

Book Reviews

The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue by Richard S. Briggs (*Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010*), 270 pp.

BAKER PRESS'S series *Studies in Theological Interpretation*, of which Richard Briggs's *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue* is a part, examines the new interests of "theological" or "canonical" interpretation of Scripture from the perspective of the biblical texts themselves. The issue Richard Briggs addresses in his book is specifically the question of "interpretive virtue." What kind of character must a person have to be a faithful reader of the Bible? Can reading the Bible make one virtuous? *The Virtuous Reader* looks to the Bible itself to shed light on questions like these. The premise of this book is that the Bible, and specifically the Old Testament, teaches certain interpretive virtues that can help Christians to read more faithfully.

Briggs begins with a brief look at the trend of "virtue ethics" in the vein of Alasdair MacIntyre's appropriation of Aristotle and Aquinas, which Briggs connects to work by Kevin Vanhoozer and Stephen Fowl on theological formation of Christian "good readers." Briggs says that Thomas Aquinas forms a key background to his thinking on interpretive virtue and Scripture as well. He says further that the key insight that gave rise to his book was John Boyle's reflection that Thomas Aquinas "is more interested in actually interpreting Scripture than in thinking about interpreting Scripture" (10). Although Briggs does little in terms of close engagement with Aquinas in *The Virtuous Reader*, he says that this belies "the hours spent exploring what was to me the previously undiscovered treasure of the *Summa*." Aquinas is present as an intellectual background in the philosophical understanding of virtue ethics that underlies Briggs's book, and he often appears, along with Karl Barth, when Briggs deals with broader theological questions.

Briggs then lays out his own plan to read the Old Testament to find interpretive virtues. Briggs focuses on five particular Old Testament narratives:

Numbers 12:3, 1 Kings 3:16–28, 2 Kings 18:13–37, Ruth 1:16–17, and Isaiah 6:1–13. Briggs uses the notion of “implied reader” as a way to read Old Testament texts for teaching on virtue without getting bogged down in questions of philosophical hermeneutics. The five interpretive virtues he discovers, corresponding to the five different Old Testament texts, are humility, wisdom, trust, love, and receptivity. He goes on to describe these in five respective chapters that mix theology and biblical exegesis. Briggs usually begins by posing a problem in theological interpretation regarding the particular passage at hand; he then reads the text in question to find a solution through an interpretive virtue that it teaches.

The first interpretive virtue Briggs discusses is “humility,” with reference to Numbers 12:3, “Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth.” Briggs reads “humility” in Numbers 12:3 to mean something more complex than “meekness,” the older King James translation. He says that the narrative of Numbers emphasizes Moses seeing God “face to face” in a way that leads up to Numbers 12:3. Moses’ humility, in the context of the narrative, is a contrast with the more mediated way in which Miriam and Aaron related to God, and it has to do with depending on God for the speaking of an authoritative word. The humility of Moses that appears in Numbers 12:3 is not modesty or meekness but close fellowship with God the revealer. Briggs’s payoff for theological interpretation here is recognizing that other aspects of the spiritual life, like prayer, are essential to being a faithful interpreter of God’s word. He references Aquinas and Karl Barth as theologians who mix biblical exegesis with spirituality in a way that mirrors his description of Moses’ “humility” as closeness to God (67).

The next interpretive virtue Briggs finds in Scripture is “wisdom” from 1 Kings 3, the text that relates the narrative of Solomon, in his dream, asking God for wisdom. Briggs studies both Solomon’s dream and the following scene of the two women before Solomon that serves as a showcase for his wisdom (1 Kings 3:16–28). Briggs reads the “wisdom” displayed in Solomon’s discernment of the rightful mother in 1 Kings 3:16–28 into the interpretive debates over this narrative in Old Testament scholarship. He says that Solomon’s ability in 1 Kings 3 to hear competing claims, to judge what can and cannot be known, and to find a way forward that follows God’s justice, is an ideal model for wise Christian readers.

Next comes “trust,” in 2 Kings 18. Briggs begins this section with reflections on biblical hermeneutics by Garrett Green and Hans Frei. Briggs connects thoughts by Green and Frei to the story of the emissary of Assyria, the “Rabshakeh,” who strangely calls on Israel to trust in their God and not in the power of Egypt (2 Kings 18:19–22). The text seems

to suggest that Hezekiah is in the right in opposing Assyria, although there is some interpretive difficulty. Briggs uses the difficulties surrounding interpretation of this text to reflect on larger themes of hermeneutical trust from Paul Ricoeur, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Michel Polanyi.

The chapter on the interpretive virtue of “love” discusses the role of Scripture in the life of local churches or parishes, particularly in the act of teaching Scripture in Christian education. Briggs finds two different ways to think about a “hermeneutic of love” in two different passages, Ruth 1:16–17 and 2 Kings 5. The first hermeneutic of love is a pledge to “follow” the message or worldview of a text wherever it leads; the second refers to interpreting a text somewhat badly to produce an interpretation that better serves the needs of the community. Briggs says that Christians need a developed understanding of the relationship between love and the act of teaching Scripture in order to ascertain which hermeneutic of love is appropriate for a particular context (162). He uses Augustine’s “rule of love” from *On Christian Doctrine* to help address this issue in the context of the connection between biblical scholarship and the life of the Church.

The final chapter looks at some contemporary theological “doctrines of Scripture,” most notably John Webster’s book *Holy Scripture*, through the virtue of “receptivity” or “being summoned” that Briggs finds in the temple scene in Isaiah 6. Briggs applies “receptivity” to biblical interpretation by describing receptivity as the ability of interpreters to have their perspectives transformed by the text. He opposes this virtue to a tendency he finds in some theological interpreters to ignore aspects of the text in order to make a smoother theological reading. He offers an example of this tendency in the fact that many interpreters tend to play down the more difficult part of Isaiah 6, verses 9–10, which suggest that Isaiah’s ministry will be a failure. Briggs says that, on a closer reading of Isaiah 6:9–10 in the context of the book of Isaiah’s overall narrative arc, one can read this passage as describing the period of exile while simultaneously pointing to a future redemption fulfilled in Isaiah 40. Briggs’s point here is that theological interpretation should avoid overriding the text with a preconceived theological framework. Theological interpreters must practice both careful attention to the biblical text and engagement with the text’s theological ramifications.

In the overall picture of interpretive virtue that emerges, readers of Scripture acknowledge the nature of Scripture as a witness to God’s involvement with the world, and they come to this witness with a basic attitude of trust. This same trust should lead the reader to attend to the text closely, and even perhaps to ask difficult questions (with love and wisdom).

The *Virtuous Reader* demonstrates how bringing theological and philosophical interests to Old Testament texts—interests such as virtue ethics—

can be done in a way that benefits understanding in all of the fields of scholarship involved. Briggs shows how virtue ethics can impact the way Christians read the Old Testament, and he shows this in a way that is equally attentive to the needs of the classroom and to those of the local church. Briggs demonstrates a real concern for Christians who are struggling with the questions that his book raises. Although the book is written for those who have at least some background in theology or biblical studies, Briggs's analyses of the five Old Testament texts could be useful sermon or Bible study material. His work could be easily adapted to an introductory Old Testament course, or to a church Bible study series on "how to read the Bible." The most valuable contribution of the book, however, is that Briggs has brought together biblical studies and theology in a way that does justice to both. N V

Matthew Archer
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio

A Biblical View of Law and Justice by David McIlroy (*Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004*), xiv + 238 pp.

A Trinitarian Theology of Law: In Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann, Oliver O'Donovan and Thomas Aquinas by David McIlroy (*Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2009*), xxii + 262 pp.

THE PROBLEM with much political theology, both on the left and on the right of the political spectrum, is that all too often political theory appears to provide the hermeneutical framework for an engagement with the biblical narrative. In *A Biblical View of Law and Justice* and *A Trinitarian Theology of Law*, David McIlroy reverses this approach, allowing a theology of human law to emerge out of the biblical narrative, and demonstrating a refreshing refusal to view that narrative through the prism of modern debates about law, politics, and morality.

In the first half of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice*, McIlroy presents a lively and wide-ranging account of the Old Testament understanding of law, which he examines in relation to such Old Testament themes as the character of God, creation, the fall, the Law of Moses, kingship, and the prophetic call to justice. While the emphasis in these chapters is historical, the author is constantly alert to the theological implications of the texts with which he engages. This theological engagement can be characterized as Christological and pneumatological—Christological in the sense that the author has a profound (and highly patristic) understanding

of Christ as fulfilling Torah, Temple, and the Old Testament roles of prophecy and kingship, and pneumatological in the sense that his dialogue with modern theologians (most especially those concerned with political theology) is grounded in his conviction that a proper understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit is integral to all such debate. In the second half of the volume the emphasis shifts from the historical toward the theological, and here McIlroy sketches the outlines of a theology of law built on these Christological and pneumatological foundations.

Fundamental to McIlroy's Theology of Law is the insight that "Christianity's vision of the ultimate good . . . is not susceptible of enforcement by human laws" (34). However, while the ultimate good (knowing God) cannot be legally enforced, "there is also a Christian vision of what is 'naturally' good as a basis for a good society," and this natural good is "that people might have their material and relational needs sufficiently supplied to be able to enjoy life in this world, and the opportunity to respond freely to the gospel, so that they might be able to enjoy life in the next world" (35). McIlroy believes that the "incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ demonstrate that legislation is not God's final answer to the problem of human sinfulness," and that law is necessarily limited in what it can accomplish (138). Hence there are "limits to what human law, even if guided by Christian principles, can be expected to achieve in restraining human sinfulness," and "limits on the extent to which Christian law makers ought to be seeking to enforce Christian behaviour and Christian belief," inasmuch as "that people have a genuinely *free* opportunity to accept the lordship of Christ has to be paramount over the enforcement of Christian morals" (138–39).

The pivotal chapter of *A Biblical View of Law and Justice*—indeed, the pivotal chapter of the two volumes taken together—is the one entitled "Law and the Spirit," in which McIlroy draws on the key texts of Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 11:19–20 and 36:26–27, in which the prophets "were given visions of a new covenant in which God himself would cleanse his people, and give them a new heart and a new spirit" (150). These promises are fulfilled in Jesus and are the background to Paul's teaching on law and justification. Law—even God-given law in the shape of Torah—cannot justify, and legal systems cannot produce what McIlroy terms "deep justice," although, under the guidance of the Spirit, they can be God's providential means for producing that "shallow justice" which in turn creates an environment in which, by the grace of the Spirit working in human hearts, deep justice is allowed to flourish.

McIlroy attributes the severely limited capacity of law to achieve "a just, righteous, peaceful and holy society" to a range of interconnected

factors: “the paradoxical nature of Christ’s kingdom, the absence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the inability of law to make human beings truly moral, and the temptations and evil lurking in the power structures of our world” (156). In particular, he argues that political and legal authorities “are not exempt from sinfulness that affects humanity as a whole,” with the result that “Christians should support the rule of law, the limited state and the separation of powers, as all being instruments apt to mitigate the effects of the Fall” (182). Accordingly, “Christian legislative initiatives must recognise that the presence of sin and the absence of the (indwelling presence of the) Holy Spirit limit what it is possible to achieve through legislation. Law making can only constrain and encourage; it cannot change hearts” (185). McIlroy’s Pauline thesis that law is not grace-bearing is one that he makes repeatedly and to great effect, but his additional point that original sin infects lawmakers and human laws themselves is equally important. Human laws, created as they are by human beings affected by original sin, are not immune from the virus of sin, and so cannot act, except (at best) in a limited and restricted sense, as a remedy. Law, in short, far from solving the problem of human sinfulness, tends to compound it—even in the case of God-given law, as St Paul makes clear. Indeed, what McIlroy says about human law in general reflects the structure of Paul’s contention (most notably in Romans 5–7) that Torah is inherently bound up with sin, that its ability to hold sin in check is severely limited, and that it is neither grace-bearing nor life-giving.

McIlroy argues convincingly that this limited function of law is brought into focus by a properly developed eschatology. Human law is provisional—only at the Last Judgment will human judgments be revealed in their true light—and, even at its best, it can be no more than an imperfect reflection of God’s justice. The question we need to ask ourselves is “will the legal systems we have been participating in be recognised as a reflection or a shadow, however faint, of divine justice or merely as a parody of it?” (199). Resisting those political theologies that seek to present redemption in terms of political solutions to problems of social injustice, McIlroy affirms that “human justice cannot be redemptive *as such*; the most it can do is to point beyond itself to the redemption available through the justice of God” (202). *Pace* the proponents of theologies of liberation, there is no equation between political and social justice and redemption, though there is a strong emphasis on the obligation of Christians to work toward creating a society in which human justice is a reflection (however imperfect) of divine justice rather than a parody.

McIlroy’s insight that an attentive reading of the biblical texts reveals the need for a Christological and pneumatological approach to under-

standing human law is the inspiration for *A Trinitarian Theology of Law*. He begins by distinguishing between the kind of classic western Trinitarianism that has tended toward a monarchical emphasis on the unity of the one God, and the kind of modern western Trinitarian theology that has focused on the “social Trinity.” The latter he categorizes as “the programmatic use of a particular model of the Trinity from which there are direct correlations to tangible social conclusions” and which “privileges the immanent Trinity as the resource for social theory” (2). The classic model tends “to reflect on the biblical narrative which reveals the Trinity and to reflect on the Trinity which illuminates the biblical narrative and so to situate present societies within the biblical narrative and in relation to the triune God,” thereby privileging the economic Trinity. McIlroy views the classic approach as preferable, partly because it is rooted in the biblical narrative, and partly because it is less prone to projectionism—that is, to the tendency to project some modern political or social agenda back onto the Trinity in such a way that the immanent Trinity becomes the theological rationale for an agenda that is not itself a natural corollary of the narrative of Scripture.

The dangers and deficiencies inherent in the social model are illustrated in Chapter 2 by McIlroy’s acute analysis of the political and Trinitarian theology of Jürgen Moltmann. Moltmann’s social Trinitarianism informs (or is informed by) his antipathy toward political hierarchies and power structures, though, paradoxically, in spite of his deep suspicion of authority and its ability to promote social justice, Moltmann’s own solutions seem dependent on the appropriate political action being taken by like-minded authorities. McIlroy also portrays Moltmann’s theology (accurately) as tending toward panthesism, inasmuch as the perichoresis of the divine Persons extends to a perichoresis of the Trinity and of the human spirit which finds expression in a soteriology of “deification” that is far removed from the Eastern Orthodox understanding of this term. Mindful of Moltmann’s inclination to look to human solutions to the problem of injustice and to blur the distinction between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit, McIlroy contends that if the Old Testament is read “as demonstrating the fallenness and inadequacies of human legal systems, even if their laws are God-given (as opposed merely to being seen as such), then the prophecies about the Holy Spirit in Jeremiah and Ezekiel are seen as promising a change of heart through the giving of the Spirit which will make justice, righteousness, holiness and social virtue possible” (85–86). He adds, “This aspect of the work and person of the Holy Spirit presupposes the inability of law alone to create a just society and reveals that in terms of law/morality it is through the agency of the Spirit that

justice/righteousness is promoted. It is not primarily legal systems and power structures but rather human beings that are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and given future orientation through the Spirit's presence" (86).

McIlroy now turns his attention to the work of Oliver O'Donovan, whom he describes as "the pre-eminent contemporary political theologian," whose work is characterized by "careful attention to the biblical narrative," a revival of the "tradition of Western Christian political theology," and an appreciation that "political theology has a Trinitarian structure" (2). Fundamental to O'Donovan's understanding of political theology is the insight that the fact of Christ's having *ascended* "means that he needs no earthly ruler to establish or to confirm his rights," and that to "claim such a vocation is to blaspheme" (107). McIlroy quotes O'Donovan to the effect that "[F]ollowing the triumphal Ascension of Christ . . . political authorities can either obediently accept their limited function of judgment or idolatrously reject their rightful place and assert themselves against God" (107), and he notes that whereas Moltmann risks "elevating *our* particular vision of justice into universal or divine status," O'Donovan is "constantly aware that seeking ultimate peace and or ultimate justice in the present age is what leads to Antichrist" (123). O'Donovan sees the Holy Spirit as "performing the key action of providentially sustaining human regimes" (149), but, arguing (in the light of the biblical narrative, and, in particular, of the witness of Jeremiah and Ezekiel) that the role of the Spirit is not only providential but also prudential and sapiential and grace-bearing, McIlroy suggests that what he describes as the "anti-totalitarian elements in O'Donovan's theory" would be significantly strengthened "by an account of the way in which the Spirit acts beyond human law in effecting the conversion of human hearts, transforming them into agents who are enabled to become truly free as they apprehend their God-given place within the moral orders of creation and God's kingdom" (150–51). McIlroy praises O'Donovan for recognizing that political theology needs to possess a Trinitarian structure, but criticizes his Trinitarianism as lacking balance, inasmuch as its strong and clearly defined Christology is accompanied by a comparatively weak and underdeveloped pneumatology.

In the next section, McIlroy selects Aquinas as the prime example of "a theologian who prioritises the biblical narrative and the economic Trinity in his understanding of the role of human law in social relations" (3). Drawing on the work of Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, he correctly rejects the view that for Aquinas the Trinity is "nothing more than an appendix to his monotheism," and presents Aquinas as a profoundly biblical and Trinitarian thinker. What follows is an exemplary

and enlightening account of Aquinas's teaching on the Old and New Law, which is discussed in relation to soteriology, grace, virtue ethics, natural law, politics, and the overarching theme of glorification—McIlroy's preferred term for deification, which he understands in a fully Orthodox sense (to be contrasted with Moltmann's panentheistic sense). In the light of the classic study by A. N. Williams on deification in Aquinas and Palamas, McIlroy rightly perceives deification as central to the theology of Thomas. In consequence, he contends that to view human relationships (or law or politics) in a Trinitarian way is not (as it is for Moltmann) to extrapolate from the immanent Trinity a model for how humans should behave, but is to see the human as a participation in the divine—more specifically, in the Trinity—and hence as “deification.”

One of McIlroy's achievements in *A Trinitarian Theology of Law* is to demonstrate the extent to which Aquinas is not only a Trinitarian but also a remarkably pneumatological theologian who understands law, grace, deification, and other related concepts in a deeply pneumatological way. Aquinas shares O'Donovan's view that the Spirit operates through human law in order to “achieve God's providential purposes,” but he goes beyond O'Donovan to emphasize the prudential, sapiential, and grace-bearing role of the Spirit who works in Christians through the New Law, “guiding and empowering them to obey God.” Aquinas's teaching on the New Law and the role of the Holy Spirit is very much grounded in Jeremiah 33:31–34, which, as has been said, is a key text for McIlroy, whose very evident sympathy with Aquinas's way of thinking in this volume may be accounted for by the fact that both the author and his subject are drawn to precisely the same passage of Scripture as their starting point for understanding the meaning and function of law in the post-incarnation era. Even so, McIlroy (who draws a distinction between Thomas and subsequent Thomism) feels that, by emphasizing the role of the Spirit still further, Aquinas could have obviated the later development of the “two storey nature and grace model of Tridentine Catholicism,” which, he argues, needs to be collapsed into a unified “nature-grace-glory trilogy” in which the various “moments” in grace—“creating grace, sustaining grace, providential grace, redeeming grace, sanctifying grace and glorifying grace . . . must be understood in triune fashion as actions ordained by the Father, ordered to the Son and accomplished by the Spirit” (202).

This highly pneumatological understanding of grace informs the concluding section of *A Trinitarian Theology of Law*, in which McIlroy builds on Aquinas's account (utilizing some of the insights of Moltmann and O'Donovan), exploring the Christian mysteries from creation through to the

eschaton from an Irenaean perspective in which the role of the “two hands of God”—the Son and the Holy Spirit—is always prominent. Human law is presented as “ordained as a means of shallow justice but incompetent to produce deep justice and the conversion of hearts to Christ” (233). This “shallow justice” is precisely what the triune God wills to work through human law by the Spirit, but it “is not ordained to produce deep justice because the triune God who loves in freedom seeks to draw human beings into relationship with Godself through their own free decision to love God” (234). McIlroy concludes, “It is the Holy Spirit, not human law, which is the means through which God achieves deep justice, as the Father transforms human beings by the power of the Spirit, into the likeness of the Son” so that, filled with the grace of the Spirit, they might “foster a level of social morality which law alone cannot maintain” (234).

Edward Schillebeeckx famously insisted that “all theology is politics,” in the sense that theology is (or should be) at the service of—and an expression of—political engagement. David McIlroy successfully puts the case for what might be termed a more “sceptical” approach to political theology. Informed by a proper understanding of biblical teaching on sin, grace, and the Holy Spirit, Christian politicians and law makers need to be constantly aware not only that political engagement and legal structures (which can never be grace-bearing) possess a limited capacity for good, but that, even when God-inspired, they are (as a result of the Fall) inherently sinful. McIlroy’s contention that, in view of original sin, political theology needs to be fully Trinitarian—and, in particular, pneumatological—is powerfully argued in these volumes, as is his proposal that an appropriately pneumatological reading of Aquinas on the Trinity, grace, and deification points the way toward a theology of law and politics designed to take seriously both the shape of the biblical narrative and the reality of the human condition. N V

J. Mark Armitage
Durham, England

The Apostles’ Creed: Articles of Faith for the 21st Century by Brian Schmisek (*Washington, DC: National Catholic Education Association, 2008*), xiv + 119 pp.

THIS BOOK is part of a series titled *For Religious Educators*, intended as a resource for teachers, catechists and other interested readers. The author explains that his “book is written primarily for Catholic school teachers, parish catechetical leaders, and Catechists who desire a basic knowledge of Catholic faith as articulated in the Apostles’ Creed” (xi). He intends to

explain “the meaning of the twelve articles of faith, their roots in apostolic faith, and their applicability and meaning for today’s religious educator, and Catholic school teacher” (xi).

The book is well organized, and in the preface Brian Schmisek describes the basic structure of his book: “The introduction covers background issues pertaining to the Apostles’ Creed. . . . Following the introduction are twelve chapters, each covering an article of the creed. Each chapter begins with the article itself, how its roots are present in Sacred Scripture . . . what the article meant for early Christians . . . how the article may have been understood later, and how the article can be understood today, looking variously at the new catechism, the *US Catholic Catechism for Adults*, and some contemporary theologians. Each chapter concludes with a summary of the theological import of the article. Discussion questions are also posed for those who study this material in a group. . . . The questions are designed not only to review some material, but also to apply it, by thinking about its relevance and meaning for today” (xi–xii).

In the introduction the author explains well the purpose and origin of creedal statements in general and of the Apostles’ Creed in particular, noting its origin in the “Old Roman Creed.” Schmisek also provides a clear and concise conclusion to the book. In between the introduction and conclusion each chapter succeeds in providing background information to an article of the Apostles’ Creed, assisting the reader to understand these articles in historical context. There are chapters treating individual articles of the Apostles’ Creed that are edifying, like the chapter on Article XI dealing with the resurrection of the body and the chapter on Article XII dealing with life everlasting. However, other chapters, like those on the seventh and eighth articles of the Creed, dealing with judgment and belief in the Holy Spirit respectively, provide little to help the reader appreciate the import of these statements for the life of the believer.

There are a few inaccuracies in the text. One minor inaccuracy in the introduction is that the author seems to equate the “rule of faith” referred to by Tertullian (and other early Church Fathers) with a creedal statement (5), instead of more broadly as the faith as it has been handed down from the Apostles. Another point lacking precision is his loose definition of docetism as “an early heresy that stressed the divinity of Jesus to the detriment of his humanity” (27), without further explanation. A third inaccuracy can be found in the statement “The person of Jesus as divine and human is one of the central mysteries of Christian faith” (27). In fact, Jesus’ personhood is not both human and divine, but only divine. The accuracy of the author’s treatment of Article IX of the Creed can also be questioned when he states, “When the Apostles’ Creed mentions the catholic Church, it

means not so much the Roman Catholic Church but the universal church" (76). His subsequent discussion does not adequately clarify this ecclesiological statement for his readers, and it could actually be misleading.

There are also some inadequacies in the text. One minor inadequacy is that although the author provides a good definition of Mystery (28), he leaves the reader wondering what is to be gained from pondering mystery. Schmisek's discussion of the first article of the Apostles' Creed is another example of inadequate treatment. Ending his discussion of the significance of calling God "Father" in the Creed, Schmisek states: "While some modern theologians are raising our awareness of the issues surrounding paternal images of God, the image of God as father is dominant in the scriptural, liturgical, and theological tradition" (12). At the end of his discussion of the first article, Schmisek does note, "The *Catechism* tells us that the Father language is used to express authority and loving care" (15). However, he goes on to state, "Father image expresses the love, and the power (authority) of God" (15). The author needs to be careful not to give the impression that calling God "Father" is mere language or imagery, as the reader could mistakenly conclude that this language and imagery is subject to change. He needed to state clearly that "Father" is the identity of the First Person of the Trinity, and then explain why this is so in light of theological development subsequent to the Apostles' Creed. He ultimately does not provide enough information for the reader to answer the discussion question pertaining to this first article: "What in particular makes the first person of the Trinity unique?" (15).

At several points in his book, Schmisek makes vague and potentially misleading statements about Church dogmas. For instance, Schmisek's discussion of the second article of the Apostles' Creed is problematic, because nowhere in his explanation of it does he clearly state that Jesus is God. Instead, he makes statements about Jesus such as: "His relationship with God is so unique that he can be called God's only son (John 1:18). With respect to humanity, he is our Lord, on par with YHWH" (22). Again, in his commentary on the third article of the Creed, Schmisek states, "Jesus incarnated God. Jesus fully expressed the love of God in the world in a way that nobody else could, for he and the Father are one" (27). Yet, these statements lack the clarity of the basic Christian claim that Jesus is God incarnate. Therefore, in these parts of the book the author did not succeed in explaining what the article meant for early Christians as well as for Christians later in Church history.

In his comments on the third article of the Creed, Schmisek states, "The reference to the "ever Virgin" Mary, or her perpetual virginity, is a theological idea whose origins go back to Epiphanius and Jerome. Both

the New Testament and the Apostles' Creed say that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth (Matt 1:25)" (25–26). To refer to the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity as merely a "theological idea" is potentially misleading, and more needed to be said in a book that targets religious educators and catechists.

Throughout the book, Schmisek refers to aspects of historical-critical Scripture scholarship. For instance, the author asserts that Matthew's Gospel was written in Greek (24), without mentioning or addressing the tradition attested by early figures like Irenaeus of Lyons that it was the first Gospel written and that it was written in Hebrew. In the introduction the author states, "The New Testament itself does not agree on the list of the twelve apostles. We are forced to follow either the Markan/Matthean tradition, or the Lucan tradition. The Gospel of John, with its fierce and overriding emphasis on Jesus, does not even bother to give us the list of the twelve" (7–8). While these statements may be true, Schmisek needs to nuance his statements so as not to promote skepticism with regard to Scripture. This is especially so, since his intended audience is religious educators and school teachers.

In addition to providing insufficient information for the reader to adequately answer some discussion questions, Schmisek poses several discussion questions that are not clearly focused. Some examples include: "What other names do you use to address God?" (15). "What do [the titles Messiah and Lord] mean to you?" (22). "Where do I stand on the issue of capital punishment?" (37). These questions do not provide enough direction for a focused reflection on the articles of the Creed, but instead could provide the opportunity for the reader to elaborate a "personal" creed to supplement the Apostles' Creed. Before each set of discussion questions the author does list paragraphs of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that pertain to the subject at hand. However, the material in the *Catechism* is not adequately integrated into the narrative of the text in every case.

On the whole, this book provides some good historical information and biblical background pertaining to the Apostles' Creed. However, the book might have been expected to provide more basic knowledge of the faith as expressed in the articles of the Creed. Also, more could be offered to help religious educators apply the Apostles' Creed in a way that conveys the beauty of the Catholic faith. Religious educators and school teachers should reference this book in tandem with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 

Perry J. Cahall
Pontifical College Josephinum
Columbus, Ohio

The Liturgical Subject: Subject, Subjectivity, and the Human Person in Contemporary Liturgical Discussion and Critique, ed. James G. Leachman, O.S.B. (*Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009*), xx + 268 pp.

IF SOMEONE proposed that we study the elements that make up a liturgy, what would come before our attention for study? The liturgy is often enough put under the microscope by one group or another, for one reason or another, and its compositional ingredients are laid out. Texts, music, architecture, art, the presider's *ars celebrandi*, the rubrics guiding the liturgy director's preparations, the cantor and choir, lector and organist, furnishings like the altar and ambo and font, the seating arrangement, the sacramentary book, and books of hymns are laid out for observation like butterflies mounted with pins. But this collection of essays startles us with the observation that something is missing. There is one more thing in contemporary liturgical discussion and critique deserving our attention, and that is the liturgical subject. It is true that the role of the assembly *en masse* is often discussed, abstractly, but the individual personhood of the subjects that make up that assembled community receives only glancing attention.

Until now. The subject of each of these twelve essays is the liturgical subject. "In this volume we have tried to gather a collection of articles that would examine understandings of the subject, of subjectivity and of the human person which lie behind both contemporary liturgical discussion and critique" (xx). It is the seventh volume in a series called "Faith in Reason," sponsored by the St. Catherine of Siena Society and published by SCM Press/Notre Dame University Press. The series is a scholarly response to Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*, and when the society's co-founders, Laurence Hemming and Susan Parsons, asked James Leachman, O.S.B. to edit a collection of essays on the subject, he gathered content in the form of a colloquium called *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* held in 2004 at Heythrop College, University of London.

The term or idea of "subjectivism" could be blurred by equivocation if the addition of "ism" has brought the snake round to bite its own tail, but that is not how the term "subject" is used in this volume. Indeed, that kind of subjectivity is frequently criticized here for exaggerating the role of subjectivity in theology and worship. Instead, the words of Pope Benedict XVI inspired both the colloquium and this volume. He suggested that a means should be found "to overcome the boundless superiority of the [philosophical] subject and to recognize once more that a relationship with the Logos, who is from the beginning, saves the subject, that is the person, and at the same time puts us into a true relation of commu-

nality which is ultimately grounded in the Trinitarian life" (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*).

Where else but in the liturgy does the action of the Logos work more powerfully to save a subject, by establishing him in communal relation grounded in Trinitarian life? Here in the worshiping Church is to be found a subject who does liturgy, a subject who is formed by the liturgy, an ecclesial person whose identity derives from the liturgical rhythms of the Church joining herself to Christ; Catholic intellectuals would do well to offer the liturgical life as an alternative to the various philosophies of subject that reign in the relativist marketplace. The essays in this book consider the formative power of liturgy upon a subject. It is difficult to review a collection of essays, and give the reader a sense of the book's content, except by treating them serially.

Laurence Hemming critiques the effects of a rationalism that made reason the standard to which faith is to be reformed and which theology is to serve. One effect of rationalism is that liturgy increasingly comes to be seen "as an essentially sociological arena within which the subject attains to a certain kind of self-understanding," and once that happens, "theology may *rearrange* the self-understanding of the subject through the reconstruction of the liturgical event" (8). The tail now wags the dog. Emphasize active participation because liturgy has increasingly come to be understood as something I can accomplish for myself. Hemming's thesis, to the contrary, is that "the meaning of the body of Christ disclosed through the Liturgy supersedes and completes any understanding of the human being arrived at by philosophy, and not the other way round" (11). In short, "it is *we* who are to be made present to God, not God to us" (15).

Robert Barron proposes to look at the Eucharistic liturgy to discover a description of the Christian. He pauses before the various parts of the liturgy, like the sign of the cross, the *Kyrie Eleison* and *Gloria in Excelsis*, opening up the biblical world, the offertory, and the sending, and looks at how the Christian self is constituted by them. The community begins by a de-centering of the self, signaling that minister and people are not self-disposing, not in control of their lives; sin unmoors the self from its properly divine origin and telos, so a moment of grace coincides with a moment of judgment; we no longer take the scriptural world as exemplifications of our experiences, but rather are formed by being immersed in "a distinctive manner of thinking, choosing, acting and reacting" (24); we discover that every creature is, at the core of its existence, received, and that in the liturgical sending "to love and serve the Lord" the liturgist is receiving personhood, not simply instructions for actions.

Angelo dos Santos Cardita offers a dense chapter on post-modern anthropology. "In the context of post-modernity, the self-awareness (as self-consciousness) of the subject has pervaded all the traditional independent positive and human sciences that had previously regarded the human being as a theologically oriented being, a being 'for' God" (34). The modern concept grounds the subject on the principle of comprehension of the world; liturgy offers us a different way to ground the subject. In making his case, this author summons Levinas, Marion, Ricoeur, Rahner, Rouvillois, etc. He arrives at the conclusion that "the liturgical subject is the 'real man' who *participates* in Church ritual" (45). "The birth of faith cannot be achieved through the intellect or even through ethics, but only through religion and ritual . . ." (55).

Laszlo Dobszay observes that any rite is multilayered, and if we would speak about its totality, we are addressing not a sum of randomly collected texts but a living organism. "To the best of my knowledge, *Litugiam Authenticam* is the first document in recent liturgical legislation that has dared speak of the 'identity and unitary expression', or the ethos, of the Roman Rite" (59). What is the ethos that held together an historical accumulation of facets? Dobszay pauses for some detailed work in the history of the Roman Rite, its sacramentaries and structures and Gallican additions, and so forth, to conclude that the unchanging essence of the Roman Rite "came about as a result of prioritizing certain elements" (63). He thus defines "Roman Rite" as "that common and 1200-year-old heritage continuously evolving and organically developing throughout history" (67). This backward glance has payoff for our discussion about identity and discontinuity.

Eduardo Echeverria builds directly on the foundation laid by Benedict XVI when the Holy Father said, "[T]here is a loss of focus on the liturgical subject, as a result of a crisis of Christian faith" (74). Forget that the subject of the liturgy is God's saving deeds, and one would start the liturgy revolving round ourselves. Indeed, Benedict writes that if "there is no already bestowed gift of redemption to convey, but only instructions for our self-redemption, then the Church . . . is an absurdity" (82). So Echeverria synthesizes Benedict's various works on liturgical themes, summarizing the transcendent basis for liturgy, the cosmic drama being played out, sacramental realism, and Christian personalism and transformation. He is a fine tour guide.

Bruce Harbert writes about "liturgies within the liturgy." Always the wordsmith, he begins with a history of *leitourgia*, which generally refers to the activity of a group. But in the Septuagint, although "the Levites are spoken of collectively, as sharing a single *leitourgia*, elsewhere each Levite is said to have his own liturgy" (116). The post-conciliar period has stressed

only the collectivist understanding of worship, such that one would rarely hear talk of “my liturgy,” or “the Bishop’s liturgy,” but Harbert notes that there are liturgies within the liturgy. He examines the translation of certain prayers into English, from Cranmer to the 1973 ICEL translation (pausing at examples in between), and sees a pressure for changing “they” prayers into “we” prayers, even though “we” is not in the Latin. He reminds us that the second term in *Liturgiam Authenticam* doesn’t mean “authentic” in the English sense of “real, true, genuine,” it means “in accord with the original.”

Zsolt Ilyes gathers material from philosophers and classic liturgical studies that defended the capacity to play. Borrowing from Huizinga and Caillois, he presents two baseline definitions of play that identify it as a free action outside of ordinary life that derives no advantage, a carefree activity that is undetermined, not productive, yet regulated. If cultic ritual has been identified with utilitarian means, the liturgy, as an exception, “has a gratuitous dimension, as liturgy is also a feast, a dance, a form of play” (136). Rite and play are conjoined; liturgy has both a ludic and a ritual dimension. “Two mysterious acts, human play and ritual, are wed in a third, the liturgy, to become mystery itself” (138). This reflects the gratuitousness of God.

Peter Kwasniewski gives one of the best introductions to sacraments in Thomas this reviewer has ever read, arranging those scholastic categories within the category of ecstasy. “[T]he dissolution and re-creation of the ‘I’ is shown forth in sacramental signs through which the Eternal High Priest touches bodies and souls with his power, effecting in the recipient a share in his life, death and resurrection” (154). Thomas understands *extasis* as a standing-outside-oneself, a going beyond oneself, going beyond what one is to become literally altered. A friend is another self. In the Christian case, God’s friendship redefines the “I.” “In Aquinas’s view the most basic function of the sacraments is to place man in vital contact with the crucified and risen Lord” (156), configuring us to Christ, and being an occasion of *extasis*. The paschal mystery becomes ours; my “I” is inserted into the “I” of Christ, and consequently joined to the “I” of my neighbor; through love the lover becomes one with what is loved; charity is such that it brings about ecstasy; charity is divine friendship with God, and the Eucharist is the divinely given sign and agent of charity. The themes circle round and round, in and out.

James Leachman and Daniel McCarthy offer together an analysis of the formation of the ecclesial person through the RCIA. They present the collect prayers for the scrutinies and then give an exegesis usually reserved for scriptural passages upon the texts of these collects. Noting (a) the literary form (such things as verb forms, imperative voice, passive participles, etc.) and historical sources of the prayers, and (b) the motive

and purpose shown in the structure of the prayer, they provide the reader with a theology of each scrutiny prayer based on its deep structure.

Enrico Mazza isolates an anthropological question within the baptismal rites. After reviewing the structure of the rites and the content of select mystagogical catechists, he identifies two anthropologies at work around the fourth century. "There are two principle elements that influence the birth of pre-baptismal rites: Gnostic anthropology with its opposition between the devil and the Lord, and Greek anthropology with its opposition between slave and free" (201). As a result of the first, he concludes that pre-baptismal anointings are above all exorcisms, or have been drawn into the orbit of exorcisms; that understanding is corroborated by the second anthropology, which sees baptism as the move from slave to free man. The liturgical person is created by passing from slavery to the devil into the lordship of Christ.

Simon Oliver asks the question, "How are we to understand the relationship between human corporeal subjectivity as it is constituted in the liturgy of the Church, and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?" Objecting to a group of theologians whom he identifies as "social Trinitarians," who project human relationality onto the Trinity, he offers a Thomistic understanding based more on apophatic doctrine. The Trinity is not a threesome of personalities that look like us; rather the Trinity is the source of power that "flows from the divinity of Christ through his humanity into the sacraments and their recipients" (237). The liturgy is therefore not simply our work, it is God's work in Christ realized by the Spirit. This is the proper reason for referencing the Trinity when considering a person's formation in liturgy.

Denis Robinson, O.S.B., looks at competing notions of *communio* and uses Newman to arbitrate among them. He identifies three uses of *communio*: the Church as people of God, a vertical ideal that functions almost like an alternative Magisterium, and the Ratzinger–von Balthasar school, which does not discount the horizontal nature of human communities but does not see it as primary. Newman's remarks on truth seem helpful to Robinson. Truth is complex, an active principle of action; it takes place within the context of the community; it is manifested in living a life of faith. After pausing to describe how Newman got this across in his preaching, Robinson offers Newman's model as a dynamic interaction of the vertical and horizontal manifestations of divine Truth.

Examining the questions of liturgical subjectivity from numerous perspectives, this collection of essays offers the reader much reward,. Forming a liturgical subject is not the only thing a liturgy is for, of course; but if we paused to examine the way in which a liturgy forms a subject ,

we would discover that the liturgy's effect on the individual is life-changing and empowers the person to progress toward deification

David W. Fagerberg
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

