

Book Reviews

Das Heil des Menschen als Gnade by Michael Stickelbroeck
(Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2014), 230 pp.

ONLY ON SELDOM OCCASIONS does one discover in the area of theology of any Christian denomination a book treating the thorny but central topic of grace. This book fills this painfully felt lacuna quite felicitously as it thinks the issue creatively beyond conventional boundaries without imperiling, but rather building upon, the heights theology had already reached in this area.

The author, professor of systematic theology at the Catholic philosophical-theological College of St. Pölten in Austria, divides the textbook into a rather long “introduction,” “a historical foundation,” and a “systematic-theological section.” An unequivocal Patristic position and clear definitions of terms distinguish this well organized study. These features come into more prominent focus when comparing this book with other recent German-language, albeit also valuable, contributions to this area such as from the pens of Karl-Heinz Menke and Jürgen Werbick. A comprehensive bibliography of approximately 125 titles and an index of names round off this carefully crafted text. Summaries and citations from pertinent conciliar documents assist the reader in accessing complex issues.

The author takes seriously the anthropological—*nota bene*, not anthropocentric—shift. Divine grace is perceived as an indispensable corollary to human freedom. In a subcutaneous way and from the very beginning of his existence, the human person exercising freedom inchoately experiences God as “the all-overarching reality” (14). In the God-man, Jesus Christ, the human being consciously discovers himself and experiences in the Savior a sublime elevation of human nature, which he actually intends from the very beginning of his existence on the surface of the earth. The author writes, “in

the teaching on grace the material-categorical totality of theology is implied,” and continues by asserting in a normative manner that “in all other theological [Catholic] tractates essential moments of the teaching on grace are absorbed” (24). At the outset, the term “grace” is extensively explained by way of Scripture and the Church Fathers (26–61). On the basis of the Pauline understanding of this key term, the author perceives grace as “*χάρις* as redemption of humankind through the cross from a sinful state” (34). Building upon this basis, the author juxtaposes and combines the emphasis of the Greek Fathers on ontology, mysticism, and divinization with the Western themes of anthropology, salvation, and ethics. The West tends to emphasize more the mystery of the Incarnation and, thereby, faith’s content—the *fides quae*. This implies that the Orient focuses on the dimension of an ever personal appropriation of grace—*fides qua*. To Stickelbroeck’s mind, “the corrective for the Western [form] of a theology of grace would be an openness for [self-]transcendence as co-given in the act of beholding, which implies a turn to a metaphysical understanding of the mystery of personhood” (44). May one here detect an implied affinity of the author for the Russian priest-theologian Pavel Florensky’s (1883–1937) critique of the Renaissance’s turn to perspectival art?

The author advocates the need to think “the cosmic-universal” (Maximus the Confessor) and the individual dimensions of grace (Augustine) together. Over and against Hans Küng, who pleads for a purely immanent hominization of humankind, the author takes up the cudgels—quite deliberately along with Karl Rahner—for *theosis*, for deification as *the* underlying cause for the Incarnation of God, which needs be thought of indispensably as the hypostatic union of divine and human natures. Significantly, in this context, he appreciates positively the contributions of the Greek theologian Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1359). In the *ductus* of *Gaudium et Spes* §11 and with the aid of Maximus Confessor, he attempts to avoid a Platonic constriction of the human existence on earth: “Christologically spoken the divinization of Christ does not lead to an unlimited participation [of a human being] with divinity, but rather to an impression and perfecting ‘information’ [the author uses here this word in an original way in order to circumscribe the transformation—cf. the term *forma*] of human existence and activities corresponding to the original way in which the person of the eternal Son constantly receives its being, insight and volition from the Father. Christ is Son of the Father, insofar He is human” (58).

All-decisive is the assumption of the divine Son's *habitus* and divine potency (ἐνεργεια) as obedience vis-à-vis the Father "by practicing charity" (61). The perfection of human nature occurs in the categoriality of its finitude as the perfection of human being's divine similitude (61)—"no identification, no transubstantiation," as the author reminds the reader (68). He thus preserves the difference between grace and divine glory—against Juan Martinez de Ripalda (1594–1648), who asserted ultimate human similarity with God's holiness.

In the main body, grace is treated under the heading of the celestial *dorean* (i.e., gratuity), enabling the human person to become co-heir. In agreement with Thomas and de Lubac but in opposition to Cajetan, the author understands grace as not being something "ecstatic." Nevertheless, the "border concept" of *natura pura* is preserved—with a nod to the greatest Catholic systematician in the nineteenth century, Matthias Scheeben (1835–1888), and the Fourth Lateran Council (1215)—as otherwise, "grace going beyond creation" would not exist (75). On this point, certainly Bulgakov and de Lubac would register their displeasure. Over and against Hegel, one must think Trinitarian, Stickelbroeck argues, as it is exclusively the Holy Spirit who enables a personal *communio* from *communicatio* in and through Jesus Christ.

Gratia creata again makes possible the singular elevation of the humanity of Christ into supernature—in a qualified sense, the model for all human beings: from a theoretical *esse ad Deum*, conceived abstractly, to a personal *esse ad Patrem in Filio per Spiritum Sanctum* (90–91). Upon this rich background, he discusses in succinct brevity and clarity Augustine, Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, Arausicanum II, Luther, Melanchthon, Trent, Jansenism, Molinism, Sertillanges, Lonergan, and justification. In the process, the author evidences himself as a profound expert on Thomistic thought who is also most capable of presenting judiciously and with ample nuance Luther's and Melanchthon's positions.

The heading "God's universal saving Will" is robustly buttressed by sound exegetical insights. In addition, this section references pertinent passages from the Second Vatican Council. It describes both a very successful synopsis of a complex intellectual history and a thorough, systematic presentation of the Catholic teaching on grace. In the process, contours of the Christian believer as the possible symphony of freedom and grace appear.

In logical and creative continuation of the *point d'appui* of the celebrated Catholic theologian Scheeben, Stickelbroeck liberates

the term “grace” from a narrowed understanding occasioned by the acrimonious polemics of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and broadens it to the most foundational intention of the Incarnation: deification. The thus-expressed emphasis of personal and dialogical divinization as the final goal of human existence within the context of grace is relatively recent. Paralleling Scheeben, it occurs by virtue of Stickelbroeck’s congeniality with the Greek Fathers. The author sets his position quite firmly in opposition to two significant representatives of Baroque Scholasticism: Bañez and Molina. While arguing very cogently, the two had understood grace in a material and mechanical sense. Likewise also, Stickelbroeck does not leave the reader in a diffuse suspense. In the process, the author often discusses the varied positions of Scheffczyk, Karl Rahner, de Lubac, Ratzinger, Hauke, and Menke. Similarly to Balthasar, also for Stickelbroeck, Maximus Confessor is the lodestar. In this context, the author’s eminent philosophical competence comes to bear. Frequent reference is made to Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein, and Giovanni Sala. This enables him to formulate with remarkable precision. As in all areas, so also here, the Chalcedonian formula is the indispensable orientation.

This richly annotated textbook deserves an unqualified welcome. One wishes the author the requisite leisure to translate the insights gained in this book into a robust Mariology. May this review encourage colleagues to offer courses on grace on a more frequent basis. Feliculously, this book promotes Orthodox–Catholic dialogue. It is certainly no hyperbole to claim that this book is one every systematician must dream of writing—this all the more in the year of divine mercy.

N·V

Emery de Gaál
Mundelein Seminary
Mundelein, IL

Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ by Aaron Riches
(*Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016*), xxi + 279 pp.

AARON RICHES BEGINS this extraordinary book by quoting Pope Pius XII’s *Sempiternus Rex*, in which the Pope emphasized that Christ’s human nature must not be presented as though it existed on its own rather than in the Word. Riches notes that Pius XII’s teaching on the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon squares with the Apostle Paul’s affirmation of “one Lord Jesus Christ”

(1 Cor 8:6; cf. the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed) and belongs to the Church's fundamental teaching that "the human Jesus . . . shares a unity and identity with God (in the person of the Son and Logos)" (3). On this basis, Riches sets forth the thesis of his book: "Therefore, the only tenable starting point for Christology lies in the absolute *unitas* of the human Jesus with the divine Son. This opposes any alternative starting point that would begin from a theoretical or ontological *separatio* of divinity and humanity in Christ in order to proceed discreetly 'from below'" (ibid.). Central to his argument is the point that no separation from God is needed or helpful in determining what Jesus's human nature is or does.

Riches gives two reasons in support of this argument. The first reason involves a paradox, given the incompatibility of the divine attributes (for example, that God cannot change and is eternal) with creaturely attributes. While differing infinitely from his divinity, Jesus's humanity cannot be truly known outside the union of his human nature with the divine nature in the Word. Riches remarks that, "if the reality of the human being 'Jesus' is ontologically constituted through union with the Logos, the human birth and real crucifixion of this human being is made possible only in the divine unity of the Logos" (5). There would literally be no human nature of Jesus if there were no union of that human nature with the divine nature in the Word, and so understanding Jesus's humanity cannot involve bracketing his divinity.

Second, and correspondingly, no separation from God is needed or helpful for analyzing Jesus's human nature because, in fact Jesus is *verus homo et verus Deus*, and so "the fullness and excellence of perfect humanity is constituted by the intimacy of its union with God" (6). Whereas it might seem that union with God makes Jesus less truly human, in fact, it makes Jesus more truly human. To know what is truly human cannot be attempted, therefore, by bracketing God. Rather, human nature becomes more what it distinctly is the more it is united with God. Riches states that "the irreducible difference of the human being in relation to God is perfected in direct (as opposed to inverse) relation to the perfection of the *unio* of his humanity with the divine Logos" (7). We might think that what is truly human is known and protected in Jesus by downplaying or bracketing what is truly divine. But, in fact, the opposite is the case, as befits the Creator God's ontological noncompetitiveness with creatures. When we emphasize Jesus's full divinity, we illumine his true humanity. Riches argues that the same point extends to knowing our own

human nature, which is known rightly when we know it as united to the divine nature in the Word. As Riches puts it, “only the confession of the ‘one Lord Jesus Christ’ maximally preserves the integrity and difference of *verus homo* before *verus Deus*” (7). Indeed, Riches makes the point even more strongly, denying that we can begin in any way “from an abstract idea of what his humanity might be apart from that *unio*” (8). The suggestion is that, to know what *true* humanity is, we must look to Christ, and we cannot import a concept of true humanity from outside the hypostatic union.

Riches has in mind first and foremost the two main Christological heresies, Monophysitism and Nestorianism. Monophysitism appears to strongly affirm the *unio*, but it does so at the expense of both *verus homo* and *verus Deus*. It implicitly assumes that the radical distinction between humanity and divinity involves a separation that threatens the union, and so it blends the human into the divine so as to insist upon the union. It does not see that the distinction of natures in their fullness is actually perfected by the union. Nestorianism, for its part, thinks that separation is what is needed to preserve the radical distinction, and so it weakens the union. In both heresies, the error comes about due to failure to realize that the union itself enables the fullness of the radical distinction between the two natures. The orthodox position therefore should not be conceived as a midpoint between the two heresies (let alone between a supposed Alexandrian divinizing and Antiochene humanizing of Christ), since, in fact, the two heresies agree in their failure to perceive the role of the union in establishing the perfect distinction of the two natures. Rather than being a midpoint, the orthodox position is actually an appreciation for the fact that the hypostatic union is where true humanity and true divinity are most clearly identified and distinguished: union with God does not threaten the truly human but establishes and reveals it.

Riches brings forward the example of Karl Rahner, who sought to overcome an overly divine Christology by retrieving a “Nestorian” corrective in the modern era, as reflective of the problematic notion that, in order to accentuate the truly human, we must diminish the union. Riches also mentions the historical-critical separation of the human “Jesus of history” from the divine “Christ of faith.” He adds the broader claim that, in modernity (notably modern metaphysics), thinkers presume that “the difference of x and y is only safeguarded by *separatio*, a strict autonomy that ensures that no intimacy crosses the basic parallelism whereby each thing remains distinct from its opposite” (11). Here he has the nature–grace debate in view, with

modernity reflected in the post-Cajetanian insistence upon a strict separation of the two through the conception of *natura pura* and de Lubac retrieving the (in Riches's view earlier) position that the intimate union of the two is the locus of their real distinction. Riches goes back further to the early medieval period to show the attraction of many thinkers (notably Peter Lombard) to the Nestorian *homo assumptus* theory of the Incarnation. He gives the post-Cajetan Thomists their due, however, by noting that, despite their insistence upon *natura pura*, even Thomists such as Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange never show the slightest inclination toward Nestorian Christology.

I think that this latter point may be even more instructive than Riches supposes. In fact, the *natura pura* theory, while meant to underscore the distinction of human nature from grace, never denied that union with God is constitutive of what a "pure human nature" would be. Thomists always conceived of sinless human nature as perfected through knowing and loving God in a profound union, even if not yet in the (distinct and infinitely greater) graced union of beatific vision or adoptive sonship. Riches argues that contemporary Thomists make the mistake of thinking that "the real integrity of human nature must be necessarily compromised by the divine union" when they "prefer to establish the ontological integrity of a 'theonomic' principle of nature abstracted from grace, and therefore of the Christian confession" (14). But I note that this "'theonomic' principle of nature" is never abstracted from a divine source or divine goal. On the contrary, it is abstracted solely from grace, not from a creaturely union with God. Thus, the issue has to do not with the separation of true humanity from union with the Creator, but rather with the doctrine of creation as involving a proportionate creaturely union distinct from (though profoundly open to) a graced one.

This point does not undermine Riches's central claim, with which the Thomists would fully agree and which Riches brilliantly unfolds: "The bitterly finite experience of the Incarnation is precisely constituted by—and therefore intensified as a result of—the unbreakable unity of the one Lord Jesus Christ" (15). Union with the divine nature in the Person of the Word grounds and strengthens, rather than threatens, Christ's true humanity. The more we are united with God, the more fully we are truly human, fulfilling all our capacities and potentialities.

The three parts of Riches's book lead the reader through the Councils and into the medieval receptions of the Councils. The first part (chs. 1–3) moves from Ephesus through Chalcedon. Its purpose

is to show the fundamental unity of Leo and Chalcedon with Cyril's Twelve Chapters, despite certain weaknesses in some of the Tome's formulations—and with special attention to Chalcedon's *Definitio fidei*. Against the Nestorians and Monophysites, both Cyril and Leo emphasize, in Riches's words, that: "The divine *forma* that shines forth in miracle and the human *forma* that succumbs to suffering may be parsed, but only as different manifestations of the one ontological existent (the *una persona* or *una subsistentia*). The concrete existent in all cases . . . remains and is the one Lord Jesus Christ" (81).

The second part of the book appreciatively surveys Gregory of Nazianzus's Christology of "mingling," Dionysius the Areopagite's theandric Christology, and the doctrine of *enhypostatos* that is rooted in Cyril of Alexandria and developed by Leontius of Jerusalem and John of Damascus (among others). Against standard patristic surveys such as that of J. N. D. Kelly, Riches argues persuasively that Constantinople II, with its condemnation of the Three Chapters in favor of Cyrillian Christology, is in strong accordance with "the dyoenergist and dyothelitist dogmata of the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681)" (129). Constantinople III took place almost twenty years after the persecution and death of Maximus the Confessor, who stands as a great defender of the Cyrillian insight that the Cross is the incarnate Son's "perfect act of theandric synergy" (152).

Riches's third part addresses Thomas Aquinas's recovery in the West of Constantinople II and III (as well as his recovery of the texts of Ephesus and Chalcedon), as well as Aquinas's appreciation for Cyril and John of Damascus, all of which aided him in overcoming the Christological problems caused by medieval Nestorian tendencies. Here, Riches underscores Aquinas's commitment to "the singular divine *esse* of Christ" (162). He shows that what is at stake is that the Incarnation "express fully the whole immutable reality on which it depends: the person of the eternal Son" (166). In this discussion, Riches delves into the longstanding debate about the seeming contradiction between Aquinas's strong affirmation of Christ's single divine *esse* and his argument, in the *De unione Verbi incarnati*, that Christ possesses a secondary *esse* as man. He argues that, in fact, Aquinas's position does not change, but rather, in *De unione*, Aquinas is simply drawing out an aspect of "the differentiated-unity of the Incarnate Son subsisting in a manner eternal and simple on the one hand, and in a manner temporal and compound on the other" (174). As Riches explains, "because the Incarnate Logos is a complex of natures, his

unum subsistens can be contemplated in terms of different aspects of subsistence (*aliter subsistens*): he can either be contemplated in himself (*in se*) or from the point of view of his assuming of human nature (*aliter subsistens*)” (175). The latter involves positing a secondary *esse*, but not an existential dualism, since Christ’s *esse* is the singular *esse* of the Logos, in which the human nature (with its secondary *esse*) subsists.

Riches then extends his investigation of Aquinas to include Aquinas’s account of how the unity of Christ’s “I” grounds his synergistic and differentiated human willing and how Christ’s human nature is an “instrument” of his divinity, so as to ensure “the absolute difference of human action and freedom within the *unitas* of the divine filiation” (183). In light of Aquinas’s theology of Trinitarian *processio* and *missio*, Riches draws upon Hans Urs von Balthasar and Pope Benedict XVI to affirm that “the filial unity of Jesus with the Father and the hypostatic unity of divinity and humanity in Christ are . . . internal to one another” and “the ‘I am’ of Jesus and the single *esse* of Christ are . . . rooted in the filial paradox of relation, which is expressed and lived in the Son’s *missio* to reveal the Father and his Love through obedient submission” (188–89). Riches goes on to treat Christ’s supreme suffering and beatific vision according to Aquinas, showing how the unity of Christ as *verus homo* and *verus Deus* governs Aquinas’s insistence that supreme suffering and beatific vision are, in Christ, found in a paradoxical unity (in this regard, Riches differs from von Balthasar and other critics of Aquinas’s position). Aquinas insists upon hypostatic unity even in his evaluation of the dead corpse of Christ. Riches concludes that Aquinas is a true inheritor of Cyrillian Christology.

Riches then shows that Scotus, by contrast to Aquinas, seeks to develop the *homo assumptus* doctrine without falling into Nestorianism. Riches explains, “Whereas Thomas started from the *unitas* of the humanity of Christ in the *unum suppositum* of the divine Logos, Scotus sought to account first for the integral humanity of *haec natura* in order to establish the tenable conditions of the *unio* of divinity and humanity he yet wanted to maintain” (210). It will be clear that, for Riches, Scotus’s move can only be disastrous. As Riches says, “Scotus was able to grant a new autonomy to the individuated human nature of Jesus, such that he could now specify an ontological density of *hic homo* that was not constituted by direct recourse to the *unum suppositum* of the one Lord” (ibid.). I agree with Riches that this move seems

problematic, since it posits (theoretically) a stand-alone human nature that is then inserted into the union, rather than ensuring that it is the union that governs everything about Christ's human nature.

Scotus here appears as something of a proto-Rahner, concerned to focus less on the divine "glory of Christ Pantocrator" and more on "the meager finitude of the particular existence of *hic homo*" (211). As we would expect, Riches's question is whether the finitude of Christ as truly human is in fact best defended outside the union: does union with God make the human nature less human? For Scotus, "the human nature of Jesus . . . is individuated and possesses its own human haecceity [though not its own personhood, because the Logos assumes this human nature] apart from the *suppositum* of the Logos and so outside the hypostatic union" (213). Although Scotus was not formally Nestorian, later Franciscans were. Riches offers two early-twentieth-century examples of such a Franciscan position, to which Pius XII's *Sempiternus Rex* responds. Riches also points out that Jon Sobrino falls into a similar problem, to which the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith formally responded in 2006. For Sobrino, the human Jesus "possesses his own 'whole reality' apart from the Son, who in a second ontological moment takes on (i.e., becoming united to) the prior 'reality of Jesus'" (222). This is an obviously disastrous outcome, since, if the Son assumes the whole reality of Jesus, then Jesus's whole reality is not characterized by being the divine Son.

In response to the concern that the lack of a human personhood undermines the true humanity of Jesus, Riches proposes that the answer consists in Aquinas's account of the secondary *esse*, which indicates the true creatureliness of the human nature of Christ—and thereby explains the importance of Christ receiving his human nature from Mary. Indebted to Louis Chardon, Riches suggests that the Jesus–Mary relation, which is inextricable from the hypostatic union, gives us insight into the mystical union of the ecclesial body with its Head in one mystical Body. As Riches puts it, "the human nature of the *unus Filius* includes Marian *communio* from its incarnate origin" (231).

The final chapter of Riches's book, presented as a "Coda," takes us further into Chardon's vision, not only with regard to the place of the Holy Spirit and the Paschal mystery in the Incarnation but also with regard to Mary's "permanent role of co-belonging to the Cross, and so to the concrete content of the Son's glorification" (240).

The Jesus–Mary relation that is inextricably present in the Incarnation means that Mary must follow the way of the Cross, the way of dispossession, even from her Son. The book concludes with a brief extension of its thesis into the realm of modern culture, which more and more reflects the separation promoted by heretical Christology. To moderns, true humanity seems to be obtained in separation from God and, thus, in separation from Christ.

This book demonstrates that *Ressourcement*, which retrieves the insights of the Fathers, need not and should not be separated from Thomism. With impressive erudition, Riches shows how Scholastic reasoning, including a metaphysically rich Christology, arises from the problems faced by the Fathers and ultimately from Paul’s proclamation of “one Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 8:6). Riches’s rendering of the Patristic period is sure-footed and profound, and his engagement with Aquinas and Scotus (in relation to the Patristic period) is erudite and, in my view, persuasive in its main lines and in its application to the contemporary situation. Readers may differ here and there from Riches without denying the truth of his central argument about the necessity of grounding Christology in the *unio* in the Person of the Logos.

In sum, I strongly recommend this book as an exemplification of the creative conjunction of *Ressourcement* and Thomism that, it seems to me, is now necessary for the health and fruitfulness of both. This conjunction will involve differences over the ways in which Thomistic metaphysics or the insights of the great twentieth-century *Ressourcement* thinkers should be appropriated and assessed. But, as can be seen wherever serious *Ressourcement* or Thomistic thinkers are at work, the theological project being undertaken is essentially the same, even where certain metaphysical or theological differences are present. A vibrant *Ressourcement* Thomism, beautifully exemplified by Riches’s book, is in fact the only viable alternative to the liberal-Catholic theology that builds, not as Aquinas does upon Scripture and the Fathers, but upon Schleiermacher, Bultmann, and Troeltsch. N&V

Matthew Levering
Mundelein Seminary
Mundelein, IL

Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church, edited by Alcuin Reid (*San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014*), 442 pp.

FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, theologians, philosophers, apologists, and ecclesial authorities have long looked at the declining number of actively involved Catholics since the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Many insist that the cause of this unprecedented flight from the pew is a failure to recognize the centrality of the sacred liturgy. The liturgy, either in theory and/or practice, has not been the source and summit of the Christian life. In other words, there have been corrupting “shadows” in the ritual reforms of Venerable Paul VI that have prevented the sacred liturgy from being what it ought, and needs, to be (cf. St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §10).

Aware of these shadows and desirous to recentralize the sacred liturgy in the service of belief and evangelization, in June of 2013, during the year of Faith (2012–2013), an international conference was held at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. Participants at the 2013 *Sacra Liturgia* conference gathered to perform what Don Alcuin Reid called an honest “liturgical examination of conscience” of the post-conciliar liturgy (10). Thankfully, all of the papers presented at the conference have been collected and made available in the text *Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*, edited by Alcuin Reid.

The text, consisting of twenty-three contributors discussing various elements of the Church’s liturgical life since the reforms of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, is bound to either encourage or frustrate, depending upon which side of the liturgical camp one is situated. The text is no less than a robust, theologically rich apologia for the new liturgical movement called for by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000]). As one may expect, topics covered include: the mis-application and weaknesses of the reforms of Vatican II, the importance of sacred music and church architecture, and the relationship between liturgical formation and catechesis. Also discussed are questions about the proper “art of celebrating,” the role and responsibility of the bishop in promoting right worship, and the relationship between liturgy and the Church’s social doctrine.

Having not the requisite space to comment upon all the fine essays presented in this volume, I will limit myself to remarking on some of the more intriguing and insightful contributions. The brief

introductory address by Bishop Dominique Rey of Fréjus-Toulon, France (13–17) effectively sets the tone for the entirety of the text. He emphasizes that the sacred liturgy “is not a peripheral matter” and, as such, it needs to be at “the center of any renewal of the Church” (15). Referencing *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, he explains that the centrality of the liturgy in ecclesial renewal is due to the “singular efficacy” of the liturgy to foster an encounter with the saving action of Christ. When the liturgy is not what it should be, when it lacks beauty, the encounter with Christ is impeded. Thus, according to Bishop Rey, “liturgical formation is crucial” (16).

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Archbishop of Comlombo, Sri Lanka, provides a sapiential articulation of worship in general, tracing its heavenly origin and man’s progressive participation in this perennial divine act. Entitling his essay “The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church” (19–39), Cardinal Ranjith argues that the very existence and mission of Israel as revealed in the biblical narrative is ordered to a cultic end. This end, which is a call to worship the one true God and lead others to the rightful worship of that one true God, is ordered to, and perfected by, Christ’s self-offering on the Cross and the Church’s continuation of that offering in the sacred liturgy. The cardinal’s Christocentric reading of man’s liturgical activity allows one to avoid many of the “erroneous ideas” that have seeped into the liturgical life of the Church. These ideological errors (of which, he lists three: a false archeologism, a failure to make the distinction between the ministerial and common priesthood, and the reduction of the term *actus participatio* to banal “showmanship”) ultimately reduces the mysterious “theo-drama” of the liturgy to parody.

One of the highlights of the text is the contribution by Bishop Peter Elliott, auxiliary bishop of Melbourne, Australia, titled “*Ars Celebrandi* in the Sacred Liturgy” (69–85). Lamenting the false Cartesian dichotomy that is affecting the liturgical life of the Church, the good bishop argues that priest celebrants must integrate “the externals and his own spiritual interiority” (70). Once the Cartesian temptation to separate external actions from internal faith is overcome, each movement and gesture of the priest celebrant will be gracious, unhurried, and never theatrical or contrived. According to Bishop Elliott, the key to overcoming the Cartesian influence and celebrating the sacred liturgy well is threefold: (1) for the celebrant to understand what he is doing through adequate formation (shockingly, Elliott reports that many priests have not read the *General Instruction*

of the *Roman Missal*); (2) for the celebrant to intelligently grasp the whole liturgical act through practice—that is, a celebrant must practically know the “shape” of the liturgy and be wholly familiar with the progressive unfolding of the liturgy—and (3) for the celebrant to humbly embrace his role as apprentice and learn the “craft” of celebrating from the living liturgical tradition. When these ends are met, many of the problems plaguing liturgical worship, such as hasty speech and actions, liturgical banality, and the absence of beauty, are evaded. Bishop Elliott’s insightful, practical, and richly incarnational article is a must read for every priest.

Marc Aillet, Bishop of Bayonne, Lescar, and Oloron in France provides the reader with a superb article that is both intellectually astute and spiritually enriching. In “The Sacred Liturgy and the New Communities” (163–82), Bishop Aillet examines the liturgical question through the lens of “new communities” and notes that what makes these communities and their apostolates particularly fruitful is their “reconnection” with traditional spirituality and traditional liturgical life. Of particular importance, argues Aillet, is the principal orientation of these new communities, which is fundamentally “Eucharistic” and eschatological. Concomitantly, these new communities also enjoy, to various degrees, a liturgical renewal that further makes their apostolates more and more fruitful. Bishop Aillet comments on three elements of this liturgical renewal: the rediscovery of Latin, the suitability of Gregorian chant, and the importance of obedience to liturgical regulations. Of particular brilliance is Bishop’s Aillet’s stirring defense of Latin within the sacred liturgy.

Tracey Rowland’s contribution, “The *Usus Antiquior* and the New Evangelisation” (115–37), is, as one has come to expect, brilliantly incisive and worth the purchase of the text itself. Drawing upon Alasdair MacIntyre’s “expressivist theory of language,” Rowland argues that the 1960s project to make the liturgy more contemporary by transposing the high sacral language into the vernacular of a low, mundane culture caused the liturgy to become, of all things, “boring” (120). This is, according to Rowland, the result of many “pastoral leaders” adopting a false linguistic philosophy that adhered to an impoverished understanding of the relationship between language and culture. The solution to the problem, writes Rowland, is to once again unite liturgically language and culture via the use of the more poetic *usus antiquior*. My only critique of this fine article is that I should have liked to see Professor Rowland draw more explic-

itly upon the seminal work of Christopher Dawson in support of her argument.

In sum, Don Alcuim Reid deserves applause for not only organizing the 2013 *Sacra Liturgia* conference but also for making its fruit available to all. The articles presented in *Sacred Liturgy* provide a solid theological foundation for the desired liturgical renewal so desperately needed. N&V

Richard S. Meloche
St. Gregory's University
Shawnee, OK

Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine by John Peter Kenney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xi + 169 pp.

JOHN KENNEY'S NEW STUDY, *Contemplation and Classical Christianity*, disputes an interpretation of Augustine's theology as reducible to Platonic philosophy, specifically on the topic of Christian contemplation. As a Platonic philosopher himself, writing his dissertation on Plotinus and the *Via Antiqua* and publishing on topics related to Platonism and theology, Kenney's scholarly work disrupts an established trend in Augustinian studies, as exhibited by fellow Platonic philosopher John Rist, to regard Platonism not merely as a source but as the foundation of Augustine's theology. As Kenney ultimately states in his conclusion:

Perhaps we may be better served, therefore, as readers of Augustine not to regard Platonism as simply a rival to his emerging Christian theology or, anachronistically, as its philosophical foundation. We might instead consider it as an alternative transcendentalist tradition, one that Augustine explicitly valued for that aspect of its thought, but which he also regarded as superseded by the more adequate transcendentalism of Catholicism. (166)

Contemplation and Classical Christianity traces the development of Augustine's theology of Christian contemplation from its nascent form in his writings at Cassiciacum while a catechumen to its full stature in his autobiography, the *Confessions*, especially as portrayed in his vision at Ostia. Chapters one and two of Kenney's study lay

the foundation for the remainder of the work. Chapter 1 explicates the content of Platonic theology for the reader unfamiliar with Platonism, and chapter 2 recounts the impact Augustine attributes to Platonism for his conversion to Christianity, while also emphasizing the distinct differences between the Platonic philosophy he encountered and the Christian theology he developed. The final three chapters of Kenney's study detail the development of Augustine's theology of contemplation from 386–400 AD as distinct from the Platonic philosophy of ascent.

Chapter 3 focuses on two treatises from Cassiciacum: *De ordine* and *Soliloquia*. *De ordine*, according to Kenney, expresses great confidence in the ability of reason to ascend from material reality to contemplation in this life. Such an accomplishment, however, similar to Platonic philosophy, is available only to the elite (those educated in the liberal arts). The rest of humanity advances in this world through obedience to authority and achieves contemplation only in the next life. By contrast, in *Soliloquia*, Augustine places emphasis on the necessity of divine grace to reach contemplation and to remain in such a state permanently. Even within *De ordine*, the apparent wisdom of uneducated Monica suggests the possibility of a pathway to contemplation other than the study of the liberal arts. The emphasis on divine intervention in his theology of contemplation within *Soliloquia* distinguishes Augustine's theology as thoroughly anti-Platonist and, ultimately, develops into full maturation within the *Confessions*.

Chapter 4 covers the development of Augustine's theology of contemplation following his baptism in 387, up to the writing of his *Confessions*. In *De quantitate animae*, Augustine records the seven levels of the soul. While *De quantitate animae* maintains that a soul may fall back into moral decadence along the path of its ascent, it remains Augustine's most optimistic text on the permanency of the highest state of the soul, the state of contemplation (101). In Augustine's monastic writings, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* and *De vera religione*, he transitions from discussing the pathway to contemplation in the context of levels of the soul to ethical advancement. *De vera religione* develops Augustine's thought beyond *De quantitate animae*, as contemplation is presented as never permanent in this life. The human soul is always beset with the temptation to abuse human freedom by turning from the highest good. In Augustine's texts following his ordination as a minister of the Church, including *De utilitate credenda*, *De sermone Domini in monte*, *Ad Simplicianum*, and *De doctrina Christiana*,

he emphasizes the universal effects of the Fall and, thus, especially, the universal necessity of grace as mediated through the Church, particularly through Sacred Scripture.

The fifth chapter of Kenney's work is the high point in which he discusses Augustine's Christian transcendentalism and the full maturation of his theology of contemplation as expressed in the *Confessions*. Kenney specifically highlights within this chapter the interrelation in the *Confessions* of Augustine's autobiography and his exegesis of Genesis in book XII. Augustine's spiritual exegesis of Genesis pushes back against a denial of transcendentalism by the Manicheans and some Christians and also provides a foundation for Augustine's transcendental experiences at Milan and Ostia (130, 134). At stake in Augustine's defense of spiritual exegesis are the most meaningful moments of his life. Defending a spiritual interpretation of Scripture not only validates Augustine's experiences of unmediated encounter with God but also supplies language for speaking of the transcendental, a geography for the ascent of the soul, and a means for mediated contemplation of the Word. The heart of Kenney's final chapter focuses on Augustine's recounting of the vision at Ostia. Kenney interprets the development of Augustine's theology of contemplation as the result of sustained reflection on his ascent in the garden with his mother, Monica. Meditation on Monica's presence, according to Kenney, develops Augustine's thought away from his two-tiered path to contemplation at Cassiciacum and toward a theology of contemplation accessible to both the educated and uneducated through divine grace, ultimately to be fulfilled only in the world to come.

In the end, Kenney leaves the reader with a thorough overview of Augustine's theology of contemplation from prior to his reception into the Church at Cassiciacum to after his ordination to the episcopacy and his narration of the *Confessions*. While accessible to the soul in this life through grace, Christian contemplation in Augustine's thought is a foretaste, as Kenney writes, of "everlasting contemplation of a transcendent God in communion with created and perfected souls" (168). Kenney's work not only carefully details the development of Augustine's theology with regard to such aspects as the achievability and sustainability of contemplation of the transcendent God during life on earth but also forcefully and powerfully articulates Augustine's theology of contemplation as *Christian theology* decidedly distinct from *Platonic philosophy*. Unlike a Platonic ascent through the use of reason alone, Christian contemplation in

Augustine is accessible only by divine grace and, thus, is available to all, and not merely the elite educated in the liberal arts. Kenney's analysis presents Augustine as a Christian theologian whose theology, while not unrelated to Platonism, develops according to his reflection on Scripture and experience and is not representative of a mere co-opting of Platonic thought. This work is recommended for graduate students, particularly those with an interest in Augustine's theology of Christian contemplation, the relation of Platonic philosophy to Augustine's theological thought, and Christian transcendentalism. 

Emily C. Nye

University of Notre Dame

Notre Dame, IN