side-bar from psychosocial science, Titus summarizes some findings about optimists and pessimists in this section that aid in understanding success and failure at certain projects. Taking up Aquinas again, Titus shows how false hopes, presumption, despair, insecurity, and faintheartedness derail certain projects as well as the life of virtue itself. Likewise, vainglory, ambition, and false humility bring about over self-confidence, self-complacency, and ultimate failure in many ventures. In conclusion, resilience or true fortitude is needed to "build life in the face of difficulty, but also [to] face the difficulty of building."

One small criticism of this almost perfect book may be in order now. On page 190, he mistakenly puts the passion of hope in the concupiscible function of the sensible appetite whereas Thomas puts it as part of the irascible function.

Chapter six leads the reader to consider the challenge of "staying power" when pain, suffering, loss, loneliness, and the many injustices of life come upon someone. The solution is learning how to cope with the onset of anxiety, torpor, apathy, and depression by means of the virtues of endurance: patience, perseverance, constancy, and longanimity. While these virtues are distinct, they come down to "holding fast" and not letting sorrow lead one to give up the challenge of virtue and more immediate tasks requiring long-term effort. Persisting firmly is not possible for persons given disproportionately to play, relaxation, and rest, because they cannot "endure toil." While resilience researchers rarely use these terms from Aquinas, their solutions come close to his virtue theory and his solutions to dealing with sadness are also similar to resilience thinkers: reasonable pleasures, emotional venting, receiving sympathy from friends, contemplation of truth, and refreshment through sleep and baths.

In part three, Titus looks at resilience and fortitude from a faith perspective, that is, seeing how grace and the theological virtues influence fortitude and resilience. In other word, what happens when God becomes involved in living out these virtues? Hence, the title for this last section is "Fortitude and Resilience Transcended."

Chapter seven makes clear that Titus accepts the Thomistic notion of infused cardinal virtues that come with grace. As he puts it: "Infused fortitude

does not make acquired fortitude redundant; nor does acquired fortitude make infused fortitude superfluous" (280). Rather infused fortitude brings a supernatural dimension to the natural virtue by giving it a motive, namely, the love of God, martyrdom being its most profound expression. The martyr does not commit suicide but rather chooses willingly to die for the truth of faith, that is, he loves Christ more than the good things of this life.

Chapter eight returns to fortitude as endurance only this time, under grace that is, the human person imitates God and by grace collaborates with God in the face of fear or sorrow. That means that a person has to hope in self and yet "under God withal." Magnanimity, a virtue of "greatness of spirit" in doing great works, looks to the greatness of grace to achieve a great work. As Titus knows, Christianity is not all pardon, love of enemies, and soft love, but also has a corrective here. This is not an egocentric virtue because it looks outward to others including God. And it mobilizes one to face risk and the challenges of possible failure by hope in divine assistance and not mere glory and honor from human beings.

Chapter nine analyzes the Christian response to pain, suffering, and sorrow, which for Aquinas is patience and perseverance. Titus provides a Christological explanation of these virtues, as Jesus showed humans how to endure what is impossible to accomplish by human efforts alone. Suffering becomes the occasion of patience which endures, though at times one must also strike out against certain evils. This of course requires prudence to know when to turn the other cheek and when to attack. Titus calls it "intelligent" patience.

Chapter ten summarizes his findings and offers a neat and tidy synthesis of his work.

My only quibble with his masterpiece is that from chapter six until the end of the book, he at times seems to conflate the infused cardinal virtue of fortitude with the gift of the Holy Spirit called fortitude. The two gifts are distinguishable. He says as much on pages 291–92. The infused virtue enables the person to organize his or her actions for the glory of God under reason and faith's tutelage, which spiritual theologians will call the human mode. The gift of the fortitude, on the other hand, is an impulse/inspiration directly under the Holy Spirit which goes beyond reason and enables one to do a heroic act of virtue in the divine mode. This was the reason why Thomas insists that these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation, because we sometimes face impossible situations requiring more than reason and human effort can understand and accomplish (cf. *ST* I–II, q. 68, aa. 1–8).

The excellence of the scholarship and the brilliance of exposition will make this book a certain read for many years to come. He is to be

congratulated for his own work of resilience and magnanimity in writing such a tome. N-V

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The Soul of the Person: A Contemporary Philosophical Psychology by Adrian J. Reimers (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006*), 301 pp.

ADRIAN REIMERS begins with a familiar story: materialists argue that matter and the laws of its interaction are all there is; most especially, what tradition has called the “soul” is nothing more than the visible effects of the brain, “a physical system different from other physical systems only in its degree of complexity” (9). Reimers, drawing on Aristotle and Aquinas, John Paul II, Charles Sanders Peirce, and sympathetic Anglo-American philosophers like David Braine, responds in *The Soul of the Person* with a contemporary reformulation of human nature as both material and spiritual. He hopes thereby to defeat rival materialist accounts (as well as, though they are not the main target, dualist accounts) and reveal the essential spiritual characteristics of the human person.

According to Reimers, our distorted contemporary pictures of the physical and the spiritual hinder our abilities both to understand and to accept a classical hylomorphic account of the human person. Therefore, after an introductory chapter, chapters two and three work to give us a clearer picture of what we ought to mean by the material and the spiritual, preparing the way for understanding human nature as involving both. Chapters four and five focus on the two most important powers of the human person, our powers to know and to strive for the good, arguing that their exercise both requires matter and transcends it. Finally, chapter six focuses on the metaphysical grounds of what has gone before, and a short epilogue offers a few thoughts on the afterlife.

For Reimers, the material is most properly characterized in terms of pure reactivity (61): “In virtue simply of a thing’s being material, all we can say is that it has, at some place and time, interacted with something else” (47). But a material thing is also one sort of existing thing, and “the existence of things,” wrote Peirce, “consists in their regular behavior” (46). Again drawing on Peirce, a habit is “any regular behavior of a thing” (49). Therefore we can say that the existence of material things consists in their habits, their regular behavior. This regular behavior is what we mean by “essence,” and is reflected in scientific laws and classifications

that bring under the same name material things that manifest the same behavior. In understanding material things as law-governed (and therefore having essences), we have already gone beyond the crudely material, but not in a way particularly helpful for belief in the human soul. Indeed, materialism claims that the existence (regular behavior) of all things is explicable by the sorts of laws that explain material things; such laws, reflecting the pure reactivity of material things, govern objects deterministically and, at least in principle, predictably. It will be Reimers's argument that human beings transcend the reactivity of materiality through the free and creative development of their habits, leaving at least a part of human nature ungoverned by the deterministic laws that govern purely material beings.

To be spiritual, on the other hand, "is to be governed by ideal, rather than material (or physical) factors." And *ideal* means "some sort of desirable future state, condition, or value that guides [i.e. governs] the actions of those who adopt it" (64). As opposed to the pure reactivity of the material, the spiritual sees and pursues what is not itself present (what is in the future and thus itself purely mental, that is, spiritual), whose identification and pursuit therefore transcend mere physical reactivity. Such activity depends on "two further, fundamental concepts: goodness (or the good) and truth (or the true)" (66). What is spiritual pursues a particular future goal (and therefore sees it as good) and must consider this goal as realizable (as possibly true). The spiritual consists in being related to truth and goodness, and this relatedness in turn reveals spiritual aspects of reality that transcend pure reactivity and physical laws.

Reimers now turns to human nature as embodied spirituality, focusing first on our power to know. Knowledge requires belief, and for Reimers "a belief is a disposition of mind toward action. . . . One holds a belief to the degree that one is prepared to act in a certain way, according to the belief" (96). As such, beliefs are necessarily ordered to truth, for only if the belief corresponds with reality will the knower succeed in acting upon it. Although Reimers then outlines a variety of embodied spiritual activities found in perception, practical work, and reasoning, the central spiritual activity of human beings is our ability to hypothesize (131). In hypothetical reasoning, we transcend mere reactivity (represented here by deductive reasoning) by leaping to a new creative hypothesis not entailed by any previous experience. Most importantly, the act of asserting the truth of any proposition is itself a form of hypothetical reasoning and goes beyond material reactivity, for "the ability to assert the truth requires more than the bare mechanisms of material interaction. By asserting truth one joins to his naturally conditioned experience the general conception of the

intellect and unifies these in an existential affirmation, one not compelled by strict deductive [or, we might say, reactive] necessity" (135).

In human pursuit of the good we notice first that human actions are not determined by our appetites but instead are a result of free choices among appetites. This is possible because we not only pursue goods, but pursue them as good and therefore as tending towards the ultimate or highest good. Further, among the basic human goods towards which we are attracted and among which we choose is the good of truth, and, as we saw above, truth is a spiritual good. But if there is at least one non-material good, there might be others. Further, the criteria we use to choose between material and spiritual goods in our lives cannot themselves be material: "Human beings value truth, and that means that some spiritual condition or relationship is a value. If this is so, then the criteria in virtue of which values may be judged to be authentic goods must refer to the spiritual as well as the material, for truth is a condition of the human intellect, not of the body" (197).

Finally, Reimers argues that the ontological foundations of the spiritual pursuit of truth and goodness consist in the freedom of human choice and the ideal (and so immaterial) character of human knowing. Reimers argues that human beings are free, and therefore transcend reactive materiality, since they universally experience themselves as freely able to act in this way or that, no law-like (and therefore repeatable) prediction of a meaningful human choice has ever successfully been made, and history has revealed as (often violent) failures all previous attempts to control human behavior as mechanically predictable (228–41). When we consider human knowing, we see that hypothetical reasoning, assertions of truth (or falsehood), and the mental ideals that make knowing and willing possible all go beyond pure reactivity and therefore beyond the material. Reimers now concludes that, since human beings are rational and rationality (consisting in the recognition and pursuit of truth and goodness) cannot be reduced to a mechanical operation, human nature must possess an immaterial principle of some sort, and this we call the soul. With respect to the afterlife, Reimer's notes only that "the human being . . . has a soul that enjoys a certain superiority to or transcendence with regard to the material. It is not unreasonable to grant that this soul can survive the dissolution of the body" (277). What the "experience" of such a disembodied soul might be, we can only guess. We go beyond this only with Revelation.

The Soul of the Person is both a rereading of traditional hylomorphism and an argument against modern materialists. As a rereading, it is often insightful and inspiring, offering a number of interesting ways to think about traditional concepts. The defense and explanation of hypothetical

reasoning is Reimers's account of abstraction, and the language of "ideas" and "ideal" rework "form" and "concept." His use of contemporary examples and arguments (Gödel and Turing, for instance) make it clear that Thomistic hylomorphism can be a powerful contemporary position. On the other hand, it occasionally isn't clear that Reimers is rereading rather than rejecting. For example, he insists that every human action is bodily and physical (91, 111). But Thomistic Aristotelianism has traditionally considered some operations of the human intellect as dependant upon, but not themselves consisting in, physical activity. If the human soul can be active after death, as Reimers thinks is possible, wouldn't he also require the possibility of such operations?

As an argument against modern materialists, *The Soul of the Person* is less successful. The foundations of Reimers's arguments are human freedom and the immaterial character of human knowing, and the materialist will attack both. Here is one possible line against Reimers's defense of human freedom: Reimers argues that we must be free because freedom coincides with our phenomenological experience and has not been demonstrated false by science or political manipulation (I am leaving out a bit of the argument. While discussing our experience, he also suggests as a "very important" argument against determinism that it is theoretically impossible for me to predict what I shall do in the future; but he refers here to Alasdair MacIntyre's similar argument in *After Virtue*, either forgetting or ignoring that MacIntyre ends his discussion of the unpredictability of human behavior by asserting that it is perfectly compatible with a strong version of determinism). The determinist, of course, grants Reimers's points, but will respond that they do not decide the issue since they neither entail nor exclude either side of the debate. We must consider a wider range of information (perhaps our Modern Scientific Understanding of the World) that, they will say, turns out to favor determinism. The same strategy will be used to respond to the spiritual character of human knowing: it depends on immaterial essences discovered by the human intellect, and while it might seem in experience that there are such things, in truth there aren't. In short, Reimers's arguments state clearly and forcefully how reality appears to us, but the materialist rejects such appearances as illusory.

But if Reimers's arguments are less conclusive than he often seems to think, they suggest that the burden of proof lies with the materialist. It is up to the materialist to offer convincing arguments that our experience and common sense are wrong, and in the absence of such arguments, we ought to accept the sorts of considerations Reimers brings forward. The proof that the Thomistic position is, in the end, correct, will consist not only in the forceful presentation of its interpretation of reality (what Reimers has

done), but also in the sustained engagement and refutation from the Thomistic perspective of the particular rival arguments. And although Reimers has not done the latter, *The Soul of the Person*, as a contemporary restatement of the Thomistic position, helps make it possible. N.V

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Trinity, Church and the Human Person: Thomistic Essays by Gilles Emery, O.P. (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), xxii + 303 pp.

TRINITY, Church and the Human Person offers an excellent opportunity for English-speaking readers to be exposed to one of the finest students of the theology of Thomas Aquinas—Gilles Emery, O.P. This book contains ten essays (previously written in French) that are grouped around three themes: (1) the trinitarian theology of Aquinas, (2) the sacraments, Church and human person and (3) reception of Thomas's teaching on the mystery of God.

The resurgence of interest in the Trinity, with its emphasis upon the "practicality" of this doctrine, raises a host of questions regarding the purpose(s) of trinitarian reflection. In chapter one, Emery explores the purpose of "speculative" trinitarian reflection in Thomas's theology. That Thomas's trinitarian theology is "speculative" does not mean that it is divorced from the economy of salvation. Thomas is clear that knowledge of the divine persons is necessary to understand the gospel. Moreover, the trinitarian treatise in the *Summa* reaches its climax in a discussion of the economic *missions*. To understand rightly the purpose of his "speculative" reflection, one must grasp Thomas's intent. Unlike some medieval theologians, his goal was not to establish the necessity of the Trinity apart from Scripture. By reflecting on "processions," "relations," and "persons," Thomas wants to show that Christian teaching on the Trinity is reasonable and that attacks against trinitarian faith can be refuted. In addition, he wants to invite the faithful into a "spiritual exercise" by which they may contemplate the triune God as a foretaste of the beatific vision.

Several scholars have suggested that significant differences exist between Augustine and Thomas regarding the *goal* of their trinitarian reflection. Whereas Augustine presents his trinitarian theology as a spiritual exercise, Thomas engages in a speculative intellectual project. In chapter two, Emery contests this claim by arguing that important continuities exist between Augustine and Thomas regarding the purpose(s) of their trinitarian reflection. Augustine's approach in *De Trinitate* may be

characterized as an “exercise of the mind” designed to reveal to the soul, albeit in a limited way, something of the mystery of the triune God. Although important differences exist in their manner of presentation, Emery argues that “[t]he speculative objective of Thomas Aquinas in Trinitarian theology must not be opposed to the spiritual objective of Augustine” (71). Like Augustine, Thomas is quite circumspect about human knowledge of the Trinity: although humans can grasp *that* God is, they cannot grasp *what* God is. Moreover, for Thomas, “Speculative Trinitarian theology constitutes an exercise, an elevation of the believing mind, a training in order to see the simple and incomprehensible Triune God, which procures a foretaste of the beatific vision and makes it possible to give an account of the Trinitarian faith” (72).

In chapter three, Emery argues that a direct (and complex) relationship exists between Thomas’s teaching on truth and his doctrine of the Trinity—both on the intra-trinitarian and economic levels. This chapter is structured around an analysis of the Son as “Truth” and the Holy Spirit as “Spirit of Truth.” Because truth involves a relationship to the intellect, it “bears an affinity with the intellectual process that characterizes the generation of the Son as *Word* conceived by the Father” (76, italics original). Thus, the Word is “Truth begotten.” Moreover, as the “Light” and “Truth” of the Father, the Word reveals the Father internally to himself and externally to the world (especially through the incarnation). Finally, the Word is the source of truth “through whom all things are true and by whom truth is communicated to the minds of creatures” (89). There are at least three reasons Thomas associates the Holy Spirit with truth. First, the Spirit is “Truth” inasmuch as the Spirit is God. Second, the Scriptures present the Spirit as the “Spirit of Truth” because he proceeds from the Word, who is Truth. Third, the Spirit is rightly called “Spirit of Truth” based on his economic work of revealing truth to human beings. Scholars sometimes fail to recognize the “profound Trinitarian dimensions” of Thomas’s teaching on truth because they do not to engage his commentaries alongside his philosophical discussions of truth (114).

“Western” trinitarian theology, with Thomas Aquinas as a key representative, is sometimes criticized for failing to affirm the “personal” dimension of the actions of the divine persons. In chapter four, Emery explores the “personal mode of trinitarian action” in Thomas’s theology. Emery argues that alongside his insistence that the divine persons act with one will, Thomas “clearly maintains a *relational mode of acting* of each person, a proper and distinct mode that consists in the personal intra-Trinitarian relationship qualifying intrinsically the act of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (152–53, italics original). A clear example can be seen

in Thomas's claim that the trinitarian *processions* are the "cause and reason" for the production of creatures. The processions shape divine action: "the Father acts through the Son whom he begets and in the Holy Spirit whom he spirates with the Son" (126). The Father acts "through" the Son because the Son is begotten by the Father. While the effects of Father and Son are one, the actors are "personally distinct and their mode of action is also distinct" (132). In addition, because salvation for Thomas involves receiving the divine persons, human beings are, through grace, able "to enter into relation with each person in particular, that is to say, each person apprehended in a proper and distinct way" (153).

In chapter five, Emery argues that a "profound connection" exists for Thomas between Church and Eucharist. An ecclesial dimension can be found in all three levels of the sacrament (the sign, the intermediate reality which is a sign and first effect, and the grace effected and signified in the sacrament). The bread and wine signify not only the unity of Christ and the Church but they also bring about this unity "by intensifying man's union with Christ and the mutual union of members" (161). Another link between Eucharist and Church can be seen in Thomas's theology of forgiveness. The Eucharist not only offers spiritual food for growth but it also "contains within itself a reconciling power" by virtue of the death of Christ (167). Although penance is required for full participation, the Eucharist can bring about the forgiveness of "light" sins (168). Finally, an ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist can be seen in its eschatological character: like all sacraments, it looks to the past (Christ's passion and resurrection), present (procuring grace) and future (anticipating the ultimate fulfillment of that which they signify).

Whereas medieval theologians treat "inner penance" as the *res et sacramentum* of the sacrament of penance, contemporary theologians tend to treat reconciliation with the church as the *res et sacramentum*. In chapter six, Emery suggests that Thomas's discussion of "inner penance" provides a helpful structure for considering the relationship between "reconciliation with God" and "reconciliation with the church." For Thomas the *res et sacramentum* is the "inner penance" of the sinner while the *res tantum* is the remission of sins. Thus, the sacrament is constituted both by the actions of the priest (sacramental absolution) *as well as* the penitent (contrition) such that no forgiveness is possible apart from a heart-conversion on the part of the penitent. Emery insists that Thomas's account of penance in no way marginalizes the Church. Penance reconciles people both to God and to the Church. Moreover, it is required for inclusion in the Eucharist. Thomas, therefore, invites theologians to recognize the *res et sacramentum* of penance "as a personal engagement ('inner penance') grasped in the

ecclesial action and recognized and ratified by the Church, so that it implies readmission to the public worship of the Church" (192).

While some view Thomas's theology as a foundation for conversation with the East, others view his theology as an impediment to dialogue. Chapter seven contains a brief discussion of Thomas's engagement with Greek-speaking theologians of the East: "In a conscious and explicit way, St. Thomas does not intend to compose only a Latin theology, but a Christian 'ecumenical' theology . . . which would fully integrate the contribution of the Eastern Fathers into the heart of the Catholic patrimony" (195). The four Greek authors Thomas cites most frequently (in descending order) are St. John Chrysostom (who appears frequently in his exegetical works), Pseudo-Dionysius (a Platonic influence upon Thomas), Origen (whom Thomas receives in a critical way) and St. John Damascene. Emery identifies three areas in which the influence of Greek Fathers upon Thomas can be clearly seen: (1) Thomas's concept of "instrument" in his Christology (in which the humanity of Christ constitutes the "instrumental efficient cause" of grace, forgiveness of sins and divinization of human beings); (2) his description of the hypostatic union in the *Summa theologiae*, and (3) his account of the "literal senses" (plural) of Scripture.

The idea that human beings possess an incorruptible "soul" has come under criticism because of the assumption that this view is inextricably linked to a "dualistic" anthropology and Cartesian rationalism. Wanting to affirm the fundamental unity of the human person, a number of theologians have become reluctant to discuss the soul. Is there a way to affirm that humans are a composite of body *and* soul while still maintaining the indissoluble unity of the person? In chapter eight, Emery suggests that Thomas's theology provides the basis for a "deeply unified understanding of man that sacrifices neither the essential link between soul and body nor the primacy of the spiritual soul in man" (210). Thomas articulates a "hylomorphic" account of the unity of the human person that is incompatible with every form of dualism. For Thomas, a person is neither the soul (contra Plato) nor the body but a composite of the two. Thus, the soul is not a separate substance but a "subsistent form" or "subsistent principle." By identifying the soul as "substantial form" of the body, Thomas secures the unity of the body (216). In the eschaton, human beings will exist in a composite of soul and body (which is required for the attainment of happiness).

In chapter nine, Emery explores the interrelationship of evil and the mystery of God in the writings of Charles Journet. Although he builds upon the "classic" Thomistic explanation, Journet departs from the latter at three crucial points: his explanation of God's knowledge of sin, his account of the divine decree by which sin is permitted, and his notion of divine suffering.

Journet does not view God's permissive decree as the means through which God knows about sin in his creatures. For Journet, God knows sin "only *in the culpable will* that has refused the divine motion to the good and not in the intervention of divine decree" (245, italics original). Moreover, although Journet believes that evil must be explained in terms of divine "permission," he rejects the Thomistic notion of God's "antecedent permissive decree" because it does not allow for adequate dissymmetry between God's relationship to good and God's relationship to evil. The permissive decree, therefore, should not be viewed as "antecedent" but should rather be seen as following upon "the evil will's nihilation of the shatterable motion" (247). Finally, Journet moves beyond traditional Thomistic approaches to evil in his discussion of "suffering" in God by affirming a kind of "quasi-suffering" in God (255). At the end of the chapter, Emery raises a number of questions regarding the viability of Journet's proposal.

In chapter ten, Emery engages George Lindbeck's "postliberal" reading of Thomas Aquinas. Lindbeck developed his "cultural-linguistic" approach to doctrine in conversation Thomas (who is one of the most frequently cited theologians in *The Nature of Doctrine*). After providing an overview of the Lindbeck's writings on Thomas, Emery examines Lindbeck's appeal to Thomas in *The Nature of Doctrine*. Appeals to Thomas can be grouped into three categories: (1) Religion and experience (Lindbeck draws both upon Thomas's account of knowledge by "connaturality" as well the Scholastic distinction between "first intentions" and "second intentions"); (2) Thomas as "Non-Foundationalist" (Lindbeck appeals extensively to Thomas in order to criticize post-Cartesian and post-Kantian "foundational" projects); and (3) "Agnosticism" of Thomas and Truth (Lindbeck draws upon Thomas's distinction between the "mode of signification" and the "thing signified" in order to prioritize the "regulative" function of doctrines over the "cognitive" function). Although the primary purpose of the chapter was to highlight the originality of Lindbeck's reading of Thomas, Emery briefly identifies a number of problems with Lindbeck's reading. For example, little support can be found in Thomas's writings for the notion that creedal statements should be viewed merely as second-order "rules." For Thomas, doctrines have "regulative" force precisely because they convey "cognitive propositional content" (288).

This collection of essays offers an indirect (yet compelling!) apologetic for the continuing value of engagement with Thomas's theology. Emery helps readers see how the "premodern" theology of Thomas Aquinas addresses a number of contemporary theological issues in fruitful ways. A clear example of this can be seen in his discussion of the nature of the human person (chapter eight). Emery adroitly shows how Thomas's hylomorphic account

of human unity avoids the pitfalls of dualism and materialism. Another example can be seen in chapter seven in which Emery presents Thomas as the source of an “ecumenical” theology that integrates contributions of the West and the East.

Perhaps the most compelling case for the enduring value of Thomas’s theology can be seen in Emery’s discussion of Thomas’s trinitarian doctrine (which build upon an earlier collection of essays published in *Trinity in Aquinas*). Critics such as Catherine LaCugna assert that Thomas’s “speculative” reflection on the Trinity exemplifies everything that went wrong in “Latin” Trinitarian theology inasmuch as he severs the life of the triune God from the economy of salvation. Emery not only shows why this reading is wrong but he also helps readers see that Thomas has an important message for theologians eager to highlight the practical relevance of trinitarian doctrine—namely, that the “practicality” of this doctrine is not ultimately to be found in its ability to provide patterns for societal structures but rather in its ability to draw us into the life of the triune God. In the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth insists that the doctrine of the Trinity should be “decisive and controlling for the whole of dogmatics.” Barth was not the first to recognize that trinitarian doctrine should shape theological reflection in other areas. Through his discussion of Trinity and truth, Emery provides a concrete example of the integrative nature of Thomas’s trinitarian theology by examining Thomas’s trinitarian approach to the truth. Emery’s discussion of trinitarian agency in chapter four is particularly important for contemporary discussion of divine agency. Eager to highlight the “personal” character of trinitarian action, a number of contemporary theologians have expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional Augustinian account of the unity of the divine persons *ad extra*. Emery helps us see that one need not abandon this axiom in order to affirm the “personal” character of trinitarian agency.

Readers will discover little criticism of Thomas in this book. Perhaps some will view this as a limiting feature; however, it is Emery’s sympathy with Thomas’s thought that provides the basis for his rich exposition. While this collection of essays encourages engagement with Thomas, it also underscores the challenge contemporary readers have in properly understanding Thomas. To understand Thomas, readers must synchronically engage all his writings (not an easy task!). In particular, Emery suggests that scholars need to pay more attention to Thomas’s biblical commentaries as they engage his speculative theological/philosophical writings. N V

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God's Universe by Owen Gingerich (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006*), 139 pp. and **Chance or Purpose? Creation, Evolution, and a Rational Faith** by Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, O.P. (*San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007*), 181 pp.

ON NOVEMBER 7, 1492, just before noon, a meteorite fell on farmland near the Alsatian village of Ensisheim. Three weeks later, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian happened to be passing through Alsace, then a part of his empire, and so came to hear of this strange visitor from the heavens. After consulting with the experts of his day, he was told by his imperial counselors and court astrologers that it was a miracle, a sign from God indicating divine favor resting on the imperial crown.

On February 8, 1969, another meteorite fell, this time on the Mexican village of Pueblito de Allende. No emperor, Mexican or otherwise, happened to be passing through at the time. But experts galore (now called scientists, not astrologers) descended on the place soon enough; and what they discovered was remarkable: the ratio of lead and argon isotopes, when matched with the known rate of decay of radioactive potassium, allows the meteorite to be dated to an age of 4.6 billion years, which means that the Allende meteorite is the oldest known macroscopic object on earth, indeed by most estimates is slightly older than the earth itself.

Both meteorites are raw facts: the exact dates of their respective falls are known to history, and both objects are still being exhibited to this day. But both are also what Aristotle called *reasoned* facts, and therein hangs our tale. As a “reasoned” fact, the first rock was taken to be an omen favorable to the Holy Roman Emperor, the other as evidence for the genesis and composition of our solar system (and, going back further, of the universe itself). Two meteorites, then: leaving us with two *raw* facts, and two *reasoned* facts.

The universe, too, is a raw fact, at least in the obvious sense that it cannot very well be ignored. But is it also a reasoned fact? After all, if we try to reason back from the universe to God, the validity of the procedure will depend on how genuinely reasonable the “fact” of the universe is. But why work backwards? Why not just start with the reality of God and then deduce the universe from God, as René Descartes tried to do? But if one agrees with Thomas Aquinas that we must work backwards from the world to God, then we have no choice but to proceed from the raw reality we know (the world) to the reasoned reality behind it, which we hope (and maybe can “prove”?) is God.

But what kind of reasoned fact is the universe? Is the world actually rational, or do we impose rationality on it? Two recent books, one from

a noted historian of astronomy at Harvard University, Owen Gingerich, and the other from the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna (and chairman of the drafting committee of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*), Christoph Schönborn, tell us a great deal about how we go from Aristotle's "reasoned facts" to the reality of God, without whom the universe would never have come to be in the first place.

Both books are quite short and can be read in an evening apiece. Yet both come out of a lifetime of reflections on this issue, albeit from two different perspectives: while both authors are committed Christians, one is a scientist and historian of science by training and profession, and the other is a teacher of the Catholic faith, speaking out of, and on the basis of, the oracles of Christian revelation, especially here the book of Genesis.

For several reasons, I think it best to begin with Gingerich's book, which began as the William Belden Noble Lectures at Harvard's University Chapel in 2005. I recommend starting with his book because, by taking them in this order, one can follow the approach recommended by the great twentieth-century apologist Msgr. Ronald Knox, who held that if we begin with certain universally recognized enigmas, we will see the meaning of Christian dogma. Knox pointed out that before we hear of the mystery of the Trinity and Incarnation we first meet up with the mystery of personality; before we learn about the mystery of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist we come up against the distinction between reality and appearance in Plato; and before the mystery of the Holy Spirit there is the mystery of mind: "You may picture human thought as a place of solid rock," he says, "but with a crevice here and there—the places, I mean, where we think and think and it just does not add up. And the Christian mysteries are like tufts of blossom which seem to grow in those particular crevices, there and nowhere else." In that sense, Gingerich gives us the crevice, Schönborn the blossom.

For Gingerich there is above all this ineluctable crevice—*teleology*: is there a point to the universe or not? Is the universe just a brute fact to be accepted without further ado? Or is it a reasoned fact that can lead, via its correct interpretation, back to God's intentions? Gingerich's Harvard colleague Ernst Mayr, probably the premier philosopher of Darwinism in the twentieth century, provides the debate's opening thesis: "Cosmic teleology must be rejected by science. . . . I do not think there is a modern scientist left who still believes in it."

Maybe, but there are many scientists who think there might be intelligent life on other planets and have great hopes that the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI) will someday prove successful. But these SETI enthusiasts then hit a snag: the very viability of that search rests on

the plausibility of the same cosmic teleology decried by Mayr. As Gingerich points out, “astronomers and physicists who assume that extra-terrestrial intelligence is inevitable and ubiquitous are essentially saying that the set is rigged, that in some way it is designed not just to allow for intelligent life, but to make it likely.” According to physicist Paul Davies, SETI “implies that mind is written into the laws of nature in a fundamental way.” But if that is true, what has happened to the randomness touted so loudly by the resolute Darwinians? If intelligence is “written into” the laws of nature so deeply, are we not approaching Plato’s most characteristic teaching that form and mind precede matter?

To that worrisome flirtation with crypto-Platonism Darwinians of the strict observance like Mayr respond that SETI proponents “are almost exclusively astronomers, physicists, and engineers. They are simply unaware of the fact that the success of the SETI project is not a matter of physical laws and engineering capabilities but a matter of biological and sociological factors.”

So who’s right, Davies or Mayr? Absent the unlikely event of alien visitors to the UN General Assembly, the issue cannot be resolved. Physicists (as a rule) might set much store by SETI, but their methods are reductive. Always fond of the Copernican “principle of mediocrity” (which states that because of the uniformity of the laws of nature, man and earth cannot be that special), they seek the most parsimonious result: “Physicists love the principles of uniformity and mediocrity, for they reduce complexity and tend toward simplicity, a process that helps them get on with their business,” says Gingerich. “If friction renders the study of motion too difficult, then consider an idealized world without friction. . . . Isaac Newton made brilliant progress by assuming that celestial motions are frictionless counterparts of terrestrial motion.”

Biologists, however, are schooled to see contingency everywhere. Take, for example, man’s bipedalism, which the anthropologist Richard Leakey holds is essential for the evolution from primate to *Homo sapiens*. In *The Origin of Mankind* he claims that the “origin of bipedal locomotion is so significant an adaptation that we are justified in calling all species of bipedal ape ‘human.’ . . . These humans were not like us, but without the bipedal adaptation they couldn’t have become like us.” But how did bipedalism become so advantageous to one group of primates? Here at any rate is Leakey’s answer:

About 12 million years ago, a continuation of tectonic forces further changed the environment, with the formation of a long, sinuous valley [in central Africa], running from north to south, known as the Great

Rift Valley. The existence of the Great Rift Valley has had two biological effects: it poses a formidable east-west barrier to animal populations, and it further promotes the development of a rich mosaic of ecological conditions. The French anthropologist Yves Coppens believes the east-west barrier was crucial to the separate evolution of human and apes . . . [and] dubs this the "East Side Story."

Well, maybe yes, maybe no. But if Leakey is right, then as Daniel Dennett points out in *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, searching for alien intelligence makes about as much sense as searching for extraterrestrial kangaroos. Again, none of these purely speculative arguments can settle this issue. But their continuing presence in the debate over evolution (touted by people who have no religious agenda whatever and often are extremely hostile to religion in any guise) only shows, at least for Gingerich, that we are up against a real enigma, one of Knox's crevices.

On that basis he has some surprisingly friendly (though critical) remarks to make about the Intelligent Design (ID) movement. First, he rightly defends them against the charge of their being "creationists," if by that is meant young-earth creationists who hold that the entire world is scarcely more than ten thousand years old. "ID theorists are much more sophisticated than that," he says. "At issue for them is whether random mutations can generate the incredible amount of information content required to produce even the simplest of cells; and whether even the great antiquity of the universe could make this possible. Here science, dealing with extremely low probabilities balanced against vast numbers of opportunities, is frankly on very shaky turf."

That paragraph alone will probably lead most strict-observance Darwinians to dismiss this book in horror, but Gingerich is merely pointing to a problem that will not go away, despite the angry harumphing and empty rhetorical excommunications from atheist citadels. That said, Gingerich must also point to the central flaw in ID theory, its scientific sterility:

Many leading theorists of ID argue that the evidence for intelligent input into the evolutionary process is overwhelming. With regard to final causes, those theorists make a good case for a coherent understanding of the nature of cosmos. But they fall short in supplying any mechanisms to serve as the efficient causes that primarily engage scientists in our age. Intelligent Design does not explain the temporal or geological distribution of species. Intelligent Design does not help us understand why Hawaii, in comparison with the older continental areas, has so few species, and why there would be flightless birds on the islands. It does not shed any light on why the DNA in yeast is so closely related to the DNA in human chromosomes. As a philosophical idea,

ID is interesting, but it does not replace the scientific explanations that evolution offers.

So how does Gingerich, himself a committed Christian, respond to this dilemma? I think this passage summarizes his own personal creed as a Christian scientist best of all (emphases are his):

Whether the mutations are anything other than mathematically random is a question without answer *in a physical or scientific sense*. But my subjective, metaphysical view, that the universe would make more sense if a divine will operated at this level to design the universe in a purposeful way, can be neither denied nor proved by scientific means. . . . One can *believe* that some of the evolutionary pathways are so intricate and so complex as to be hopelessly improbable by the rules of random chance; but if you do not believe in divine action, then you will simply have to say that random chance was extremely lucky, because the outcome is there to see. Either way, the scientist with theistic metaphysics will approach laboratory problems in much the same way as will his atheistic colleague across the hall. And probably both will approach some of the astonishing adaptations seen in nature with a sense of surprise, wonder, and mystery.

Gingerich readily admits that only faith can make this transition (or “leap” if you will), a faith that has guided his own life from childhood on. The fact that few of his colleagues at Harvard are willing to follow him here does not intimidate him in the least, for this he knows above all: “The God having the creative force to make the entire observable universe in a dense dot of pure energy is incomprehensible, beyond human imagining (apart from the comparatively feeble efforts of theorists exploring the inner workings of the Big Bang). And yet we can see the consequences of this unimaginably powerful creative act: a universe congenial to the ultimate formation of life, life giving rise to intelligence that can ask questions science cannot answer. It is God’s universe.”

It is God’s universe for Cardinal Schönborn too, I presume it goes without saying; but with his latest book *Chance or Purpose? Creation, Evolution, and a Rational Faith*, readers enter a quite different universe of argument. First of all, as might be expected, Schönborn writes as a teacher of the Catholic faith. True, he is not addressing the public in the strictly magisterial sense, telling Catholics what they must hold by solemn hierarchical decree. But surely what he asserts, that the universe is God’s creation, must belong to the essence of the Christian faith, as the opening line of the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds profess.

Second, Schönborn is entirely biblical throughout this book. In effect, he is giving an extended meditation on the meaning of several verses of

the Bible that bear on evolutionary controversies: “In the beginning, God created . . .” (Genesis 1:1); “He created everything according to its kind” (Genesis 1:11); “He upholds the universe by his word of power” (Hebrews 1:3); “You have made him [man] little less than God” (Psalm 8:6); “All things were created for him [Christ]” (Colossians 1:16); and “Subdue the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

This selection is significant, for all his chosen verses express the crucial non-negotiables that the Church will always maintain and that scientific developments can never undermine. True, especially in regard to Genesis, these theological insights were expressed in the language of ancient Hebrew cosmology and therefore require interpretation. As Pope Pius XII taught in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*:

What is the literal sense of a passage is not always as obvious in the speeches and writings of the ancient authors of the East, as it is in the works of our own time. For what they wished to express is not to be determined by the rules of grammar and philology alone, nor solely by the context; the interpreter must, as it were, go back wholly in spirit to those remote centuries of the East. . . . For the ancient peoples of the East, in order to express their ideas, did not always employ those forms or kinds of speech which we use today; but rather those used by the men of their times and countries.

But by the same token the interpreter must recognize in those ancient idioms a revealed message directly relevant today, especially that the intelligibility of the universe comes from God. Almost as if he is speaking of Gingerich, Schönborn says this of Christian scientists: “Belief in God as Creator is not an obstacle but rather the opposite. Why should belief that the universe has a Creator stand in the way of science? . . . There are in fact an enormous number of scientists who . . . not only make no secret of their faith, but positively affirm it and see no conflict between science and their faith.”

That point, of course, makes only a sociological observation. The teacher of the Catholic faith, however, can go much further; and at a crucial juncture in his argument, the Cardinal quotes Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* (its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), which directly asserts a positive connection between faith and science:

Methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not overrule the moral law, can never conflict with the faith, for the things of this world and the things of faith derive from the same God. Indeed, the humble and

persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, however unawares, by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence and made them what they are.

This assertion, of course, cuts both ways. On the one hand, as *Gaudium et Spes* says in the next line (but unquoted by the Cardinal), “Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science.” On the other hand, when the results of science seem to conflict with the faith, the believer can be quite sure that the conflict is only apparent: either because the evidence is ambiguous; or because this evidence, even when entirely reliable, does not carry the philosophical and religious import claimed for it by atheists; or because Christians have misunderstood their faith by confusing a mode of expression with the truth that mode intends to express.

The first difficulty requires patience, and Church teaching can handle the last one, as Pius XII did when he clarified that the “literal” meaning of the Bible refers to the meaning intended by the author of the original text in its original setting and does not depend on some superimposed literalism defined by a one-dimensional fundamentalism. But the second difficulty can only be dispatched through the hard work of spotting the inevitable contradictions that are bound to crop up whenever scientists or their atheist popularizers stray beyond their competence.

In that regard, Schönborn can be quite witty. He recounts the story of one of his brother Dominicans harping at table every day about a book he planned to write that was going to prove that man is not essentially different from the other animals. Finally another Dominican got tired of these obsessive proclamations and asked, “Father, will this be an autobiography?” The rest of the brethren all laughed—except for the putative author, who kept silent.

But my favorite example comes from an interview Richard Dawkins, England’s most pious atheist and loudest Darwinian, gave to an Austrian newspaper, *Die Presse* (July 30, 2005), where he made this whopper of a concession: “No decent person wants to live in a society that works according to Darwinian laws. . . . A Darwinian society would be a fascist state.” With that move Dawkins has undercut his whole project, which requires that Darwinism be made applicable in all areas of life. His ethical critique of Darwinian dystopias itself testifies to man’s uniqueness, specifically his possession of a conscience independent of evolutionary forces.

But at this point I must wonder if the Cardinal himself does not go a bit too far in disengaging Darwinian insights from political economy.

Although hardly the main point of his book, the author concludes with a swipe against the neo-liberal economist Friedrich von Hayek and even seems to endorse the economic philosophy of *New York Times* op-ed panjandrum Paul Krugman. Admittedly, this view is tucked inside a quotation from an Austrian economist, but as Schönborn cites him with approval, I think it bears notice:

The United States economist Paul Krugman is right when he writes that a textbook on neo-classical micro-economics reads like an introduction to microbiology. In economics, the close relation to biology is seen especially in the writings of Hayek, . . . [who came from] a family of biologists, [and who] talks explicitly about a “sifting” by the market. Hayek holds that a high rate of unemployment—like excess population in the animal world—is economically desirable, so that natural selection can have something to work on. . . . Decoded, this amounts to saying that we have to get rid of the European social model.

I dispute this reading of Hayek at several points. After all, there are perfectly harmless applications of the term “natural selection” that do not entail anything nefarious, as when we say that bloated corporations become “less fit” and thus inevitably lose out in the “struggle” to win investors. No literal slaughter of corporate managers takes place, nor did Hayek recommend killing off the unemployed. I do not deny that classical neo-liberal economics stands in tension with Catholic social doctrine, but that hardly renders the “European social model” unproblematic either. I am reminded of a remark Arnold Schwarzenegger made when he was running for governor of California: he emigrated from Austria to the United States in his youth, he said, because as soon as Austrians turn eighteen they start talking about their pensions. (The fact that he is now recommending universal health care in California is irrelevant to the observation and only shows he is being a true politician, pandering to an electorate that is perfectly willing to make use of “free” services as long as they don’t notice they have to pay for them.) Plus, I think a good argument can be made that the cradle-to-grave social services provided to most European citizens have contributed to the demographic lethargy and cultural ennui that worries so many Christian commentators, on both sides of the ocean.

As I say, the Cardinal’s criticism of neo-liberal economics is but an aside to an otherwise fine book; but it does show yet again how difficult it will be to follow the mandate of Vatican II when it calls on Catholics to attend sufficiently to the rightful independence of science. But truth has a habit of catching up with us all, despite what the postmoderns say. So there is no need for believers to worry about the false claims of the

science-hijackers: "Everything that is, is created," says Schönborn, this great teacher of the Catholic faith. "That is the first, fundamental statement the Bible makes about reality." Which means that everything we encounter, rightly interpreted, is a gift. "What do you have that you have not received?" Paul asks rhetorically (1 Corinthians 4:7). This, for Paul—and for all Christians—is the most significant "reasoned fact" of all: everything that comes to us is pure gift. **N V**

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Answering the Enlightenment: The Catholic Recovery of Historical Revelation by Grant Kaplan (*New York: Crossroad, 2006*), viii + 240 pp.

GRANT KAPLAN'S *Answering the Enlightenment* presents a movement within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German thought that sought to understand revelation in light of idealist philosophy. The first half of Kaplan's book deals with the internal development of this tradition within the context set by Descartes and Hume. Thinkers of the "High German Enlightenment" sought to provide a clear and distinct basis for religion, one that would not be susceptible to an empirical critique. Kaplan then shows how this Enlightenment tradition was taken up and appropriated by Catholic theologians at the University of Tübingen.

Kaplan begins his treatment with Gotthold Lessing, whose famous ditch emphasizes "the gap between historical and dogmatic truth" due to "doubts about the reliability of historical witness" (12, 11). Lessing puts forward the claim that Christianity's historically based teaching served a purpose, but now should retreat so that humanity may freely progress to a higher level without outside interference from God (16). In a significant move for the Idealist tradition, he reduces religion to the ethical realm. Kaplan argues that "by adopting an Enlightenment conception of history and anthropology, however, Lessing edges closer to a position that would necessarily conflict with traditional Christian claims about revelation" (14). Lessing introduces a conflict between Christianity and humanity's progress by arguing that a revelation from God necessarily hinders humanity's own ability to arrive at the content of revelation on its own.

Kaplan's treatment of Lessing leads directly into Kant's thought, which provides a fuller articulation of human autonomy and religious self-sufficiency. If Lessing points to the need to leave Christianity behind, Kant actually provides the ground to do so through an a priori system that

imposed "the same standard of truth" on religion "that holds for ethics and metaphysics" (27). Just as Kant reduces ethics to an "internal, necessary communication" accessible to everyone through pure reason, so "he equates God's revelation with the moral law in us" (28). The consequences for religion are drastic: there can be no religious power or revelation outside of the limits of reason. Kaplan argues that Kant's thought "shows how the elimination of historical revelation completely erodes any real relationship between God and God's creatures" (34). God simply serves as a postulate, necessary to connect man's moral life with happiness (44).

Kaplan presents Johann Gottlieb Fichte as the culmination of the vision set forth by Lessing and Kant on religion. Fichte argues even more robustly for the absolute equation of religion and morality. Though Kant clearly intimates it, Fichte boldly states that God's existence arises from "the transferring of something subjective into an essence external to us . . . used for the determination of the will" (47). Fichte must maintain that God is only a projection of something internal to us, because any external principle influencing the will would deprive human beings of autonomy. Thus, he equates natural and revealed religion, dissolving the latter into the former, since what is known *a priori* cannot be made known in history (49). Revelation has a place only as an outward proclamation of what is inward. It cannot exist in its own right since there can be no possible proof for something contingent and historical. Summarizing the thrust of these three thinkers, Kaplan describes their shortcoming as "the search for an autonomy independent from all influences . . . reason that is 'pure' of any divine assistance" (52).

For Kaplan, Friedrich Schelling provides a noticeable departure from these three thinkers. It is clear that Schelling still stands within the same idealist tradition, maintaining similar concerns such as freedom and intuition, but he seeks to recover a real notion of God and a positive role for history. Accordingly, he sees no necessary conflict between the finite and infinite and subjective knowledge and its object. He argues that history must no longer stand apart from truth, because it is only as something occurs within history that one can have real knowledge of it (76). While thus trying to avoid a priorism, Schelling also seeks to avoid empiricism. Though there is a unity of the subject and object, this union manifests the knower's conscious freedom, which is founded upon God's own self-manifestation. Humanity, through "intellectual intuition," has the luminous presence of the Absolute within, which serves as the means by which to see reality as a whole (62).

Schelling stresses history to the point that it becomes the very vehicle for the "unfolding of the Absolute itself" (80). History plays a crucial role

in the knowledge of God, finding its place alongside the interior recognition of God and the witness of nature. Intuition provides the foundation necessary to recognize God, and does so initially through the formation of myths. These myths provide the context through which God more explicitly reveals Himself by taking an active role in history, first through Israel and then most fully in Christ. Thus, "for Schelling, Christianity is primarily a historical religion . . . one cannot remove the historical from Christianity without also ridding Christianity of its very essence" (82). Based upon his expanded epistemology and his appreciation of history, Schelling attempts to initiate a philosophy of revelation that observes how God and humanity mutually seek union, mediated by the events of history and interior acts within the person.

The newly created Catholic theology faculty in Tübingen cautiously found Schelling to be a useful partner in its attempt both to critique and to interact with the prevalent intellectual atmosphere of the day. Kaplan notes that the key features of Tübingen's method entail a focus on history and an engagement of modern thought. Tübingen theologians also emphasize the Church's tradition as a living organism in time (99). Engaging modern philosophy brings its own pitfalls, of course. For instance, Kaplan notes that Johann Drey fails to distance himself enough from the Enlightenment in seeing revelation as too closely associated with religion throughout history (102–10). The crucial figure of Kaplan's study, Johannes Kuhn, follows Drey in accepting Schleiermacher's definition of religion. This definition influences the way that Kuhn characterizes revelation, which he presents as any activity of God in the world (129). In particular, Kuhn builds upon Schelling's theory of intuition, in order to articulate the existence of a primary experience of God which occurs through an immediate perception that grounds all human knowledge (136). Though it is necessary to see creation and the human mind as a necessary basis for revelation (141, 147), Kuhn describes them as revelatory in themselves (138, 146). Thus, even while Kuhn regards himself as a critic of Schelling, he follows him in accepting a somewhat generic understanding of revelation.

Kaplan argues that the use of the term "revelation" came about as a response to the Enlightenment: although the concept belongs to traditional Christian teaching, the use of the technical term arises at this later point (3). Yet, the way that the Tübingen school describes revelation could lead one to ask whether revelation has become too generalized and therefore deprived of important aspects of its traditional meaning. It is crucial in evaluating Kaplan's treatment to ask whether the philosophical tradition of German idealism truly serves as an impetus for a fuller

account of revelation. Kaplan praises both Schelling and Kuhn, the former primarily for the retrieval of history and the latter for bringing this insight into the Catholic tradition. Schelling would certainly be an essential ally if it were one's goal to respond to the pitfalls within the earlier idealist tradition. While one can gladly affirm Schelling's contributions toward formulating a philosophy of history and the human study of revelation, nonetheless the risk lies in reducing religion to intuition and experience, so that Christianity comes to be seen as part of one large movement of religion. Kuhn's appropriation of Aquinas points to the need to remain rooted primarily in the Catholic tradition. On the issue of nature and grace, Kuhn stayed rooted in the tradition by a careful, if not completely uncontroversial, reading of Thomas (154). On the issue of religion and revelation, however, he often seems to follow in the anthropocentric footsteps of Schleiermacher.

In sum, Kaplan's study provides a helpful window into the efforts of Catholic thinkers to maintain, not always successfully, the priority of God's revelatory action while at the same time valuing the human dimensions of revelation. N V

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