

Book Reviews

Maurice Blondel: A Philosophical Life by Oliva Blanchette (*Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010*), xvi + 820 pp.

MAURICE Blondel (1861–1949) devoted himself from an early age first to Christ and then to philosophy. But, as Oliva Blanchette describes it in his monumental “philosophical life” of the French thinker, Blondel came to intellectual maturity at a time in which fissures in the relationship between the Church and the world, which had sprung up in secret, grew into an outright rupture. While it would have been difficult enough to find oneself suddenly on one side or another, the division passed directly through the center of Blondel’s heart. Blondel, though, was gifted with both a radical docility to the Church and an intellectual genius that allowed him to expand modern philosophy’s self-understanding from the inside in such a way that it too would recognize the inevitable drama of Augustine’s *cor inquietum*. It was Blondel’s aim, in the dissertation for which he is principally known, first of all to bring to light a reality that, as central as it is to human life, had up to that point curiously received little attention from the philosophical tradition, namely, the sphere of action, and, second, to demonstrate through a rigorous phenomenological method that action cannot avoid continuously transcending itself, ultimately to the point of opening up to the possibility of grace. To the consternation of his philosophical examiners at the late-nineteenth-century Sorbonne, Blondel famously ended the dissertation with a word frankly confessing the reality of faith: “C’est.”

As Henri de Lubac later wrote in a letter to Blondel, the concern he had come to share was that “Christianity has too often been uprooted from the inner viscera of man.” What Blondel came to call his “method of immanence” challenged this split between the Church and the world from both directions. On the one hand, it revealed that the autonomy of the natural order does not mean self-sufficiency; in fact, to the contrary, nature even on its own terms possesses a need for something that lies beyond itself, namely,

the gratuitous order of grace that cannot be demanded but also cannot be rejected without necessary consequences. On the other hand, against what Blondel called “monophorism,” which interpreted the order of grace as something wholly extrinsic to the secular order and thus without any *natural* significance, Blondel insisted on a profound receptivity to the gift of grace, an internal preparation for it, which is itself part of grace’s gratuity. In other words, he retrieved from the tradition the Catholic idea of the immanent action of grace that is inseparable from its action “from above,” which is indispensable if grace is to penetrate to the very core of nature. Without this immanent action, we cannot avoid thinking of the supernatural order as simply a superficial overlay. The bold position he navigated in the uncharted waters of modern secularism caused him to suffer misunderstandings on all sides. During the “Modernist” crisis, Blondel found his orthodoxy under attack (though his work was never officially condemned) and at the same time he had to separate himself from those with whom he had initially thought he had common cause.

Because of the importance of the nature-grace problem, we tend to forget that Blondel’s interest in philosophy both preceded the Modernist crisis and continued beyond it. There is a certain irony about Blondel’s legacy. He sought to protect and defend the autonomy of philosophy, demonstrating its abiding role even within faith, and yet today he is read almost exclusively by theologians. He also sought to recover philosophy’s original aim to understand the whole of reality, and yet today he is thought of narrowly as “the philosopher of action”—and by that is meant, not a thinker who explored all of the dimensions and implications of this neglected sphere, but typically nothing more than one who engaged the problem of the opening of the immanent sphere to the supernatural. More than fifty years after his death, Blondel’s work is arguably still awaiting its proper reception.

In this respect, it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of Oliva Blanchette’s book, which acknowledges the significance of Blondel’s dissertation—in fact, the book begins directly with a dramatic account of Blondel’s public defense before stepping back to tell the story of Blondel’s prior development—but it continues beyond this problem to offer an account of the whole of Blondel’s work. Indeed, the story of *L’Action*, Blondel’s early works, and the various aspects of the Modernist controversy forms only half of the eight-hundred-plus paged book, the second part of which offers a detailed presentation of the two trilogies in which Blondel worked out his mature philosophy in systematic fashion. Blanchette is positioned like no other to present the life and work of Blondel: a translator of *L’Action* into English, Blanchette originally studied Blondel in the early fifties, taught Blondel’s

philosophy at Boston College for several decades, spent a great deal of time inside the Blondel archives in Aix and then in Louvain, and enjoyed a friendship with Blondel's secretary, Nathalie Panis, with whom Blondel worked very closely toward the end of his life after effectively losing his sight. Made-moiselle Panis, to whose memory Blanchette dedicated his book, was the original custodian of Blondel's papers and according to Blanchette was the source of much of the biographical information he draws on to illuminate Blondel's work. Given Blanchette's resources, his expertise in Blondel's philosophy and long acquaintance with the material, and indeed his stylistic clarity, it is difficult to imagine any study surpassing this book in comprehensiveness and depth any time soon.

The book's subtitle, "A Philosophical Life," is a fitting description of the approach Blanchette adopts. Though it is filled with details about Blondel's person, his friendships and family relationships, the events through which he lived, and the circumstances under which he did his teaching and writing, the book is not primarily a biography. Instead, Blanchette offers the personal details principally in order to set the context as an illuminating backdrop for what constitutes the real essence of the book, namely, a substantial exposition, argument by argument, of each of Blondel's main works. These include not only the books he published, but also most of his significant essays and journal articles. The personal details, fascinating in themselves, on occasion also serve to bring out something of considerable importance for the content of Blondel's thought. For example, Blanchette describes the exchange with his close friend Victor Delbos that ultimately led Blondel to add a hastily composed final chapter on the ontological dimension of action to his dissertation after his defense in 1893, and explains why he was sufficiently dissatisfied with the dissertation not to allow its republication after this limited printing was exhausted. This account illuminates the relationship between his late trilogy on Thought, Being, and Action and the original thesis, showing that the explicitly metaphysical approach Blondel adopts in his later work had been intended from the beginning. If Blanchette's foregrounding the exposition of Blondel's writings makes the book a slower read, it is difficult to imagine a better presentation of his thought, from its germ to its final flourishing.

The volume is worth owning already simply as a scholarly resource. In addition to the clear articulation of chapters that allow one to consult with ease a particular episode from his life or the exposition of a particular essay, the book also includes a dated list of Blondel's major works and even posthumous publications. But there are three particular contributions of Blanchette's study that I would like to highlight here in relation to the general reception of Blondel's philosophy. The first is the clarification of

Blondel's position in the Modernist controversy, showing the consistency of Blondel's position from the beginning to the end, the difference of his position from the notions criticized by *Pascendi*, and its harmony with the Church's tradition—against those who would characterize the story as “Blondel vs. the Vatican” (see, for example, the work of John McNeil). The second is the nuanced account of Blondel's role as a philosopher against those who tend to “theologize him” (see, for example, Adam English, *The Possibility of Christian Philosophy*). Blanchette shows with great lucidity both how reason, for Blondel, requires but never anticipates the supernatural and also how philosophy retains a distinct task even within the order of revelation. The third contribution, and the most significant for this reader, is Blanchette's elucidation of the incredible wealth of philosophical insight in his systematic late work—against those who would characterize the early writings as the “definitive Blondel” and the later work primarily as a fairly unsuccessful rearticulation of his initial thesis in more tentative and accommodating terms in light of criticism (see, for example, Bouillard's classic work, *Blondel and Christianity*). While Blanchette admires the boldness of Blondel's dissertation, and acknowledges the stylistic infelicities of the later work, which are due to Blondel's obligation to compose these volumes by dictation, he nevertheless reveals the final trilogies to be the crowning expression of Blondel's philosophy; they provide the proper context in which to make sense of Blondel's profound insights into action and the problem of the supernatural.

If there is any criticism to be made, it is that Blanchette limits his account to its own sort of “method of immanence,” that is, an internal exposition of Blondel's thought without a great deal of analysis or evaluation of the arguments, and without much of an account of how the later work was received. (After he finishes an in-depth exposition of each of the last volumes Blondel composed, Blanchette concludes the book with a couple of paragraphs relating the circumstances of the philosopher's death.) But of course to have included such things would have made the already ponderous volume impossibly long. One would hardly want to give up any detail of the masterful presentation of Blondel's “philosophical life” that the book does offer. Blanchette has given us what will no doubt be the definitive study in English of Blondel's life and work, and will remain a permanent resource for anyone interested, not only in Blondel, or the history of the Modernist crisis, but simply in what it might mean to philosophize in the light of faith. N V

D. C. Schindler

Villanova University
Villanova, PA

Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought by David VanDrunen (*Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010*), x + 446 pp.

AMERICAN Calvinists have been reappraising natural law of late. While Reformation scholarship has never denied its existence in Calvin and company, the problem since the Barth–Brunner debate of last century has been what modern heirs of Calvin should do with the idea. Is it a vestigial organ of the Catholic tradition, needing to be excised due to infection with natural theology and the *analogia entis*? Recent monographs, such as Stephen Grabill’s, have answered negatively, seeking to recover Reformed natural law doctrine. Now David VanDrunen, professor at Westminster Seminary California, has written *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (hereafter *NLTK*), wherein he argues that natural law has played an important role for five hundred years in enabling Calvinists to distinguish between two ways in which God governs men: through the “spiritual kingdom” (institutional and invisible church) and the “civil kingdom” (secular society). *NLTK* is in the Emory University Studies in Law and Religion, edited by John Witte, Jr.

In the first chapter, “The Untold Story of Reformed Social Thought,” VanDrunen proposes that his ambitious project establishes the integral relation of the natural law and two kingdoms doctrines in Calvinist theology. The primary target is neo-Calvinism, the progeny of Abraham Kuyper’s idea that, since all of creation is being redeemed by Christ, Christians ought to extend the one kingdom of God beyond the church into all spheres of life, thereby transforming civil society to the glory of God. For VanDrunen, this involves the institutional church in political and cultural affairs, which threatens the church’s spiritual mission to proclaim salvation. The antidote is the Reformed natural law tradition, namely, “that God had inscribed his moral law on the heart of every person, such that [. . . all] have a universally accessible standard for the development of civil law” (1–2). VanDrunen argues that classic Reformed theologians, in positing natural law as the civil kingdom’s guide outside of revelation, thereby “rooted political and cultural life in God’s work of creation and providence, not in his work of redemption and eschatological restoration through Jesus Christ” (2). For this reason, ecclesial involvement in culture or politics is not only superfluous but violates God’s providential ordering of the world. Chapter 2, “Precursors of the Reformed Tradition,” establishes a historical foundation through a survey of how Christians have understood church and secular society to inhabit the same world.

Chapter 3 presents Calvin's connection of natural law to his own version of the two kingdoms as prototypical for the Reformed tradition. Calvin's exposition of natural law, though, is ambiguous. On the one hand, reason is fallen and cannot rise to God, while on the other hand, every man has clear access to the natural law. To solve this ambiguity, VanDrunen appeals to the way natural law functions within the two kingdoms doctrine. In the spiritual kingdom, natural law condemns through conscience's witness against man for transgressing the will of God. In the civil kingdom, natural law is the foundation for civil order. Since natural law perdures after the fall of man, the civil order still functions. VanDrunen's Calvin finds in this a reason for barring the church, concerned only with salvation of souls, from overseeing the state. In the spiritual kingdom "the conscience is trained to piety and divine worship" (72) and so is concerned with the governance of interior acts by the Holy Spirit. In the civil kingdom, men are "instructed in those duties [they] are bound to perform" by the natural law. This is an interesting move in reading Calvin, though ambiguity regarding natural law, religion, and civil life remains.

VanDrunen locates the theological ground of Calvin's position in the "dual mediatorship of Christ," whereby the Son rules the nations as Creator and rules the church as Redeemer (75–76). Since Christ rules the world in these two distinct ways that correspond to the two kingdoms, each with a distinct constitution of natural law or Scripture, respectively, neither kingdom must impinge on the other. Despite this delineation of political and ecclesial authority in Calvin, VanDrunen finds inconsistencies in how this was applied in Geneva (85–93). For example, the Consistory of pastors had authority over all citizens of Geneva, regardless of standing with the churches (85). In the other direction, Calvin expected the magistracy to regulate religious "externals"—for instance, it should punish public blasphemy (88). Calvin saw this as enforcing the whole natural law, which includes the first table of the Decalogue.

Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate the continuity of Reformed "resistance theorists" and "orthodox scholastics" with Calvin's vision through the seventeenth century. Various motifs recur: the accountability of all to the natural law; natural law as the foundation for order in the civil kingdom; and the dual mediatorship of Christ, whereby he rules civil matters as Creator and spiritual ones as Redeemer. The ambiguous state of natural law found in Calvin reappears in these theologians, as they held that "[t]hough nature confronts all people with the divine law, reason as a human faculty is not inherently trustworthy" (134).

Chapter 6 covers three applications in the New World of the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine. The first is John Cotton in colonial New England.

While “for Cotton . . . the Son rules the state as God and creator and rules the church as God-man and redeemer” (218), the Puritan still wanted the state to protect true religion and wanted magistrates to take religious oaths (221–22). Second, the disestablishmentarian Presbyterians of post-Revolutionary, Episcopalian-leaning Virginia blended appeals to natural law, the two kingdoms, and Enlightenment ideals in petitioning for religious toleration (240–44). A contemporary development of the two kingdoms idea was the modification of the Westminster Confession by American Presbyterians to deny the magistrate ecclesial oversight.

In VanDrunen’s assessment, a third group of American Calvinists applied the natural law–two kingdoms synthesis most consistently. They are Southern advocates of *de jure divino* Presbyterianism, the strict separation of church and state, and chattel slavery. When James Thornwell promoted the separationist “spirituality of the church” version of the two kingdoms, Northern Presbyterian Charles Hodge challenged him on the implication that the visible church could not actively inform civil society on moral matters. VanDrunen suggests that this was not Thornwell’s position, but then charges Thornwell with inconsistency for seeing any overlap in churchly and civil matters (264–65; cf. 262 n. 168)! VanDrunen commends the “spirituality of the church” but disapproves of the doctrine’s use in preserving American slavery. He urges his interlocutors to evaluate Thornwell’s arguments, not the fact that Thornwell was “in part motivated to espouse his doctrine because it prohibited the church from taking a political stance against slavery” (261).

Chapter 7 reinterprets Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian and statesman, as having more in common with the classic Reformed position than with Kuyperian neo-Calvinism. Kuyper held to the essential components of the two kingdoms and natural law, though under terms such as “sphere sovereignty” and “creation ordinances.” Most notable is VanDrunen’s argument that Kuyper held to the two kingdoms *as confirmed* by his doctrine of common grace, a foundational doctrine for neo-Calvinism (302–14). Nevertheless, Kuyper mistakenly called for the “Christianization” of culture, which does not cohere with Christ’s two mediatorships (314–15).

Chapter 8 turns to Karl Barth, whom VanDrunen portrays as the iconoclast of the classic Reformed synthesis. He is, to read between the lines, neo-Calvinism made consistent. VanDrunen critiques Barth for jettisoning natural law, the two kingdoms, the *logos asarkos*, and the dual mediatorship of Christ. For Barth, the orders of creation and redemption are indistinguishably united in the one person of Jesus Christ, the Son made flesh (323). To appeal to differing roles of the Son is to separate the

Creator from the Redeemer (344). Chapters 9 and 10 relate Reformed movements that claim Kuyper as forerunner to the classic synthesis. VanDrunen charges neo-Calvinist thinkers with confusing creation and redemption in calling for Christian societal transformation.

Catholic readers will find points of contact with VanDrunen's classic Reformed synthesis, such as that the church has a spiritual mission distinct from the state and that natural law grounds civil society's relative autonomy in "mediating" God's providence. Nevertheless, disagreements may arise from VanDrunen's approach to the traditional nature/grace distinction. The Reformed tradition tends to relate grace to sin only, and for VanDrunen, the notions of the beatific vision and participation in the divine nature are "neo-Platonic" and erroneous (105). This suspicion of traditional thought on nature/grace and man's supernatural end explains why the classic Reformed, neo-Calvinists, and Barthians disagree not only with Catholics about the two kingdoms, but also with each other. In the course of renegotiating these doctrines, they have posited incompatible visions of eschatological consummation and man's final end, the nature of grace, the identity of the kingdom of God, and its relation to creation and the political-cultural impulse.

One issue involving the nature/grace distinction is VanDrunen's attempt to cleanly distinguish the spiritual and secular realms. His narrative commends the minimization of overlapping jurisdiction to the point of denying the church direct involvement in civil society. VanDrunen presents the "two mediatorships of Christ" as the main theological ground in his sources for this two kingdoms separation. Yet it is not obvious how circumscribing the church's voice follows necessarily from Christ's dual mediatorship, since providence and redemption are united in the one divine *ratio*. While the two kingdoms are relatively autonomous, the intermediate end of civil society is ultimately ordered to the supernatural destiny of man and the church's spiritual mission. VanDrunen's acknowledgment that revelation contains and clarifies the natural law further disturbs this compartmentalization. The church, having received revelation, would seem to have the duty to teach natural law principles to her own members and to civil society, given the effects of the fall on the human intellect. The church must speak to civil society when necessary to protect the salvation of the human person, as man must keep the natural law for salvation. Grace heals and elevates nothing other than nature.

Another curiosity is the fate of the religious side of natural law as *NLTK* enters the era of liberal democracies. If Calvinist thinkers "could claim to have a natural law basis for entrusting the magistrate with the establishment and enforcement of laws concerning atheism, idolatry, blas-

phemy, and worship, which relate to the demands of the first four commandments” (201), what changed in the development of Reformed natural law theory to make this an “inconsistency”? If VanDrunen were to argue that, given the modern situation, enforcement of the first table would harm the common good, he would find much sympathy. But VanDrunen thinks the modern situation good because of the “spirituality of the church.” The reader is left to wonder if God rules the civil kingdom by only the second table of the natural law or what the earthly city owes, if anything, to God.

In light of this change, the methodological question is whether VanDrunen has read the Southern “spirituality of the church” doctrine into earlier articulations of the two kingdoms because he sees it as the natural terminus of Reformed development. Where he finds the Reformed inconsistently applying their theory until three centuries after Calvin, one may think of other explanations. One possibility is that Calvinists have applied the same set of principles in different socio-political contexts with different results without contradicting those principles. VanDrunen carefully entertains this possibility, but thinks it an incomplete explanation. If VanDrunen is correct, then Calvinists supported the magistrate’s jurisdiction in religious matters when expedient for the initial survival of the Reformed movement, but the pressure of pluralistic America helped Calvinists to see the consistency of religious freedom. Alternatively, American Presbyterians may have reformulated the two kingdoms relationship because of that pressure and, in reality, there are various “consistent” Reformed two kingdoms doctrines differing still from one another.

Regarding St. Thomas, VanDrunen satisfactorily explains how the eternal, natural, human, and divine laws relate in the *Prima secundae* (42–47). Still, VanDrunen offers a hostile and heavy-handed analysis of Aquinas’s positions on conscience and nature/grace when contrasting him with Calvin (101–7). At least twice, VanDrunen mistakes the presence of the doctrine of the theological virtue of charity in medieval theologians for the absence of any kind of natural love, then declares Luther’s and Calvin’s views superior for making natural love part of the natural law (65; 102n118). VanDrunen highlights the similarities between Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham on natural law as he establishes a broad medieval tradition with which he places Calvin in continuity (42–55).

NLTk will stimulate Reformed Christians uncertain of natural law and will interest students of Christian social theories. The book may not convince all Reformed readers that the natural law–two kingdoms synthesis entails that the church should not speak to public moral issues or establish institutions to further the works of mercy. Others may balk at the

attempt to ground a civil ethic in natural law, on account of Calvinist or late modern suspicions of reason. Nevertheless, VanDrunen rightly cautions against the political messianism that may seduce conservatives or liberals, Protestants or Catholics. He does not, however, provide compelling historical or theological reasons why Calvinists—or anybody else—ought to think that the church *qua* church should not inform the conscience of citizens, be merciful toward pagans, or even transform civil society in the course of preaching salvation in Christ the Mediator. **N-V**

Barrett Hamilton Turner

The Catholic University of America
Washington, DC

Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity by Matthew Levering (*Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2010*) x + 340 pp.

MATTHEW Levering here expounds the traditional Catholic doctrine of the priesthood and defends it against criticisms that may have arisen among the Protestant Reformers but were then prolonged along theological, historical, political, social, cultural, psychological, and even moral lines characteristic of modernity and have more recently been voiced even by theologians writing from within the Roman Catholic tradition. Typically, Levering begins each of his five principal chapters at a point where contemporary scholars have found the notion and practice of priesthood problematic or even objectionable. Sometimes he is able to invoke other recent writers who nuance matters less negatively. Positively and powerfully, our author argues that the priestly office and hierarchy belong integrally to a pattern of sacramental mediation rooted in the kenotic divine self-gift through the Son and the Spirit, which in turn allows the ascent of receptive believers into communion with God. Not surprisingly, the chief witnesses in the tradition are “Dionysius the Areopagite,” with his celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies, and Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the *Summa theologiae*, and the Supplement to the latter based by Reginald Piperno on the master’s *Commentary on the Sentences*.

The first numbered chapter deals with what—if it were correct—would perhaps be the weightiest and most severe objection to the doctrine as Levering himself grounds it, since it reaches to the heart of divine dogma. For Levering, the ultimate basis for hierarchical priesthood resides in a sound Trinitarianism, and he finds a convenient opponent in Miroslav Volf, whose own “free church”—or even “congregationalist”—ecclesiology

appeals, in *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, to the “social” version of the Trinity propounded by Jürgen Moltmann in order to challenge the “communion ecclesiologies” of Joseph Ratzinger and John D. Zizioulas on account of their respective Trinitarian flaws (Ratzinger is alleged by Volf to reduce divine personhood to “relationality,” while Zizioulas overplays the “monarchy” of the Father). By contrast, Levering argues that “Aquinas’s Trinitarian theology exhibits the compatibility of a strong affirmation of divine unity with a thorough rejection of a monist understanding of God—and thus, by extension, the compatibility of a strong account of ecclesial unity with an equally strong affirmation of ecclesial communion” (43). More concretely: “Aquinas’s Trinitarian theology—in which the Son receives all from the Father, and the Spirit is the Gift of the Father and the Son—can be seen to constitute the pattern, through the missions in history of the Son and Spirit, for the gifting and receptivity that unite the Church in communion through faith and the sacraments of faith” (39). Or, phrasing it from the human end: “Due to the pattern of gifting/receptivity, the (hierarchical) ecclesial communion of believers makes manifest the (ordered) communion of Trinitarian persons, at the same time as it makes manifest the unity of the Trinity” (53).

In chapter 2, Levering turns to the priesthood of Christ, in which—according to the Second Vatican Council—the Christian priesthood shares by means of “the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist,” which itself is “the chief means through which believers are expressing in their lives and demonstrating to others the mystery of Christ and the genuine nature of the true Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2 and 7). A priestly office of Christ can certainly be seen in Incarnational and Trinitarian terms in the Letter to the Hebrews, but given the relative paucity of such a notion in the Gospel narratives, our author turns to several contemporary New Testament scholars (with N. T. Wright in the lead) for “historical-critical witness to an understanding of Jesus’ death as a priestly action that is eschatological, sacrificial/eucharistic, sanctifying and unitive”; and these same dimensions can be classically seen in Aquinas, particularly in his treatment of the priesthood of Christ in the *Summa theologiae* III, q. 22. According to 1 Peter 2:4–10 and the book of Revelation (1:5–6; 5:9–10; 20:6), all Christians share in that priesthood, being “enabled, in Christ and his Spirit, to worship God the Father in holiness,” but the question remains: “Is there also a hierarchical priesthood whose ministry unites our spiritual sacrifices cultically to the sacrifice of Christ?” (65–66). To that question Levering turns in chapter 3, treating it first in historical terms: “The Priesthood of the First Christians.”

Thus chapter 3 begins by tackling two recent accounts of hierarchy in the early Church by Catholic writers: “While affirming that the first

Christian communities were marked by hierarchy, James Burtchaell and Francis Sullivan present ecclesial hierarchy not as a sacramental reality arising from Christ's mediation of his priestly action, but as a functional form of leadership that Christ did not directly will" (121). For his part, Levering examines the scriptural evidence found particularly in 1 Corinthians and the Gospel of Matthew to show that "in the New Testament, ecclesial hierarchy is intrinsic to, rather than merely conducive to Christian communion" (ibid.). Especially important is St. Paul's presentation of the "apostolic mandate" in chapters 1, 4, 10, and 12 of the first Corinthian letter, and the first Gospel's understanding of the relationship between the authority instituted by Christ in the disciples/apostles in the matter of teaching, baptism and Eucharist and the pattern and goal of that authority found in self-subordinating Christian love. Aquinas—from the *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, ch. 74—is brought in for the sake of his "grounding ontologically the Eucharistic role of bishops and priests in a theology of sacramental 'character,'" whereby they stand "in persona Christi" (122, and especially 164–77).

In chapter 4 Levering looks at the question of "Priority or Primacy in the Church." He finds support in twentieth-century Eastern Christianity from John Zizioulas (already invoked in this connection in chapter 3), and now also Nicholas Afanasiev and Olivier Clément, particularly at the level of the Eucharistic community as "the local church" gathered around the bishop and under his presidency. The Orthodox, however, are typically suspicious of the notion of a "universal Church," especially insofar as it provides the framework for the papal "primacy." Nevertheless, Afanasiev in particular supplies helpful support at least in terms of a "priority" in witnessing to the gospel that can contemplate the notion of a local church (even Rome!) that "presides in love." For his part, Clément is sensitive to the global dimensions of a "modern world that is marked by increasing unity and increasing fragmentation" (198), and he looks for "the rediscovery of a mystical and liturgical vision of the cosmos" (201) that might be promoted by "a Church restructured around dynamic Eucharistic communities, each gathered around its bishop, . . . with universal primacy ultimately pertaining to the bishop of Rome as the embodiment of both the presence of Peter and the charismatic inspiration of Paul" (202). Levering calls above all on Aquinas for the teaching and gubernatorial offices of the papacy: "Even if they get caught up in the erudite errors of theologians, Aquinas notes, simple believers will not go astray so long as they adhere to the Church above such theologians, because 'the faith of the universal Church . . . cannot err, since our Lord said (Luke xxii.32): *I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not.*' . . . Since the foundation of the papal ministry is Christ's grace

of headship and Christ's prayer, Aquinas sees the papal ministry as the antidote to the inevitability of theological divisions" (217–18).

Levering himself offers a very subtle and sophisticated solution to the question of local and universal: "Just as the unity of the many Eucharists requires an understanding of the one living body and blood of Christ, so also the unity of the many members and churches requires an understanding of the one Church encompassing all members and churches, which are divisible in a sense that the body and blood of Christ are not. . . . The conceptual self-sufficiency of the local church, as containing in itself all the local churches, no more follows than does the conceptual self-sufficiency of the local Eucharist. In both cases, the 'Body of Christ' includes both the one and the many in a nuanced fashion" (193–94). It seems that our author never came across the snappy phrase that made its way in ecumenical circles from the mid-twentieth-century Swiss Reformed theologian Jean-Jacques von Allmen, to the effect that "the local church is wholly church but not the whole Church." The notion of a Eucharistic presidency for the universal Church was at least floated (albeit in a "problem box" following paragraph 111) in the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order study, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* (1998): "Most churches accept that a eucharist needs a president. Amongst these, there are some who would go on to say that a gathering of eucharistic communities at regional and world level similarly needs a president. In this perspective conciliarity implies primacy and primacy conciliarity"; regrettably, the idea was dropped altogether from the revised text of 2005, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*.

In his fifth and final main chapter, Levering concentrates on the notion of "sacramental mediation," which has in fact underlain the entire book. Volf appears again on account of his charge against "the sociological weaknesses of hierarchical structures": "Were hierarchical ecclesial structure the only ecclesial option, he notes, many people would choose instead to remain unchurched. In this sense, 'The differentiation of various traditions is not simply to be lamented as a scandal, but rather welcomed as a sign of the vitality of the Christian faith within multicultural, rapidly changing societies demanding diversification and flexibility'" (229). The question hinges, says Levering in reply, upon what constitutes the core of Christian personalism: "Specifically, how does Jesus Christ encounter, heal, and elevate into Trinitarian communion the personhood of each of his members? At the heart of this question is whether one understands the Church to be constituted by sacramental mediation (and thus preeminently by the Eucharist)" (232). Our author proceeds, somewhat surprisingly, by way of the German Protestant J. G. Hamann (1730–88) and the Jewish

thinker Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) before coming to “Aquinas’s theology of the priesthood, which draws heavily upon Dionysius’ understanding of mediation while also responding to concerns that resonate with those of Volf” (233). (Admittedly, it would have been possible to bring in also John Henry Newman; see 245, n. 60.) Briefly: “Human beings, after sin, do not come naturally to look upward. The hierarch, within the community, belongs to the ‘perceptible symbols’ by which the triune God leads human beings upward to communion in divine unity and Trinity. By his presiding at the Eucharistic synaxis, the hierarch symbolizes the need for each member to receive from above, from Christ, and the hierarch symbolizes the reality that the gifts are not merely exchanged among the members but rather come down from the Father through Christ by his Spirit. The community becomes itself in worship—a richly symbolic worship in which the pattern of upward-looking receptivity is symbolized throughout. Hierarchy thus fits the particular kind of interpersonal relationship that is the relationship of fallen/redeemed human beings with God. So as to share in the Trinitarian communion of equal Persons, human beings need to be formed by an embodied hierarchical symbolism to learn how once again to receive gifts from on high. Even an imperfect hierarch can take his place within the symbolic framework, although it is much better that the hierarch be what he should be” (256). And to that very last point Levering reverts in his brief conclusion on “hierarchy and holiness” (where he engages with Pheme Perkins and Nicholas M. Healy). The clue resides in “self-dispossessive receptivity,” being enabled by the mediation of grace to follow the pattern of Christ’s kenotic charity (291).

For clarity of exposition in the main text, and for comprehensiveness of reference in the footnotes, it would be hard to better this book. N V

Geoffrey Wainwright

Duke University Divinity School
Durham, NC

Aesthetic Revelation: Reading Ancient and Medieval Texts after Hans Urs von Balthasar by Oleg V. Bychkov (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010*), vii + 349 pp.

IN *Aesthetic Revelation*, Oleg V. Bychkov sets out to discern and evaluate the hermeneutical method of Hans Urs von Balthasar, particularly his read of aesthetic thinking in non-Christian and Christian tradition. Bychkov proposes to critique von Balthasar’s aesthetic method by a close, historical, Gadamer-infused examination of ancient texts (5; see also xiv, 100).

Following Brian McNeil, Bychkov acknowledges: “Balthasar sees the

theological exegete more as an iconographer than as a photographer" (94). In other words, von Balthasar examines multiple texts by drawing together various unifying themes or *Gestalten* instead of employing chronology or narrow textual exegesis (97, 115). Key to the arrangement of these *Gestalten* is the singular *Gestalt* of Christ, the Incarnate God (73). Von Balthasar is deeply indebted to Karl Barth for his profoundly Christocentric perspective (52–55). Despite von Balthasar's frequent resistances to Immanuel Kant, Bychkov sees von Balthasar's understanding of the aesthetic as essentially modern (78) and argues that von Balthasar's hermeneutic resembles that of Heidegger or Gadamer more than it does ancient authors (85). Central to von Balthasar's exegetical method is the "aesthetic," and here Bychkov focuses on two qualities in particular: the aesthetic as revelatory, and the aesthetic as sensible (113, 123). Together, the revelatory and the sensible constitute what Bychkov calls a "direct seeing," or an intuitive grasp that tends to bypass the intellect (120).

These three aesthetic features, the revelatory, the sensible, and direct seeing, become Bychkov's fundamental criteria in his subsequent examination of historical texts. Bychkov dedicates the rest of the book to examining the concept of the aesthetic in specific Western traditions: Platonic, Stoic, Augustinian, Bonaventure/Late Medieval (129–321). Bychkov interacts with both the primary texts and historical scholars, and he relates these findings to von Balthasar's claims about them. Not all of Bychkov's chosen texts, particularly those from the Stoic tradition, fall under von Balthasar's purview, and Bychkov's stated goal in this case is to see if he can find further correlations with von Balthasar's work in the broader Western tradition (124). The author discovers repeated instances of von Balthasar finding his own project in the works of historical figures, a practice von Balthasar often employs that serves to distort these figures according to his own image (particularly Plato, 141). Augustine and Bonaventure appear as figures most resembling Balthasar's own sensibilities, perhaps not least because both are explicitly Christian, and the attempts of each to arrange theology according to Christ's form have the most sympathies with Balthasar's efforts. The overall historical sense that emerges is one of von Balthasar's continuity with history, and in this way Bychkov affirms von Balthasar's basic project by unveiling similar contours in ancient and medieval thinkers. He finds in von Balthasar and these historical figures a comparable sensibility toward the aesthetic: an intuitive or "direct" grasp of something revealed or unveiled through the senses.

Bychkov concludes, "Our hermeneutic dialogue with ancient and medieval thought proves that von Balthasar's analysis was essentially correct: both ancient and medieval authors do notice and explore for

their theological and philosophical needs the revelatory aspect of what we now call aesthetic experience” (323). He then offers further reflections on the current state of aesthetic studies, urging a more “engaged” field—that is, one brought out of its academic isolation. He ends with this phenomenological note from Husserl and Schelling: “Beyond the realm of eidetically observable phenomena, there is no intelligible reality: things resist our reflection about them . . . and pose limits” (333).

The effort presented in *Aesthetic Revelation* is both arduous and laudable. Bychkov approaches his primary texts with great care, attentive both to their historical context and to the original languages employed. His work is a fine attempt to resituate von Balthasar according to the tradition of the aesthetic thought he himself explores, and with more historical awareness than von Balthasar displays. Bychkov also helps to situate von Balthasar within contemporary discussion, relating von Balthasar both to recent history in aesthetic circles—particularly with respect to Kant and to phenomenology—and to the possible future of the aesthetic in the academy, where the aesthetic remains isolated from other disciplines.

It is not always clear, however, that von Balthasar’s interaction with historical texts has been fully evaluated, and with that the possible further uses of his aesthetic “hermeneutic.” Bychkov’s own treatment of von Balthasar’s historical interlocutors reveals von Balthasar’s troubling tendency to see his own project in the works of the Western philosophical, theological tradition, and it is fair to wonder if Bychkov’s optimistic conclusion—“Balthasar’s analysis was essentially correct”—is stretched a bit too far. Bychkov’s careful work helps to indicate deep flaws in von Balthasar’s perspective—as, for example, in his neglect (in Bychkov’s eyes, cf. 176) of the Stoic tradition, which Bychkov persuasively indicates has a wealth of material for aesthetic reflection (176–212). Pressing the flaws of von Balthasar’s studies would have been helpful, even as Bychkov helps to vindicate von Balthasar’s interaction with history.

A prominent feature of Bychkov’s work is the insistence that his own method will emphasize history alongside a narrowed definition of the “aesthetic”: the aesthetic as a revelatory, “direct” seeing through the senses. Though this helps to limit Bychkov’s study to a manageable whole, it also distinguishes the focus of his study from von Balthasar’s theological emphases. Von Balthasar’s affirmation or denial of aesthetic concepts is not based on a self-sufficient sense of the aesthetic, but on the form of Christ. Bychkov’s study concentrates on the aesthetic qualities of this form, not on the Christological aspect of the form. The decision to focus on the three qualities of the aesthetic—as revelatory, sensual, and direct—rather than to examine the Christological form that orders those

qualities is in a certain respect necessary to Bychkov's study. His branches into a wider range of early non-Christian sources than von Balthasar's. At the same time, it serves to obscure Bychkov's evaluation of von Balthasar's "hermeneutic," the proposed emphasis of *Aesthetic Revelation*, since Bychkov himself does not take up von Balthasar's interpretive method in full. Von Balthasar's "hermeneutic," in other words, is Christological-historical, and indeed primarily Christological rather than historical. The form of Christ shapes history itself. The limits of Bychkov's study put him at partial odds with von Balthasar's method. He evaluates von Balthasar in a primarily aesthetic, historical manner instead of adopting von Balthasar's Christological point of view. This makes his evaluation of that method itself partial, and, for this reviewer, calls into question Bychkov's basic assumption that von Balthasar is essentially a modern, Heideggerian-Gadamerian textual interpreter.

Bychkov also displays great sympathies with both modern hermeneutic theory, particularly Hans-George Gadamer, and phenomenology. His evaluation of von Balthasar as an essentially modern, phenomenological reader of history is both accurate and misleading. While von Balthasar is beholden to modern ideas, such as what Fergus Kerr has called a "Heideggerian Thomism," von Balthasar also sets himself against much of the modern project. He places himself at a distance from Kant, and he rejects phenomenology despite his sympathies with it. A wider-ranging interaction with the work of scholars Aidan Nichols and D. C. Schindler would have assisted Bychkov with regard to von Balthasar's complex relationship to phenomenology and modern philosophy. Thomas Aquinas also looms as an important, and uninvestigated, aesthetic interlocutor of von Balthasar.

As a whole, Bychkov's work is admirable. His book contributes to the valuable task of placing von Balthasar in the wider context of the history of ideas and thus more firmly in the contemporary discussion of the future of aesthetics. Bychkov's careful analysis of historical texts is most helpful here, and his lengthy discussion of the modern interest in aesthetics is indispensable. *Aesthetic Revelation* helps to highlight the possibilities and problems in von Balthasar's "iconography" of the past, even if it does not resolve either.

N. V

Anne M. Carpenter
Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI

The Drug, the Soul, and God: A Theological Perspective on Anti-Depressants by John-Mark Miravalle (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010), 139 pp.

JOHN-MARK Miravalle's *The Drug, the Soul, and God* formulates a Catholic response to the pharmaceutical treatment of depression. It follows *Gaudium et Spes* in discerning the signs of the time, in this case the growing dependence on anti-depressants in our society, and offers a response drawing on the Catholic tradition, specifically "the psychology of Thomas Aquinas" (25). One of Miravalle's main goals is to make clear that there is an overreliance on anti-depressants, caused in part by false assurances of the scientific grounding of the cause of depression itself. Rather than simply assuming that all depression is physiologically based, as most do, Miravalle draws from Aquinas's treatment of sorrow to provide an explanation rooted in the passions and therefore more under one's own control. If depression is simply a biological problem, then the response could simply entail a pharmaceutical approach. If it is, however, rooted in the passions, involving both soul and body, then the response must entail something more holistic, respecting the spiritual nature of humanity.

Miravalle begins by exposing the shallow approach of modern psychology, which lacks a defined anthropology, especially regarding man's moral and spiritual constitution (1). He states that the intent of the book is to provide the principles needed from a Catholic perspective to give guidance on the use of anti-depressants. Chapter one leads with a discussion of anti-depressants in general, particularly their palliative rather than curative role for the patient. The controversy over anti-depressants centers on whether or not depression is physiological, rising from the improper functioning of neurotransmitters. Miravalle focuses on the recentness of this assertion (made mostly after the rise of anti-depressants themselves) and the lack of compelling scientific proof (14). The current consensus on the use of anti-depressants, he argues, comes from the overwhelming influence of the pharmaceutical companies and the ease of their use for doctors. However, their rise has led to the treatment of depression on simply a bodily level without reaching to the real, personal depth of the illness. He contends that doctors have removed mental illness from the patient's sphere of control and experience (18). With this background, Miravalle states that the object of his inquiry in the rest of the book concerns whether it is justifiable to give anti-depressants when there is not a clear biochemical disorder (21).

In chapter two Miravalle turns to Aquinas for a more holistic account of depression. He states that Aquinas "lays out the proper anthropological

conception of the essence, causes, symptoms, and finality of depression, as well as the foundation for its appropriate treatment" (26). The focus of his reading is Aquinas's account of the passions, particularly the passion of sorrow. Since a passion is a reaction to some perceived good or evil, one can control the passions by attaching positive or negative associations with an object in the imagination. This view of the passions enables Miravalle to assert more responsibility for the one suffering from depression over his or her emotional state (32). He next turns to Aquinas's account of sorrow: sorrow in itself, which is a rational pain; its cause, seen as deprivation of a perceived good; its effects, including impairment of normal mental function; and its remedies, such as positive physical, emotional, and spiritual stimuli (34–44). Depression in particular is described as a burden on the soul, because of which one withdraws into oneself; in depression the mood is not focused on one particular object, but on all things (37, 46). He summarizes the light Aquinas sheds on depression as follows:

Depression is not, therefore, an unintelligible, senseless ailment, and one need not turn as by default to the physical makeup of the person in order to understand its origin. Rather, it generally seems to stem from an excessive introspection and concentration on internal pain. This state is to be especially fought by attempting to reconnect the person with what might be called extra-mental reality. (45)

The most important extra-mental realities are eternal realities, which Aquinas holds up as the highest source of relief for depression, since they are focused on the triumph of good and are most fulfilling of human teleology (43–46). By ignoring the ultimate good, modern psychology cuts itself off from the most important referent and solution to depression.

After this articulation of a broader anthropology, Miravalle in chapter three articulates the moral principles needed to guide discussion of depression. Morality is crucial to this discussion, because, as Miravalle describes, it is the art of fulfilling the human person, which shapes one to be as perfect as possible and attains the goods appropriate to one's nature in order to maximize one's potential for excellence (47). The crux of his argument focuses on the principle of integrity, namely, that one must not deliberately act in a manner contrary to human goodness or in a way that prohibits one from fulfilling the task entrusted to him or her by God (48–49). Any manipulation of the person through the use of mood-altering drugs must be evaluated in light of its effect on the person's overall well-being. Miravalle uses contraception as one example of the pharmacological manipulation of the person from a bodily level without respect for the person's moral and spiritual dimensions (51–54). He concludes

the chapter by discussing the good of inner peace, which mood-altering drugs could potentially harm by creating an artificial mood without the proper integration of the person.

The fourth chapter brings us to the heart of the discussion of the moral permissibility of anti-depressants. Miravalle articulates his position that depression has not been proven to be biochemically based, which leads him to this position:

It seems to me that antidepressant drug use is not in itself intrinsically evil, and may even be of real benefit in therapy when used in conjunction with treatments geared more directly at the patient's mental state. However, it is not morally permissible to use these drugs as the sole or fundamental treatment for depression, since to do so would constitute an unnatural perversion of the appetitive power away from the apprehensive power, and would, therefore, involve an attack on personal integrity. (59)

He asserts that the evidence points to depression as being primarily rooted in experience. The response to experience-based depression is to assert the governing role of the intellect over the passions: "The appetitive power is meant to respond to the apprehensive power. The person's emotions should respond to how the mind sees things" (63). Anti-depressants thwart this proper interior harmony: "The mind presents the world in a negative, ultimately tragic light, and yet the individual's emotional experience is one of contentment, or even of a general cheerfulness. In scholastic language, the person apprehends evil and experiences joy" (*ibid.*). It is this evaluation that provides the heart of his moral criticism of the use of anti-depressants. Anti-depressants do not address the experiential root of mental problems, but rather simply alter one's mood while letting the interior conflict persist. Treatment should focus on removing the source of the problem, "the offending object," while medication should be reserved for aiding this treatment in a subordinate fashion—when patients cannot function properly—so that the harmony of the powers can be preserved (70, 77).

With the main purpose of the book now accomplished, Miravalle devotes the two remaining chapters respectively to promoting a Thomistic psychology and examining the spiritual role of suffering. Chapter five examines particularly the joint work of Anna Terruwe and Conrad Baars as a model for combining Thomistic moral principles with modern psychology. The final chapter looks at the role of suffering in relation to spiritual growth. Suffering can serve as a just punishment, or as an opportunity for the soul to be roused from spiritual slumber; it can impel one toward growth and even perfection, and is also an opportunity for the Christian to share in the suffering of Christ as a member of His Body (100–105, 112).

Suffering is also a natural response to loss and sin, a manifestation of which can be seen in depression. Miravalle worries that anti-depressants may deprive souls of spiritual growth by covering over problems and dulling the soul, thus deterring persons from reflection on life and longing for spiritual goods (109). This leads him to his final and most spiritually charged critique of anti-depressants: The anti-depressant culture “is a phenomenon that is, to a large degree, the product of a general misunderstanding, or more precisely non-awareness of the meaning and significance of suffering” (112). In conclusion, Miravalle reaffirms that the treatment of depression should respect the harmony of the powers and reject the false position that seeks to avoid suffering at all costs (117–18).

As a whole, I think Miravalle is very successful at pointing out problems with the current use of anti-depressants and providing general moral and spiritual principles to form a response. The problem, however, is complex, especially given the need to substantiate scientific claims. While I greatly applaud Miravalle’s use of Aquinas in psychology, I wonder if Aquinas is sufficient for a complete response to this modern dilemma. Just as Aquinas turned to ancient philosophy as a metaphysical tool for theology, I believe he would also glean all that he could from modern science. Aquinas provides a solid foundation for understanding human nature as a body-soul unity, but his insights could be fleshed out by using modern research on the brain. Miravalle is right to point that there is still much uncertainty; it seems, however, that an account of depression is incomplete without recourse to modern science (even while we await more detail from science). Aquinas is a solid guide in this discussion, but his thought should not be made to provide more than it is able.

In particular, I question whether Aquinas’s description of depression as a sorrow completely expresses the depression that many suffer today. It is true that many people who take anti-depressants may simply be suffering from the excessive influence of the passion of sorrow. Simply addressing their situations chemically could do great harm to their souls, as Miravalle points out. However, what of the case of someone whose depression, or other serious mental illness, has descended to the level of pathology? Here sorrow is not simply (or no longer) functioning as a response to some outside stimulant, but rather the emotions have been prohibited from functioning properly. Miravalle assumes that the intellect must be focused on a negative trigger in the depressed mind and therefore concludes that providing an artificial emotional stimulant would cause interior imbalance and do harm to inner harmony. It may not be enough, however, in addressing the negative thoughts of the mind, simply to remove the source of the illness and thereby allow a return to proper

functioning. Anti-depressants are designed to address such a case of severe emotional malfunction. Therefore, although Miravalle's assessment is largely on target, inasmuch as there is a severe overuse of anti-depressants, it does not comprehensively illuminate anti-depressant use for serious mental illnesses, including ones more serious than depression.

While the analogy of contraception is important and helpful inasmuch as it highlights the crucial role of teleology, it also has its limits. Whereas contraception impedes one's natural teleology, anti-depressants are meant to enable human flourishing. When the emotion of sorrow has been taken to pathological levels, it is then crucial to remove this excess. It is true that in some patients anti-depressants may produce an excessive opposite emotion, but ideally they should enable the proper functioning of the emotional life. Anti-depressants do not necessarily prevent those who take them from experiencing the passion of sorrow, but rather are meant to pull one out of excessive sorrow. It strikes me as paradoxical that Miravalle mentions that anti-depressants may be used in certain cases and nevertheless accuses them of intrinsically harming one's internal order (using the example of contraception to bolster his point). Regardless, it is important to take Miravalle's enjoinder to discover and address seriously the emotional roots of the illness.

It is encouraging to see a serious and thoughtful engagement of such a significant, contemporary topic, despite any limitations in the book. While Miravalle may have too quickly dismissed current scientific studies of depression, he has provided an important service in providing key anthropological and moral points to assist in analyzing the use of anti-depressants. It is necessary to point out that the scientific grounds for the pharmacological treatment of depression are currently weak, yet a more definitive Catholic response may require further scientific inquiry. It is hoped that this book will receive a wide reading and will encourage future Catholic engagements with this crucial issue as part of the Church's mission to heal both souls and our culture. NV

R. Jared Staudt
Augustine Institute
Denver, CO

Eternity, Time, and the Life of Wisdom by Matthew L. Lamb
(Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), xx + 161 pp.

MATTHEW Lamb once described Thomas Aquinas as a paradox who conjoined deep reverence for tradition with "an astonishing zest for novelty" ("Introduction" to his translation of Thomas Aquinas's *Commen-*

tary on *Ephesians*, 1966, p. 1). Lamb himself might seem to be such a paradox. One reviewer of his *Solidarity with Victims* noted that Lamb's project "just might put political theology on a new and promising footing" but was bewildered by "his attempt to salvage orthodoxy" (Charles Strain in *Journal of Religion* 65 [1985]: 299–301). Lamb's aim has always been to recover the transformative power of orthodoxy. This has taken different forms at different moments of his long career, but one constant has been his preoccupation with the challenge of mediating the truth claims of the Gospel in a way that would resist both the truncations of modernity and the distortions of sub-par theology. As he puts it in the present volume, "The challenge facing philosophers and theologians today is twofold. First is the task of reaching up or returning to the truly great philosophers and theologians of the past in order to be transformed by the truth and wisdom they communicate. The second task is transposing that truth and wisdom to the manifold problems and issues of today" (52f.). Concretely for Lamb this has meant a profound retrieval of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, together with a serious engagement with modern and post-modern thought and a commitment to what some might justly regard as the "novel" project of Bernard Lonergan.

In any case the "novelty" of Lamb's approach was already apparent in the remarkably insightful introduction to his translation of Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on Ephesians* (1966). There he showed how Thomas Aquinas assimilated and transformed the patristic tradition of exegesis, not through the introduction of new techniques, but by a differentiated reflection on how the Word of God might be transmitted in the words of human beings. The faithful transmission of the transcendent in the particular has, in a sense, remained the focus of Lamb's work down to the essays in the present volume. Along the way he has tried to deal with the complications stemming from the modern and post-modern problematic of hermeneutics and history.

Having drawn attention to the importance of Thomas Aquinas's presuppositions for his approach to Scripture as the word of God, Lamb was led to work out his own presuppositions with great care in order to come to terms with the derailments of modern and post-modern thought. This he did in his published dissertation, *History, Method and Theology* (1978). In a broad sense his concern in that volume was with the relationship between faith and culture. He argued that theology must move beyond historical and exegetical questions to evaluative and foundational questions. Theology cannot abandon its truth-intention without also surrendering its critical mediation between religious faith and the cultural matrix. In his subsequent *Solidarity with Victims* (1982) this

concern resulted in a typology of theologies based on the relationship between theory and praxis. Here he argued for a theology based on conversion and a self-critical recovery of the classic meaning of reason from the teeth of its modern distortions and truncations as a precondition for coming to terms with the most authentic witness of the Christian tradition. All along the line he has opposed the Enlightenment temptation to subordinate the cosmic order to ourselves rather than ourselves to the cosmic order, insisting that such resistance depends on fidelity to the truth claims of the Gospel.

As their collective title suggests, the essays in the present volume carry forward Lamb's relentless critique of an historicism that buries the past and a relativism that refuses to come to judgment. These essays represent the projects of more than a dozen years from 1992 to 2004. Where his previous books were decidedly addressed to the methodological situation of academic theology in relation to other disciplines, here one senses an address to the wider Church, though these essays make substantial intellectual demands. It seems clear that Lamb feels the disorder he has decried in academic theology is increasingly spilling over into ecclesial life, as the introduction by Dauphinais and Levering suggests. The essays are well chosen and aptly titled, for it is easy to discern in them thematic continuities in relation to the title and, to the extent that a collection of essays can be said to have a thesis, this collection advances an important one.

For Lamb, wisdom has to do with the apprehension of order, which means, concretely, coming to understand that time and space are an ordered whole present in the divine eternal now. Coming to terms with divine eternity as the source of order and meaning in history is intrinsic to wisdom. Lamb brings out how Augustine wedded the Platonic concern for human intelligence as spiritual to the Christian commitment to the word of God as true, which commitment entailed, among other things, that history itself is a field of divine meaning. Augustine thus took intelligence in act as the analogue for approaching the mystery of God, whose loving understanding creates and orders the meaningful totality of times and places. This achievement became possible for Augustine only because he had himself been profoundly converted morally, intellectually, and religiously. Lamb argues that unless we undergo the same profound conversion we will be unable to reach up to the mind of Augustine. Christian wisdom depends upon a deep personal transformation, which involves, among other things, intellectual probity as a form of purity of heart.

Lamb argues that Boethius and later Thomas Aquinas were worthy heirs of Augustine in this respect. Their achievement was derailed, however, into the gutters of voluntarism and nominalism, where divine

power and will eclipsed divine wisdom as the key categories for conceiving God's relationship to the world. This derailment leads directly into the modern project, preoccupied with power relations and convinced that divine sovereignty and human autonomy compete in a zero-sum game. Lamb discerns the effects of this derailment both in modern philosophy and in the sterility of later scholasticism, as exemplified in the controversy *de auxiliis*, which, he argues, stemmed from a mechanistic approach to divine transcendence and human freedom. He points out with great perspicacity how the instrumentalizing approach to knowledge characteristic of so much modern science is also embedded in biblical fundamentalism. "Where modern science would wrest knowledge as power from observing and instrumentalizing nature, so modern fundamentalists would wrest from biblical apocalyptic . . . the secrets of the end time as immanent" (57).

Thus the relationship between Catholicism and modern cultures calls for dialectical discernment. Lamb understands dialectic in Lonergan's sense of coming to grips with the radical source of differences. This is altogether more differentiated and serious than asking, for example, whether Catholics should adopt the posture of separatism or assimilation vis-à-vis American culture. A serious critique of culture demands coming to terms with transcultural norms, which norms Lamb, following Lonergan, finds in the "communicative praxis" of asking and answering questions. The root of dogmatism and nihilism in modern culture, he argues, is "misplaced normativity" by which we attribute to our products and practices the normativity that really belongs to the praxis of intelligence, reason, and charity. By disclosing the normative structure of consciousness, Lonergan showed how we can rescue the authentic achievements of orthodoxy from the derailments of conceptualism, voluntarism, and nominalism. "The work of Bernard Lonergan demonstrates the need to recover the intellectual, moral, and religious orthopraxis that has been the matrix out of which genuine orthodoxy lives through the ages" (145f.).

This praxis is "communicative" because we are subjects-in-relation whose development is conversational. Lamb is sharply critical of modernity's "monadic" construction of personal identity in isolation from God and others. Rousseau exemplifies this tendency in his appeal to God not as a meaningful partner in the making of a life, but solely as a judging spectator. The truncated modern subject understands both internal and external relations in terms of domination. By contrast, the *Confessions* of Augustine and Teresa of Avila are invoked as examples of a Christian self-understanding in conversation with God. The irony of modern historical consciousness is that its awareness of historicity is generally attended by a failure to under-

stand how human history is constituted by meaning in relation to God and others. Memory and expectation mediate past and future into the conscious present, in a created participation in that divine eternal presence which creates and redeems all times. Thus our friendship is not limited to those who happen fortuitously to share our particular time and place.

Lamb inveighs against the modern empiricist truncation of consciousness for closing the world of nature and history off from God. Having thus exiled God from time and space, modernity is unable to understand how history has any meaning beyond the succession of discrete moments. In consequence, moderns are unable to read the Bible as referring to any realities beyond itself. Modern critical approaches to Scripture never complete the hermeneutical circle by coming to grips with the religious realities mediated through biblical testimony; one may as well venture a history of mathematics without understanding the math. Lamb sees Einsteinian relativity as a way to recover the openness of time and history and reconnect with the wisdom of Augustine, Boethius, and Thomas Aquinas, who understood that divine eternity does not negate time but creates and orders all times.

It is this divine eternal presence which ensures that "there are no nameless victims of history" (9) and opens up a space for human freedom. The resurrection attests the personal character of God's saving love. God knows and loves individuals, not only in the divine understanding but also in the human mind of Christ. Christ suffered as no other, indeed more than all others combined, because in his human consciousness he knew and loved each of us in all the uniqueness of our personal histories of sin and suffering. Thus Lamb urges "the highest Christology possible . . . if one is going to take the concrete histories of suffering seriously" (65 n. 35).

Lamb is well known as one of the most important students of Bernard Lonergan. Those who have studied Lonergan seriously will feel his influence everywhere in these pages. But Lamb is no slavish repeater, whether of Lonergan or of Augustine, Boethius, or Thomas Aquinas. He has assimilated their ideas in a remarkable way and brought them to bear creatively on his own distinctive project and in his own distinctive voice. One might wonder how Lamb conceives the relationship of this project to Lonergan's call for a paradigm shift in theology. For example, how does Lamb understand his use of Lonergan's hermeneutics (cf. 23f.) to criticize historical critical approaches to the Bible in relation to Lonergan's differentiation of functional specialties in theology? The answer might be surmised, but what is wanted is a monograph.

There are limits to what can be accomplished in an essay, and even a collection of essays cannot transcend them. Ideas compactly expressed

tend to get repeated rather than expanded. These essays are more tours-de-force than patient pedagogy. Lamb's immense learning makes strenuous demands on the reader. He presupposes a great deal. He paints with a broad brush and seldom substantiates his claims with the specificity and detail one might expect in a monograph. Some readers will no doubt bristle at his sweeping censure of Scotus, Ockham, Descartes, or others, yet he gives them few details to hold on to. On the other hand, Lamb's generalizations are at the service of rare insight. He never succumbs to scissors-and-paste theology. Virtually every page shimmers with light. Even those who disagree profoundly should find his purpose worthwhile and his ideas immensely stimulating. **N.V.**

Jeremy D. Wilkins
University of St. Thomas
Houston, Texas