

Book Reviews

The Feminine Genius of Catholic Theology by Matthew Levering
(*London: T&T Clark, 2012*), ix + 157 pp.

MATTHEW LEVERING has written widely: on the priesthood in Roman Catholicism, and on a wide range of doctrinal topics, always anchoring his work in Christology and the Trinity. The title of this book evokes a number of echoes in terms of recent Catholic theology. Pope John Paul II employed the term “feminine genius” in his Apostolic letter “On the Dignity and Vocation of Women” (1988), and again some years later in his “Letter to Women” (1995). The Pope isolated various charisms of the female genius that were rooted in the particular embodiment of women: maternity, from which receptivity, sensitivity, and generosity flow. Subsequent to these papal writings, Catholic theologians have been embroiled in a long-running controversy in attempting to define this particular “feminine genius.” The various approaches range from “essentialist” definitions of women based on their bodily form to others who, on the opposite side of the spectrum, argue that gender is socially constructed and there are no fundamental feminine traits. There are complex positions dotted along this spectrum. There is also much at stake as the questions of “service” (in terms of differing forms of ordained and nonordained ministry) and “power” (which gender group exercises power over other groups) are contested. While it would seem that John Paul II took a clear position on women and the priesthood, there is an enormous amount of wriggle room regarding the nature of women and their roles within the Catholic Church. Pope Francis seems to be beginning to address this question.

Readers with this background in mind will initially be disappointed by Levering’s book. There is no reference to the Pope’s address (from

which the title must derive) and no references to the theology of body that underlay these teachings. Levering of course knows this debate and is a subtle and creative theologian. I think he is trying to broaden the perspective on this question by trying to show that “feminine genius” can be explored by drawing from women writers to illuminate the key doctrinal themes of Roman Catholic and Christian theology. The scheme of the book is ingenious and most illuminating. Rather than chronologically outlining the works of the eighteen women he draws on, Levering structures the ten chapters of the book thematically, using ad hoc writings to illuminate the chosen theme. The women span the second half of the last century, with the exception of Egeria (300–400s). The other writers are Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), Elisabeth of Schönau, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadwijch, Angela of Foligno, Gertrud the Great of Helfta, Birgitta of Sweden, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, Teresa of Avila, Jane de Chantal, Louise de Marillac, Juana Inés de la Cruz, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Elisabeth Leseur, Thérèse of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Edith Stein, Maria Faustina Kowalska, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910–97). This list is quite an achievement in drawing on such different temperaments, styles, and geographic diversity. The themes are most traditional and the staple of systematic theology: Trinity, Christ, creation, sin, sacraments, the Church, the virtues, Mary and the saints, prayer, and eternal life. The reader senses a genuine and lasting contribution to the theological themes. Levering lets us hear the voice of these women and knits and weaves their work into a beautiful tapestry of prayer, praise, and a life immersed in the love of God.

I have one minor reservation. Levering concludes the book by saying that these women writers exemplify an interiority and intimacy with the divine life that is their special feminine genius. In one sense that is entirely true. In another sense, one could only establish the special “genius” of women if he compared it to other male writers working with similar genres. For example, Bernard of Clairvaux, John of the Cross, Francis of Assisi, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Thomas Merton all present moments of remarkably interior and intimate writings. They could be said to exemplify “feminine genius.” Likewise, Edith Stein’s philosophical writings are as hard-nosed, exterior, and rigorous as Edmund Husserl’s work or the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas. We have to

turn to her letters, an altogether different type of genre, to find another type of Stein. But reading the letters of Karl Rahner or Karl Barth equally illuminates the complexity of sophisticated personalities. I am not entirely convinced that Levering establishes that there is such a thing as “feminine genius,” but he does show that we ignore the rich and complex writings of these figures at our great peril. For that, we are deeply indebted. 

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Philosophical Anthropology: An Introduction by Jose Angel Lombo and Francesco Russo, translated by Piers Amodia (*Downers Grove, IL: Midwest Theological Forum, 2013*), xv + 264 pp.

IN THEIR FOREWORD to *Philosophical Anthropology: An Introduction*, the authors (both professors of philosophy at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross) state their intention to provide not “a treatise upon philosophical anthropology in the strict sense but an introduction to the study of that subject—an introduction that seeks to offer the fundamental elements for such study yet without delving exhaustively into the details of each subject and without dwelling on more specialized questions or an all ongoing debates” (xiv). While the authors indicate that Christian revelation is the ultimate context and occasional inspiration for their reflections, they mean to offer a text of rational argumentation in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition (4–6). Despite the ambiguous reputation of the Thomistic manual genre, a well-crafted textbook can be desirable not only for its integrated presentation of a topic that Thomas may never have synthesized, but also for its ability to bring Thomas’s thought into greater engagement with current readership by employing contemporary discourse and addressing contemporary concerns. Philosophical anthropology, at least in English, has needed just such an introductory text for several decades. This work admirably meets that need.

The book’s two-part structure divides the whole into nearly equal halves, and reveals the authors’ guiding vision of the study of the human being. Part 1, titled “The Human Person: A Corporeal-Spiritual Being,”

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explores human nature through a metaphysical perspective. Here the text “uses an analytical method to reflect upon the human person as a living being in the world, possessing his own fundamental properties” (xiv). Part 2, titled “Personal Self-Fulfillment: Between Relationality and Historicity,” views the human being as existing person situated within relational and temporal dimensions. In part 2 the work “adopts a synthetic and dynamic perspective to demonstrate the particularity of human existence as characterized by freedom” (ibid.). Not surprisingly, Thomas and Aristotle receive the most attention in part 1. In part 2, authors such as Plato, Augustine, Victor Frankl, Romano Guardini, Josef Pieper, Max Scheler, Robert Spaemann, and Karol Wojtyla also play prominent roles.

This overall structure alone has much to commend it. The inclusion of part 2 indicates an appealing ambition on the authors’ part to display the human being not just in its essential structure (which many texts might have been content with), but also in its actual situation within a world. By ordering the two parts as they have, the authors establish the priority of metaphysical foundations and structures. At the same time, the authors show how these structures come to fruition within human living. Students new to Thomas, or even to philosophy in general, are likely to be concerned initially with many topics included in part 2: the presence of suffering and evil, the significance of human relationships, the role of culture, and the objective reality of values. Such students will be pleased to find these topics addressed, and done so in a manner that builds upon the metaphysical reasoning of part 1. More seasoned readers of Thomas, by contrast, will appreciate seeing the familiar metaphysical analyses organically followed by no less substantive personalist considerations.

The order of chapters in part 1 is conventional, following the lead of Aristotle’s *De anima* and Thomas’s *Summa theologiae* I, qq. 75–76. After a brief reflection on philosophical anthropology and its method (chapter 1), we find an analysis of life with its characteristics and degrees in the natural world (chapter 2). The remaining ten chapters treat of the soul, the body, the powers or “faculties” in general, external senses, internal senses, intellect, appetite (“tendential dynamism”) and freedom, affectivity, sexuality, and death and immortality.

As a whole, part 1 is clearly organized and expressed, exhibiting sound interpretation of Thomas’s thought and an astute sense for important details. Two items are of particular merit. First, the authors frequently refer

to contemporary scientific literature or to scholarship (mainly Italian) in the Thomistic tradition, which has sought to articulate Thomas's reasoning in light of current scientific developments. This is an assuring move, especially when the chapters cover such topics as the body or the external and internal senses. Second, chapter 4 on the human body and chapter 10 on the affective realm are especially welcome. Thomas does not focus on the body in his admittedly theological works, yet prephilosophic human experience and scientific investigation can go far in aiding a view of the body as that which reveals, to a great extent, the human being as a whole. The affective realm, while it has often been presented in Thomistic texts (usually under the label of "the passions"), is granted a relatively robust treatment here. The authors spend some time sorting out terminological matters, distinguishing and relating "affection," "passion," "emotion," "feeling," "mood," and "sensation." After giving accounts of these phenomena in terms of human awareness and appetite, the authors examine the dynamism and typology of the affections. They maintain that while the affective realm does not constitute a third faculty alongside intellect and will (105), the affections remain a "particularly appropriate expression of the substantial unity of body and soul, of spirituality and sensibility" (118).

Part 2 begins with a substantial examination of the person from metaphysical and historical angles (chapter 13). Six more chapters investigate freedom and self-fulfillment; relationality; culture; values; work, feast, and play; and time and history. Certain chapters are almost surprisingly substantial in content. For example, chapter 15, on the relationality of the person, begins by considering relationality as originary and man as social by nature. It then devotes attention to the various tendencies and accompanying virtues that constitute relational living: *pietas*, *observantia*, *dulia*, *obedientia*, *gratitudo*, *vindicatio*, *veracitas*, *amicitia*, and *liberalitas*. The chapter ends with discussions of human self-fulfillment in the context of society, and individualist versus collectivist conceptions. Chapters 13 and 14, on the person and on freedom and self-fulfillment, are similarly extensive.

More noticeably than in part 1, the text here makes rich use of many thinkers, most of whose names are instantly recognizable, as mentioned above. The authors do not hesitate to employ helpful contributions from across the philosophical spectrum, nor do they hesitate to point out accompanying deficiencies. For example, chapter 14's discussion of freedom

and self-fulfillment includes a brief account of the distinction between individuals and persons articulated by Nikolai Berdyaev, Emmanuel Mounier, and Jacques Maritain. The authors suggest that while the distinction has some validity given the right context, it is ultimately insufficient in light of the metaphysical account of the person already established in chapter 13 (166–67). Similarly, in chapter 17, Max Scheler's contribution to a theory of values receives approbation for its insight into values as objective and universal; yet his larger view of the person is noted as faulty (217–18).

I have two minor criticisms. First, I would have appreciated more direct quotes from the primary thinkers, especially in part 1, which contained very few. Second, while many chapters are quite detailed and substantial in content, others are noticeably less so. Sometimes this unevenness may be warranted, given the aim and limits of the work (thus chapter 16 on culture), but at other times one wishes for a more thorough presentation (chapter 5 on the faculties and chapter 11 on sexuality, for example).

In sum, *Philosophical Anthropology: An Introduction* is notable for its broad scope, its analytic and synthetic accounts of the human being, its sound presentation of Thomas's thought, and its felicitous use of thinkers—metaphysical, personalist, literary, and scientific—from within the Western tradition. More than a fine introduction to philosophical anthropology in the Thomistic tradition, it stands out through including the personal, relational, and cultural dimensions of human existence. Experienced teachers may even find their own thinking stimulated in a certain direction by the text's uniting of the metaphysical and personalist approaches. The work would make an excellent text for introductory courses in colleges, universities, and seminaries. For seminary philosophy in particular, Robert Sokolowski has encouraged the use of good textbooks. With such works as *Philosophical Anthropology: An Introduction*, his suggestion could be fruitfully followed. 

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Theology, University, Humanities: Initium Sapientiae Timor Domini edited by Christopher Craig Brittain and Francesca Aran Murphy (*Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011*), viii + 243 pp.

ANY THEOLOGIAN working in the academy is well aware of the precarious place that theology occupies within the modern university. Even if the institution claims a confessional identity, theology faculty must navigate an intellectual battlefield stretched between two fronts. On the one hand, university administrations question the “usefulness” of theology in a secular world that views higher education as a means to a lucrative career. On the other hand, fellow disciplines constituting the “humanities” (or “arts” in many American universities) frown upon theology as an obscurantist sibling that undermines their own struggle to prove the usefulness of the humanities in the modern job market. That theology is “queen of the sciences” is dismissed as an antiquated (and even arrogant) myth. Theologians might bemoan this situation in hushed corners or at academic conferences, but they are remiss to propose any tangible remedies.

The present work under review may not offer any grand solution to this situation, but it does mark a rare collaborative effort to place theology in dialogue with other disciplines and thus charts a path forward. The edited volume is a diverse collection of papers presented at a conference on theology’s place within the humanities. The editors readily admit that the contributors do not come to any unified solution. Nevertheless, a common stone inscription found at the University of Aberdeen—the host of the conference—serves as a collective starting point for each author: the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Theology has something unique to offer the university, if for no other reason than, as Francesca Murphy argues in her introduction, theology “can remind the humanities how to have a *practical aim* without being useful” (6). In other words, theology challenges the postmodern materialistic worldview and points to a greater purpose in life. The authors demonstrate how theology can be a valuable liaison between the modern university and the humanities by critically questioning unnamed premises—what one contributor identifies as theology’s “ability to sniff out small gods” (191).

The book offers two noteworthy strengths: an extensive interdisciplinary perspective on the role of theology in the academy and an impressive quality of scholarship. P. Travis Kroeker begins the conversation by placing Kant, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky in dialogue with Augustine on the liturgical nature of justice in society. Although the article could benefit from a more generous (and thorough) reading of Augustine, Kroeker makes a memorable case for how “rights are related to rites” (34). John Webster continues the discussion with an intriguing recovery of Bonaventure’s underappreciated work *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*. Webster employs the service of the great scholastic to show how theology “is not a ‘faculty’ but a culture” in that it provides a “comprehensive account of all things in the light of God” (51). David Jasper shifts gears to outline a case for a “theological humanism” that forms a “creative imagination” (73) poised between intellectual extremes. He argues that theology must recognize its own limitations, and some readers may question whether Jasper overstates the apophatic nature of theology. Joachim Schaper combines history and exegesis to provide the work with a historical perspective. The article is sure to raise the eyebrows of many readers, as Schaper attempts to save biblical criticism from the “dogmatism” underlying “theological exegesis.” He takes on John Barton and Richard Hays by way of Schleiermacher and Troeltsch. Theology in general, and biblical studies in particular, must wrestle with the complexities of history if it is to be an academic discipline. In one of the more controversial lines of the book, Schaper insists that biblical studies (and theology by extension) must “never let itself be governed by *dogmatically inspired* hermeneutical axioms. If it does, it ceases to be historical and critical” (89). A “critical” assessment of this statement might question whether it is not itself “dogmatic” in its eschewal of ecclesiological considerations. Simon Oliver pays closer attention to logical premises in the following essay. He critiques modern philosophy’s prioritization of potentiality over actuality. This trend, he maintains, results in positivistic definitions of God based on human experience that refuse to consider revelation. As an antidote, Oliver recovers Nicholas of Cusa’s claim that God is “actual possibility” or “possest” in that only God is creator (99). Here theology can help philosophy move beyond subject-object dualism through a creator-creature paradigm. Laurence Paul Hemming is not so sure that such a move is possible in the next article.

He argues that theologians cannot escape the Hegelian dialectic of the infinite and the finite, and shows how attempts to escape this reality by de Lubac and Milbank only reaffirm the dominance of this imperative. David McIlroy takes the book in a completely different direction with questions about theology in relation to legal theory. He uses the thought of Herman Dooyeweerd and Thomas Aquinas—two unlikely interlocutors—to argue that only theology can explain the “why” behind law’s foundations in justice and authority (145). Christopher Brittain (also an editor) gives a voice for sociology by disputing Stanley Hauerwas’s rejection of the social sciences for Christian thought. For Brittain, theology cannot be divorced from social reality by means of a rhetorical “invisible church” or coming kingdom (164). Rather, Christian theology can aid sociology with an understanding of “charity, reconciliation and redemption,” yet by the same token, sociology can help locate these ideas in the reality of social life (171). In a similar vein, Christopher Insole speaks for political theory as he challenges theologians (many following Hauerwas) who maintain that liberal democracy is fundamentally antitheological. To define “liberalism,” Insole begins with “practices” rather than theory via a “methodology of attention and disaggregation before adjudication” (178). His point is simple: theology *does* have something to contribute to political theory, but if it is to move beyond rhetoric, it must discern the actual complexity and diversity of “liberalism” in the modern world. Gavin D’Costa is also critical of Hauerwas from a Catholic perspective. Although he sympathizes with Hauerwas’s disdain for the state of the modern university, D’Costa questions Hauerwas’s “bonfire of the disciplines” in ostensibly claiming that the Christian is “immune” from the critique of nontheological disciplines (204). D’Costa’s alternative is the worldview of *Ex corde ecclesiae* and the Catholic pursuit of a genuine “Christian culture” in which theology guides but does not suffocate dialogue between the various disciplines of the university. Instead, theology reminds the other disciplines that the (Catholic) university constitutes a collaborative pursuit of the *same* truth. He concludes with a fascinating example of how this dialogue can take shape between theology and literature. Brittain concludes the book with a reflection on how contemporary Christianity might recover John Henry Newman’s “idea” of a university that saves the “Lost Soul”—the individual adrift in the modern world, unable to “think about, and bear, complexity and

difference" (225). Overall, this diverse (and at times, even divergent) assortment of essays invites theology to dialogue with history, sociology, politics, philosophy, legal theory, and literature.

Despite the astounding breadth of perspectives presented, the book exhibits two weaknesses. Murphy acknowledges the first limitation in her introduction: the interaction between theology and history fades into the shadows of the book, and she laments that the volume did not include additional essays on how theology and ecclesiology can both inform modern conceptions of history and learn from historical research (12). Here Schaper's concern that theology is deaf to the voice of history is well taken. Newman's idea of a Catholic university was not divorced from his theories on the development of doctrine. Questions about continuity and change continue to frame ecclesiological questions (e.g., the reception of Vatican II) and, more often than not, haunt the silent premises of many systematic and biblical theologians. From an American perspective, the work also lacks any discussion of the emergence of "Catholic Studies" programs in recent decades. To be sure, the phenomenon is more or less limited to higher education in the United States (Durham's Centre being a noteworthy exception within the United Kingdom), and the editors are careful to maintain a cross-confessional discussion of the topic at hand. Nevertheless, the development of such programs has arisen as a direct response to how the theological search for truth can collaborate with other disciplines in the university (including, but not limited to, the humanities). D'Costa's case for the creation of a "Catholic culture" seems to resonate with a similar goal. Of course, no collection of essays can be exhaustive, and one only hopes that this timely work will foster further conversation and inspire future publications. Any scholar in the humanities has much to gain through the insights of this work, and the theologian may consider using this text in a graduate or faculty seminar. 

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Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization by Ralph Martin (*Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012*), xvi + 316 pp.

IT IS NOT WITHOUT MERIT that Ralph Martin's recent volume is prefaced by some sixteen endorsements from leading theologians, bishops, and cardinals. *Will Many Be Saved?* is an erudite but accessible work that raises the long-overdue question of whether we have properly received Vatican II's teaching vis-à-vis the possibility of salvation for non-Christians.

As Martin indicates in his preface, the book's principal focus concerns the proper interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* 16, a text that constitutes "the most extensive treatment of this question in the conciliar documents" (xi). At the heart of the author's argument is his contention that the text's last three sentences are almost always ignored. From an analysis of these sentences Martin develops his thesis that they "contain a key to overcoming a doctrinal confusion that is hindering our response, as individuals and as a Church, to the recent popes' persistent calls for a 'new evangelization'" (xii). This confusion, Martin maintains, involves the widespread supposition that the majority of mankind will somehow or another be saved. In contrast, Martin takes "a position that is not often argued—namely that the conditions under which people can be saved who never heard the gospel are very often, in fact, not fulfilled" (xii).

Martin sets the stage for his argument in a brief opening chapter. Citing Ratzinger, he observes that we are witnessing a mass apostasy in today's Church (3). Evangelization is therefore just as important as ever, but the importance of mission is not sufficiently recalled today. Martin pointedly frames the issue:

If it is not really necessary to become a Christian in order to be saved, why bother to evangelize? The reasons often given for evangelizing include appeals to a "greater richness" or a "greater fullness" or a "making explicit what is already implicitly there." In a culture that is characterized by hostility to claims of absolute truth and unique means to salvation, many Catholics apparently find these reasons to be less than compelling (5).

At least to this reader, it is not obvious how this last sentence follows from Martin's brief summary of the reasons for evangelization mentioned immediately beforehand. Yet while these and other potential reasons could have been taken more seriously, the soundness of Martin's point is seen in the very fact that Catholics often seem uninterested in evangelizing. Even among those of us who do engage in a ministry of evangelization, our ministry often lacks urgency. Martin recognizes that a reason for this is that there does exist a "certain tension" between the call to evangelize and the fact that the Church affirms salvation is possible for those who have never heard the Gospel (5).

Chapters 2 and 3 contain a detailed examination of *Lumen Gentium* 16. According to the conciliar text, salvation is possible for non-Christians "under certain very specific conditions": that their ignorance of the Gospel not be culpable, that they sincerely seek God, that they follow the light of conscience as moved by God's grace, and that they welcome whatever good or truth they live amidst (9). However, Catholics often gloss over the final three sentences of LG 16, which indicate that the above conditions are not always met. Indeed, some translations fail to capture the sense of the Latin *saepius* in this text, which means that "very often" non-Christians find themselves deceived by the Evil One and exchange the truth of God for a lie (15, 58).¹

A significant portion of chapter 3 is dedicated to tracing the history of the doctrine *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (EENS) based on Francis Sullivan's chronology.² With Fr. Sullivan, Martin is aware that the various formulations of the doctrine must be understood within their proper historical context and thus in light of their audience and intention. Issued in 1949 in response to the teaching of Fr. Leonard Feeney, the *Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston* is described by Martin as the culmination of the doctrinal development he has surveyed. Cited by LG 16 in support of its teaching, the letter "reaffirmed the 'broader' understanding of EENS that did not require explicit membership in the

¹ As a possible indication of the Council's intention here, Aloys Grillmeier notes that the original draft of the section now known as LG §16 had the heading "Of non-Christians who are to be led to the Church." Ibid., 18.

² Francis Sullivan, S.J., *Salvation outside the Church: Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

Church for salvation, but allowed for relatedness by implicit, even unconscious, desire" (47-48).³

Martin's conclusions at the end of chapter 3 provide a clear summary of what *LG 16* is and is not teaching. On the one hand, it is important to consider that not every proclamation of the Gospel can be deemed "adequate," and thus not everyone who rejects such a proclamation can be judged culpable of unbelief (53). However, Martin balances this positive observation with a note of realism: "Just because salvation is possible for people who are inculpably ignorant of the Gospel or who have not heard a presentation that is adequate, does not mean they are hereby saved" (53). Salvation requires grace, and a person who says "yes" to God in the depths of his conscience must persevere in corresponding to this grace until death. Inattention to this last point has led many Catholics "to take a superficial and cavalier attitude" toward the possibility of non-Christians being saved (53).

One of the theologians claiming "salvation optimism" is none other than Francis Sullivan, upon whose chronology of EENS Martin has drawn. While giving due respect to Sullivan's careful analysis of the doctrinal history of EENS, he critiques the latter for claiming that there has been a reversal from pessimism to optimism in the Church's official stance on the salvation of non-Christians (54-55). "Unfortunately," Martin does well to observe, "no sources are indicated for the alleged 'presumption of innocence' that is supposedly the 'official attitude' of the Church. Huge leaps in logic are being made here" (55). When the innocence of non-Christians is presupposed, the possibility of salvation described in *LG 16* is often wrongly taken to mean probability, and this is what is damaging. For this reader, Martin's criticism of Sullivan on this point was one of the highlights of the book. It is a salutary reminder that Vatican II's teaching does not amount to an official perspective change whereby we may presume innocence, and therefore salvation, in the case of non-Christians.

³ For a particularly insightful treatment of the mechanism by which non-Christians may respond to grace in a "pre-conceptual manner," see the following work discussed by Martin: Charles Journet, *What Is Dogma?*, trans. Mark Pontifex, O.S.B. (New York: Hawthorn, 1964), 30-39. For a further application of Journet's theology, see Matthew Ramage, *Dark Passages of the Bible* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), esp. chap. 4.

In chapter 4, Martin switches gears to treat the biblical foundations of *LG* 16. The primary focus of the chapter is Romans 1–2, which is both explicitly cited and implicitly alluded to in the council text. Romans is important because it “shows us that something is really at stake: eternal salvation or damnation” (91). When Romans 1 teaches that the Gentiles have the law written on their hearts, Paul is using this observation not to exonerate the Gentiles, but rather to indict them. The Gentiles are far from innocent: they are “without excuse” (Rom 1:20). Also covered in this chapter—more briefly—is Mark 16:14–16, another text cited by the council. While Martin does well to focus on these texts, it does seem odd that a chapter dedicated to the biblical foundations of *LG* 16 would not devote more time to the other two texts cited in this section of the text, in particular 1 Timothy 2:4 which would have provided a more “optimistic” balance to Martin’s assessment. As a general but related observation, there seems to be a lacuna in the work insofar as it pays minimal attention to the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Many statements from these pontiffs seem to paint a more optimistic portrait of non-Christians than one finds in Martin’s analysis. These must be given more attention if we are to ascertain that in which a proper reception of *LG* 16 consists.⁴

Comprising nearly half of the book, chapters 5 and 6 investigate and critique the theology of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, men selected because “their views on the possibilities of universal salvation are cited as the basis of a prevailing consensus among Catholic theologians in favor of a strong hope that everyone may be saved” (129). For his part, Rahner overestimates the “response rate” of the human race to the grace of God (101). According to Martin, Rahner’s “completely optimistic description of the conciliar teaching . . . is only possible when the complete text is ignored” (107). Further, Rahner insinuates that *Lumen Gentium* was not itself dogmatic but a “start” to further dogmatic devel-

⁴ In particular, the book would have benefited from more attention to John Paul’s *Redemptoris Missio*, which is mentioned a handful of times; *Dominum et Vivificantem*, which is mentioned only once; and *Redemptor Hominis*, which is omitted entirely. Similarly, Benedict XVI’s encyclical on hope, *Spe Salvi*, is mentioned only once within a footnote (284n14). Though not magisterial, the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is another significant document that should be mentioned in the endeavor to properly receive the teaching of *LG* §16.

opment (124). Bringing Ratzinger's analysis to bear on this view, Martin sharply criticizes Rahner for disregarding the council's actual texts in the name of a supposed "spirit" implied in them (124).

Nearly twice as long as his chapter on Rahner, Martin's critique of Balthasar in chapter 6 is thorough and incisive. Contrasting the approaches of these two thinkers, Martin describes Rahner's theology as an attempt to "dive under" the words of Scripture, finding in human anthropology "a transcendental subjectivity that is already addressed by God and is most likely positively responsive to the 'supernatural existential'" (134). Balthasar, on the other hand, attempts to "jump over" the words of Scripture in positing extrabiblical possibilities of salvation (e.g., through a conversion after death). Martin's conclusion is that Balthasar "departs from the content of revelation and the mainstream theological tradition of the Church in a way that undermines the call to holiness and evangelization and is pastorally damaging" (178). Specifically, Balthasar's declaration of a "stalemate" between biblical passages that seem to speak of universal salvation versus those which speak of a densely populated hell "makes clear his belief in an all-but-certain universal salvation" (183). Also problematic in Martin's view is Balthasar's claim that we have a "duty to hope for the salvation of all" (169). Martin finds there to be an equivocation on "hope". The term is not problematic if taken to mean "we hope and pray" that all be saved, but it is another thing to affirm we can have supernatural hope for the salvation of all men. Martin believes—with good reason—that Balthasar is using hope in the latter of the two senses (173-74). While still admiring Balthasar's genius, this reader has had to revisit his own assessment of Balthasar's soteriology in light of Martin's analysis.

In sum, Martin's recent work is a timely reminder that the true spirit of Vatican II is to be found within its texts in their entirety. To be sure, *Lumen Gentium* represents a development with regard to how the Church views the status of non-Christians. However, *LG* 16 also soberly reaffirms the real possibility of damnation and thus the need for Christian missionary activity. The Church today needs a properly balanced pastoral strategy cognizant of both the universal action of the Holy Spirit and the pervasiveness of sin, which poses a real threat to salvation.

N&V

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The Biblical Interpretation of William of Alton by Timothy Bellamah, O.P. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xi + 354 pp.

IN THIS BOOK, Fr. Timothy Bellamah makes an important contribution to our understanding of medieval exegesis both by providing the first full-length study of the largely unknown Dominican biblical commentator, William of Alton, and by publishing critical editions of the prologues to six of his seven known biblical commentaries.

Born in England, but sent to Saint-Jacques in Paris at some point after entering the Dominican Order, William of Alton came to be one of the Dominican regent masters in theology at Paris in the academic year 1259, occupying the chair that Thomas Aquinas left vacant after his transfer from Paris to Italy. Twenty-five biblical commentaries (or “postills,” as the line-by-line commentaries he produced are often called in medieval and modern sources) are attributed to William. Attempting to determine which of these commentaries William actually authored presents no small number of difficulties. As Bellamah acknowledges, “no explicit internal evidence of William’s authorship of any of these texts has yet been found” (11). Nonetheless, there is some important external evidence that guides Bellamah as he sifts through the works attributed to William. For example, in some of the manuscripts the medieval scribe attributes a work to William. Also, in 1275 three works are mentioned on a stationer’s list as being authored by William. We also find references to William’s works mentioned in the catalogues of a few medieval libraries. This external evidence allows Bellamah to conclude that the postills on Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and John are very likely to be from William. Bellamah refers to these four postills collectively as constituting the Group A commentaries, while all of the remaining ones are placed into a B group.

Bellamah identifies a set of characteristics common to the postills of Group A, such as William’s stylistic and lexical choices as well as his exegetical concerns. For example, in his *divisio textus*, William “systematically opens with an excerpt of the text commented upon, or lemma, which is regularly followed by *hic*” (17). To take another example of a distinguishing feature of the Group A commentaries, Bellamah shows that there is a notable primacy placed on the literal sense in these com-

mentaries. Bellamah acknowledges that these and the other features common to the Group A commentaries can be found individually in the commentaries of William of Middleton, Albert the Great, Bonaventure, and other near contemporaries of William. Nevertheless, their simultaneous presence in any one commentary is taken as evidence for William's authorship. Based upon the internal evidence culled from the Group A commentaries, Bellamah convincingly argues that three of the Group B commentaries should be attributed to William. Thus in addition to the commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and John, Bellamah identifies commentaries on Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, and Ezekiel as the work of William of Alton.

Bellamah goes on to situate William's exegetical method within the larger context of patristic and medieval exegetical practices. William accords a primacy to the literal sense of scripture, and in order to be able to delve more deeply into the literal sense of scripture, William shows a special concern for uncovering what he can about the life and thought of the human authors of the books on which he comments. One way that Bellamah shows the uniqueness of William's concerns for these matters is through comparing how Thomas Aquinas and William treat the figure of John in the prologues to their respective commentaries on the Fourth Gospel. While both Thomas and William are interested in the human author of the Fourth Gospel, Bellamah notes that "Thomas's focus is speculative, William's historical" (37). In the prologue to his commentary on John, William reflects on various episodes in the life of St. John, such as his conversation with Christ at the Last Supper and the charge that Christ gives him to take care of Mary. William even takes into account the pseudo-Jerominian prologue to the Gospel that portrays John as the groom at Cana who leaves his bride to follow Jesus. By contrast in Aquinas's prologue the only biographical detail mentioned about John is a passing reference to John's reclining upon Jesus's chest at the Last Supper. Aquinas instead focuses on John as a model of one who has contemplated God well and as such becomes a good instrument for communicating divine revelation to others. For William, however, John's many encounters with Jesus during his earthly life show him to be an intimate friend of Christ and a trustworthy witness to divine revelation.

Bellamah devotes a chapter to William's sources, which included

pagan authors, the Church Fathers, the *Glossa Ordinaria*, and his own contemporaries. William's commentaries are heavily indebted to these sources in that much of the text of his own commentaries is drawn verbatim or by close paraphrase from them. William, for instance, borrows heavily from the commentaries of Hugh of St. Cher and Bonaventure. Nevertheless, Bellamah shows that William was no mere compiler, but presents him instead as one who offers a creative synthesis of his sources that issues in an original contribution to the study of the Bible. Both his originality and his debt to his sources are on display in the final chapter of the book, where Bellamah discusses a series of theological topics that are present in William's biblical exegesis. The topics discussed are prophecy, divine condescension, the works of Christ, preaching, contemplation, spiritual sensation, and evangelical poverty.

This book also includes two valuable appendices. In Appendix I, Bellamah discusses all of the commentaries attributed to William. He provides information on the manuscripts containing these commentaries, before explaining why the claim of William's authorship of a given commentary is or is not accepted according to the criteria he had rigorously set out earlier in his book. In Appendix II, Bellamah publishes his editions of the prologues to all of the commentaries that he attributes to William with the exception of Isaiah. His editions follow the principles established by the editors of the Leonine Commission, and this includes reproducing the orthography of the medieval scribes. Thus in the editions of these prologues one will find *hec* instead of *haec* and *set* instead of *sed*, and so on. This practice is certainly to be commended since it preserves for the modern reader some of the unique features of medieval Latin.

As research into medieval exegesis continues it is quite possible that additional commentaries by William will be uncovered, and Bellamah has provided a solid foundation for all future studies of the texts and theology of William of Alton.

N&V

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Choosing from Love: The Concept of “Electio” in the Structure of the Human Act According to Thomas Aquinas by Lambert Hendriks (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2010), 358 pp.

THE MAIN THRUST of Lambert Hendriks’s work establishes a new foundation from which to understand human action. He ably shows that the foundation of a human act is the human person—an integrated whole who retains a single moving intention that is caused and maintained by his love for some good.

The nature of the human act has been perennially a topic of discussion among ethicists and moral theologians, and it has gained prominence in the past few decades among Thomists of various stripes. Partly in response to a cacophony of voices after Vatican II expostulating on conscience, freedom, and juridical norms, many have returned to the fundamental issues of morality, focusing on the nature of a human act, that is, a moral act from the perspective of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas’s account of human acts in questions 6–21 of the *prima secundae* of his *Summa theologiae* has become a classic text for subsequent thinkers. It is not thereby accepted as entirely perspicacious. On the contrary, these passages have proved difficult to grasp fully even by disciples of the Common Doctor. To modify extreme voluntarist interpretations of Aquinas, the Dominican priest Charles René Billuart (1685–1757) proposed a way to understand human action from the perspective of Aquinas, a twelve-step scheme that described the genesis of human action as an interplay between the human faculties to one degree or another. Billuart’s twelve-step scheme has shaped most subsequent discussions of Aquinas’s action theory. After Servais Pinckaers’s reevaluation of moral theology as a whole and Billuart in particular, recent works have modified Billuart’s schemes to various degrees, for example, Daniel Westberg’s *Right Practical Reason* (1994), Stephen L. Brock’s *Action and Conduct* (1998), Michael Sherwin’s *By Knowledge and by Love* (2005), and Livio Melina’s *The Epiphany of Love: Toward a Theological Understanding of Christian Action* (2010). It is into this context that Lambert Hendriks enters with his published dissertation, *Choosing from Love*. With Melina as the director of the dissertation, Hendriks’s method and exposition follow a scholastic route.

Hendriks's work is divided into six chapters, along with an introduction. Chapter 1 is prefatory, surveying Aquinas's sources, and chapter 6 is the summary and conclusion. Therefore this review focuses on chapters 2–5: choice in Aristotle, love, choice in Aquinas, and the union of reason and will.

By way of establishing key themes in his exposition, Hendriks devotes chapter 2 to Aristotle's concept of choice. For Aristotle, just as the human person is an integral whole, composed of soul and body, so human action contains an "organic" unity on account of the acting subject. Additionally, the good itself is a unifying higher principle insofar as the agent strives for the good through his desire. Although one can parse different elements that compose the human act, those elements are correlative, mutually enriching, and equally necessary. There is a "strict collaboration in choice between desire and reason" (90), as may be seen in Aristotle's famous description of choice as "either desiderative thought or intellectual desire" (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI, ch. 2 [1139b4]). Hendriks shows that "the Philosopher does not know or does not want to give priority to either [faculty]"; this is because they "work together with equal weight" (91). Furthermore, "choice itself is part of the action, and not some process that ends before the actual act begins"—that is, choice is not only a moment of volition; it remains present throughout the act chosen (92). Aristotle's integrative approach to human action demonstrates that character is modified by the process of human action: internal motivations and the external execution of the act are both at work. Aquinas develops these insights and incorporates them into a greater theological synthesis. The Dominican, drawing from other sources including Augustine and John Damascene, has a clearer concept of a "rational appetite," the will. Hendriks argues that the distinction between higher and lower appetites enables Aquinas more adequately to integrate the rational and desiderative elements in human action.

Chapter 3 is entitled "The Vulnerability of the Agent," a concept Hendriks borrows from Paul Wadell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (1992). Hendriks follows Aquinas in saying that "all of the agent's moral life" consists in seeking and finding what we love, and then finding joy in it (132). Because human action necessarily involves desire, it is founded on love. But love is radically shaped by the character of the person, that is, by an acquired *hab-*

itus that forms the disposition of the agent such that some things seem good—and therefore loveable—and other things do not. Because every agent wills an end, the end unifies all of the actions of an agent who pursues the means that lead to the end. Likewise, the striving of the agent, stemming from his knowledge and desire of the end, gives unity to the components of a human act. Hence there is a fundamental unity in the acting subject and his action, a unity that guarantees that love is present throughout a human act, from its conception to its completion.

In Wadell's terms, "Love is the utmost vulnerability" because "love [is] an abiding openness to all that is good" (88, 84). Developing this insight, Hendriks shows that "the appetite is what makes the subject 'vulnerable' for things outside him" (143). When appetite becomes united to reason, it "presupposes a voluntary receptivity to reality" (144). From this perspective, the passions that arise from appetite can contribute to human action and thus should not be suppressed but cultivated to do the good (157). Seeing the will as a "rational appetite" helps one to grasp that, contrary to the conception of later Scholastic thought, it is not a neutral faculty; it has an inclination toward the good, an inclination it shares with the lower appetites. Furthermore, the appetites belong to the entire person; they do not belong simply to one part. It follows that there is continuity between the sensible and rational appetite: the higher can share rightness with the whole of a person's affectivity. In this "dynamic of love," before the agent engages his will and chooses, "there is already a movement that orders the agent to act by means of a passive power, which is open for the object that the agent acts for" (175). Although the "specifically human" faculties, the reason and the will, may not yet be engaged, the human act is already in genesis, since the action is one of a complete person. In sum, the only way to correctly understand what an agent does is to take into consideration his intellectual, volitional, and affective dispositions (184). This is because the various causes of human action are linked together in the single moral act.

Chapter 4 concerns choice, that is, *electio*. It is a crucial moment for the person, for "at this point the acting person becomes attached or committed to the action he wants to accomplish . . . it comprises the human act in its fullness" (203–4). In brief, choice is "the decision to act" (206). Because the decision to act is always directed toward an end, and an end as such is desired for its goodness, choice necessarily involves a

striving of the will toward a good. This striving, this inclination of love, is present in all moments of the human act. Thus there is a “continuous movement of the will that accompanies the act from the very beginning until the very end” (213). For Thomas, intention and choice name the same thing seen from different points of view: on the one hand, a person does not . . . the means; and, on the other hand, one fully chooses in accord with one’s firm intention. Intention “unites the efficient cause of the will and the ordering of reason” (219).

With real innovation, Hendriks in chapter 4 helpfully discusses how virtue can elucidate the nature of the human act. Virtue reveals the substrata of every human act because “in a supreme way the virtuous act contains all of the affectivity and inclination that is in some way present in every human act,” for a virtuous act is human excellence visibly manifested (221). Because a virtue is a stable *habitus*, it shapes how a person responds to an object, thus preparing a person to love the good on emotional and volitional levels. Virtue is an “elective” habit: “it stems from choice, is preserved by choice, and is ordered to choice” (225). It follows that “virtue comes from love and leads to love . . . the virtues are strategies of love” (230). Hence the best version of a human act is a virtuous act: it is a pristine specimen, as it were, that discloses the depths of human action. This is especially true of the infused supernatural virtue of charity, which is “the virtue that commands that which the other virtues choose” (250).

Hendriks avoids both voluntarism and intellectual determinism by showing the interdependence of intellect and will. He emphasizes Thomas’s doctrine that “the will is the material principle and reason the formal principle of choice” (see *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 1). Following Pinckaers’s reading, Hendriks shows that Thomas’s account of the human act is “structural,” not temporal. Thus the intellect does not have temporal priority over the will, contrary to oversimplifications of the issue. It is true that, whenever the will errs, the error was first in the intellect. But the intellect does not act independently. Appetite moves the intellect to act in any given instance. Thus right reason is dependent, as it were, on right appetite in order to function well: and virtue is precisely what orders appetite. It is in this context that Hendriks discusses the issue of “self-determination,” gesturing toward St. Gregory of Nyssa with an observation that “we are our own parents, since we create ourselves as we

will through our decisions" (269). Reason is the root of freedom according to the classic Thomistic line that Hendriks follows, because one's inclination toward something will cease whenever its goodness is not considered by reason. In sum: "The will is free to act or not to act, in conjunction with reason's capacity to specify any aspect of something as a good for the agent" (276). "The will and the intellect mutually include one another: for the intellect understands the will, and the will wills the intellect to understand" (*ST* I, q. 16, a. 4, ad 1). There is therefore a "reciprocal causality" between intellect and will (322); they are co-movers (see *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 1). Insofar as the human act begins with a sensate encounter with an object, love has priority. Insofar as the human act properly speaking begins when the agent rationally reacts to the object, reason has priority. In accordance with the theme of the unity of the human person, freedom is not synonymous with indifference or spontaneity; it cannot be reduced to one's "simple liking"; rather, it involves "the realization of a human being's nature and involves the whole of one's life" (276).

Chapter 5 constitutes the culmination of Hendriks's argument. Based on his fundamental conclusion, discussed earlier at length, that "the principle of action is love rather than the will or reason, and therefore the agent as a whole is to be considered as acting," here Hendriks directly critiques Billuart's schema. Although Thomas Aquinas himself distinguishes the various "partial acts" that form the complete, organic human act, Hendriks holds that these partial acts are "mere theoretical elements." This stance is similar to that of biologists who look at the human body from a systems perspective and argue that microparticles, such as atoms and electrons, do not exist as such as "parts" of a body. Rather, the body exists as complete, organic whole. Particles of a body no longer exist on their own; their continued existence depends on their association and incorporation into the greater whole. Although atoms and the like can be extracted from the body, they cease to be parts of the living body by that very process of extraction. A similar situation obtains for the sequence of *simplex apprehensio . . . electio . . . fruitio*. "They can be helpful to analyze the human act logically, but they do not reflect the reality in action absolutely and by themselves" (277). This is because those "moments" in the human act are not "complete in themselves, even when they are partial acts" (280). In other words, Hendriks

critiques Billuart for perceiving the human act as an “extrinsic object” and then chopping it up into little bits. This takes the life out of human action. In contrast, Hendriks’s virtue perspective shows that “choice is involved in the whole act,” that love is the life of choice, and that therefore love is the life of the human act (282). It follows that “each partial act is also present in the others,” so long as they are related to *electio* (287, 289). These partial acts “can be considered different points of view of the one loving will that becomes concrete and particular in its way to the good,” such that the single human act is not composed of various partial acts pasted together (298); rather, the act as an integral whole can be viewed from various aspects.

With his book *Choosing from Love*, Lambert Hendricks insightfully explains the heart of the human act. The implications for his study are enormous, for he successfully clarifies an issue that has been discussed at length for centuries. It is highly recommended. Drawing from a wide variety of recent Thomistic thought on the human act, especially in the English-speaking world, he has synthesized many voices and shown that the human act is best understood as an organic whole. Minor faults include the circularity and repetitiveness of his thought, which is partly on account of his theme; additionally, there are a number of grammatical errors and infelicities. These faults do not substantially detract from the power of Hendricks’s insight and the thoroughness of his exposition. Love is present throughout the human act—natural love, sensitive love, and reasonable love. This insight can pave the way toward a more realistic, a more adequate, a more personal explanation of the human act, one that fits both experience and reason. **N&V**

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