

Book Reviews

The Primacy of God: The Virtue of Religion in Catholic Theology by R. Jared Staudt (*Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2021*), 409 pp.

The very title of the book prepares the reader to look at religion in way that, while not unknown to our times, is not the usual way scholars discuss religion: as a virtue. Staudt immediately reveals the purpose of the book in the opening paragraph of his introduction, namely, “to recapture Aquinas’s understanding of religion as a habitual disposition within the soul that rightly orders it and all of one’s actions to God” (1). In order to recapture St. Thomas’s understanding of religion as a virtue, Staudt not only has to expound on Aquinas’s teaching on the virtue of religion; he also has to address the various meanings the word “religion” has taken on over the last several centuries, where it has rarely been treated as a virtue. Staudt’s goal for the book will bring the reader to encounter the following: the history of the virtue of religion, *ad intra* controversies as well as *ad extra* controversies, social sciences, philosophy, theology, and of course, Thomas Aquinas, who will be the hand that guides the work.

The introduction is where Staudt sets the scene for the rest of the book. Here he first gives a quick baptism into Aquinas’s understanding of the virtue of religion: “For Aquinas, religion primarily indicates a virtue that offers just worship to God, *virtus religionis*, and only secondarily does it refer to an organized body of worship or rite, the *religio Christi*, with neither meaning simply referring to a religion as understood today” (5). The reader, knowing the centrality of Aquinas for the work Staudt is doing, also needs to know how religion is viewed today. Staudt gives four elements common to our times about religion: “(1) belief about ultimate reality, (2) moral directives, (3) ritual worship, (4) the organization and regulation of a community” (5). In order to achieve the aim of the book to bring the discussion of religion back into its rightful place in theology as a virtue that orders one’s life to God, Staudt not only has to engage in a historical review

of Aquinas's teaching, but also has to engage the modern understanding of religion. To help the reader follow the path he is laying, Staudt breaks down the book in three parts, each with three chapters. The first three chapters make up part I, "Justice in Relation to God." The second three chapters comprise "The Heart of Christian Worship" in part II. The final chapters situate the virtue in part III, "Religion's Place in Catholic Theology."

Chapter 1 takes the reader back centuries into the past to begin with the Fathers of the Church. After describing the way the Fathers used ancient thought, particularly that of the Greek philosophers, Staudt goes back a century before Christ to expound on Cicero's teaching on religion. This is not just a historical throwback, but a necessary review for two reasons: firstly, because Cicero's teaching on religion demonstrates religion's relationship to the natural law; second, because the Fathers of the Church, including Augustine, and the Scholastics, particularly Aquinas, will engage Cicero's teaching to develop their own teaching. For the Fathers and the Scholastics, the teaching on religion cannot remain solely on the level of philosophy, but must go deeper due to God's revelation. Staudt gives a good recount of how Augustine appropriated some of Cicero, yet recognizes the problems in this ancient philosopher's understanding of religion, too, since, for Augustine, "Christianity fulfills the noble aspirations of the pagans for justice and worship of God" (31). When expounding on Aquinas's teaching, Staudt shows not only how Thomas used Cicero, but also how Aquinas stays rooted in the Scripture for his teaching on religion so as to separate true worship from idolatry and false worship.

The penultimate section of the chapter takes up criticisms of religion, first by Karl Barth, and secondly by Matthew Myer Boulton and Tom Greggs. For Barth, religion is not something that needs to be purified and perfected, but in Christ, something that needs to be cast aside, since, as Staudt describes Barth's view, "Religion has no positive role in one's relation with God once revelation exposes religion for what it really is" (47). Boulton and Gregg, who both take up Barth's position, question whether religion is even biblical. Staudt answers their objection using the Scripture itself to demonstrate that it "is not possible to speak of God against religion" (54). This propels him first to defend religion in light of Scripture, and then move into the next two chapters, which will delve deeper into the right order of things to God and the development of religion in salvation history.

Chapter two situates the virtue of religion in light of virtue of justice. Instead of beginning with Aquinas, Staudt brings Immanuel Kant into the conversation about justice. Kant is one of the leaders in the modern way of viewing justice: individualistic, transactional, and separate from the

transcendent. Staudt cites Joseph Ratzinger's *Truth and Tolerance* on how Kant's overthrowing of metaphysics leads him to view religion in pragmatic way. This section sets up the rest of the chapter to delve into Aquinas's treatment of religion in the *Summa theologiae* (*ST*): its relationship to justice, the importance of worship, the most important of the moral virtues, and the sins that defile religion. In this section on Aquinas's teaching, Staudt adeptly keeps the reader close to Thomas's use of Scripture to understand religion. This allows the reader to engage the aforementioned criticisms of religion by Barth and Kant.

Chapter 3 continues to develop the understanding of religion in light of salvation history. A key aspect of religion is worship, and worship is ordered to God. This chapter ties religion to law: the natural law, the Old Law, and the New Law. Religion's relationship to the law is a key way Staudt helps the reader keep these important concepts united. Moreover, using Aquinas's teaching, he also shows the importance of the Old and New Law in purifying religion in the natural law: "[Aquinas] delves into the relation of law and worship in much detail especially in his detailed description of the ceremonies of the Jewish Law. These ceremonies find their foundation in the natural law and their fulfillment in the New Law, which give coherence to the progression of worship" (108). The New Law brings the reality of grace and charity to the virtue of religion, which reveal that, "the New Law consists essentially in an interior union with God that moves the believer toward the good in love, rather than proposing a new moral code." Christ is the one who ushers in the New Law, and, "since it flows from Christ, the New Law imparts his own right relation to the Father and his own Spirit, conforming the believer to his humanity, as a member of his own body, along with his relation to God" (129–30). Having a right relation toward God is clearly related to justice, and this can happen in the soul through the New Law. This in turn is related to holiness, "which serves as the means by which the infused justice of interior righteousness orders all of one's life to God through acts of worship and in all one does, making life itself into a pure offering to the honor of God" (133).

As the book moves into the second part, the title of the fourth chapter, "The Religion of Christ and His Church," veils what is coming. The second footnote informs the reader that Staudt is weighing in on a controversial subject: "Did Christ Worship the Trinity?"—the title of an article Staudt wrote for *The Thomist* (vol. 76, no. 2 [2012]: 233–72). This is very much the topic at the outset of chapter 4. Staudt allows the criticism by his interlocutor (Thomas Joseph White) a full hearing. White's criticism is that those who hold for Christ worshipping the Trinity do so without any

clear textual support from Aquinas. White ascribes an implicit Nestorianism to those who hold that Christ worshipped the Trinity. This criticism does not deter Staudt. To make his case that Christ did worship the Trinity, he first appeals to Scripture. He gives five citations from the New Testament to demonstrate Christ's offering signs of reverence and service, which is part of worship. Next, Staudt acknowledges that there is no explicit text in Aquinas on this point. However, he identifies places where Thomas offers "indications" that Christ worshipped: "First of all, Christ must possess the virtue of religion due to its role in the perfection of human life. Aquinas recognizes that Christ possessed all the moral virtues (see *ST* III, q. 7, a. 2, corp.)" (143). Along with citing the *ST* II-II on religion (q. 81, a. 7, corp.), he also cites the *ST* III (q. 47, a. 2, corp.), where Aquinas speaks of Christ, through his sacrifice, fulfilling all the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law. Staudt eventually discusses the claim of implicit Nestorianism. He explains what the Nestorian position is, and then rejects that his claim that Christ worshipped the Trinity reflects the Nestorian position, for two reasons: "First, there is reverence in the human soul of Christ toward God, and, secondly, the worship which is directed to the person of the Father is communicated to the other persons" (154). He utilizes the next several pages to further explain his reasoning.

Chapter 5 gives an extensive explanation of what it means to worship the Trinity. This chapter concludes with a beautiful reflection of how both the Roman Rite and the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom reflect the right worship of the Trinity in their respective rites. Chapter 6 flows from these two previous chapters to focus on religion, the theological virtues, and the love of neighbor. He includes a thorough account of Karl Rahner's position on the love of neighbor, which Rahner holds to be the key moral act in relation to God, which would seem to turn on its head the order of charity and the acts of religion. Staudt brings Hans Urs von Balthasar and Aquinas to engage Rahner's position and ultimately show the necessary relationship between the theological virtues and the virtue of religion in giving God his due honor.

The title of the final section of the book, "Religion's place in Catholic Theology," takes the reader into an engagement with modernity. In these chapters, Staudt brings Aquinas's understanding of the virtue of religion into conversation with the modern concept of religion. In chapter 7, he gives an explication of Aquinas's understanding of religious history and complements it with von Balthasar's understanding of religion, despite the fact that von Balthasar does not identify religion as a virtue (see 269n29). In chapter 8, Staudt brings religion into dialogue with the social sciences. This is a challenge, due to the diversity of religions and the necessity to

remember key principles that make the dialogue possible. For this reason, Staudt reminds the reader that this chapter builds upon Aquinas's thought. He then gives five theses he will elaborate on over the course of the chapter while bringing sociology, truth, and history to help expand the conversation of religion and religions and their relation to Christianity.

The final chapter, entitled "Recovering the Virtue of Religion in Theology Today," reminds the reader of the goal of the book. Staudt did not set out solely to expound on St. Thomas's teaching on the virtue of religion, although he did that. Nor did he seek to give a history of religion, although he did that, too. Rather, he began this work with the goal to recapture Aquinas's understanding of religion as a "habitual disposition within the soul that rightly orders it and all of one's actions to God" (1). In other words, this book was written as a true act of religion—to give honor and glory to God. Staudt has several objectives for this final chapter. First, he reminds the reader of how Aquinas's teaching on religion influenced the manual writers of the first half of the twentieth century, where they generally show that "the scholastic treatment of religion provided grounding for the study of theology in the soul's just ordering to God. A proper understanding of religion, therefore, provides the context for fundamental theology: human beings are religious creatures" (336). With this understanding, Staudt challenges several modern theologians and their teaching on religion. This section, while ultimately critical, is fair. Staudt is not polemical or overly negative, yet the engagement of these theologians is a key section that helps him argue for reuniting Aquinas's thought with fundamental theology.

R. Jared Staudt undertakes the great task of offering a comprehensive account of religion in Catholic theology. It will be a key resource to anyone studying the virtue of religion today. The breadth and depth of his study is remarkable. His engagement with various sources from varied times is both impressive and challenging, sometimes for the reader and other times for the one whose thought Staudt challenges. The controversies he wades into could be a catalyst to further debate, particularly on whether Christ worshipped the Trinity. The layout of the book follows a logical continuum that makes it readable and comprehensible, even if in a few sections it can be a bit laborious. Ultimately, Staudt has undertaken and fulfilled the work he set out to do. By doing so, he has made an important contribution to the study of the virtue of religion in Catholic theology. N.V

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A Living Sacrifice: Liturgy and Eschatology in Joseph Ratzinger by Roland Millare (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2022), xx + 309 pp.

The subtitle of Roland Millare's *A Living Sacrifice* is deceiving. It is about as misleading as most works that deal with the theology of Joseph Ratzinger. Millare's subtitle reads "Liturgy and Eschatology in Joseph Ratzinger." While Millare's book certainly grapples with Ratzinger's liturgical theology and his engagement with the final things, the book essentially presents Jesus Christ. Those who have thoroughly immersed themselves in the expansive work of the late Pontiff have come to discover what Emery de Gaál calls "the Christocentric shift." At every turn within the Ratzinger / Benedict XVI corpus, one finds, in some way, the figure, the person of Jesus Christ. Millare is one such thinker who finds Jesus in Ratzinger's thought and has made Jesus the key to unlocking new horizons in the relationship between liturgy and eschatology.

A twofold question drives Millare's work. On the one hand, how do attitudes towards the future affect the now of the liturgy? On the other, how does the celebration of the liturgy shape one's outlook of the future? Perhaps, more fundamentally, one might ask what determines these attitudes in the first place.

In response, Millare does not bury the lede. "In the beginning was not the 'deed' [*ethos*] but, rather, the Word [*Logos*]; it is mightier than the deed. Doing does not create meaning; rather, meaning creates doing." Millare opens his book with this Ratzinger quote and does not look back (15). The fundamental thing, as he reiterates throughout the book, is the relationship between *logos* and *ethos*—an argument for the primacy of *logos* over *ethos* and the problems that result from subordinating *logos* to *ethos*. This central point, which becomes his hermeneutical key, so to speak, is the topic of his first chapter.

For Ratzinger, *logos* means "mind," "reason," "meaning," "discourse," and "word" (see 26–29). But *logos* does not remain a mere abstraction. *Logos* takes flesh in Jesus Christ, the *Logos* incarnate and dwelling among us. Straightaway, he presents Ratzinger's argument that subordinating *logos* to *ethos* fundamentally changes the understanding of eschatology. That which was once viewed in light of creation and the Creator is now viewed in light of man and the world he has yet to create. The reversal affects the liturgy as well. The subjection of *logos* to *ethos* results in "idolrous pseudo-liturgies" and "festivals of self-affirmation" (16). Following the work of Romano Guardini, to whom Ratzinger owes a great deal in this area, Millare notes Guardini saw modernity as oriented to progress for

its own sake, a “non-cultural culture” equipped with a “non-human” man and “non-natural nature” (24). The *logos*, which had previously been the “given,” had been replaced by *ethos* in the form of *technē*. Now power and domination and possibility come to the fore. What things are in themselves, where they came from, or where they are going matters not. What does matter is what human beings have done with the raw material of the earth and, more importantly, how it can be feasibly shaped for a better future. The relegation of *logos* results in a modern world “marked by a total separation between God and the human person, . . . an alienation that reduced nature to ‘mere materiality’” (33). When this happens, the liturgy and the eschaton no longer appear as the *opus Dei*, but the *opus hominis*.

Ratzinger views this reversal of *logos* and *ethos* in the same way he understands sin. “At the very heart of sin,” Ratzinger says, “lies human beings’ denial of their creatureliness, inasmuch as they refuse to accept the standard and the limitations that are implicit in it; . . . they do not want to be dependent.” Thus, Ratzinger concludes that “sin is, in its essence, a renunciation of truth.”¹ Sin is a renunciation of *logos*—with the lauding of *ethos* over *logos* its anthem. Sin is a perversion of the primacy of *logos*. To this, Millare adds rather poignantly, “idolatry is a form of subordination of *logos* to *ethos*,” and “autonomy is antithetical to the covenantal relationship that Israel is called to have with God” (67). In the end, the dreams of the modern (and postmodern) *ethos* amount to nothing but a chimera, and a grim one at that. As Benedict XVI says, it “resembles a concrete bunker with no windows, in which we ourselves provide lighting and atmospheric conditions, being no longer willing to obtain either from God’s wide world.”²

At the heart of Ratzinger’s project, then, one consistently finds the recovery and preservation of *logos*. *Logos* is not abstract “reason,” but, in Jesus, *logos* appears as identical with love. The truth is love, and love is truth. *Logos* is love and truth and *Logos* is God. *Logos* comes before; it is fundamental, the “given”—God is first and God initiates. Millare captures the full force of the implications here. By embracing this truth of dependence in humility and rejecting the perennial temptation of pride, perhaps dominant in the modern mind yet always a threat to the human being, man

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning . . . : A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 70–71.

² Benedict XVI, “The Listening Heart: Reflections on the Foundations of Law,” address to Bundestag, Berlin, September 11, 2011 (*Arion* 19, no. 3 [2012]; copyright Vatican Library).

can rightly approach liturgy and eschatology. The primacy of *logos* is the hermeneutical key; or, better, the *Logos* incarnate is the hermeneutical key. As Millare concludes at the end of the first chapter, “a person will not be able to penetrate Ratzinger’s thought with any depth if they do not take the significance of this position [i.e., primacy of *logos*] seriously” (56).

With the recovery of the harmony produced by the primacy *logos* as a prelude, Millare goes on to highlight Ratzinger’s symphonic theological movements on the topic of the liturgy—all of which build upon the revelation of *logos* in Jesus Christ and account for a properly Christological eschatology.

The first of these movements runs contrary to any form of liturgical theology that reduces the Eucharist to a communal meal. Avoiding any banality, Ratzinger stresses the centrality of sacrifice in both Eucharistic theology and spiritual Christology. Millare rightly notes that Ratzinger embraces the Augustinian understanding of sacrifice as self-giving love as opposed to destruction. Viewing sacrifice as destruction amounts to non-being, whereas a true sacrifice of love is a way of being. Millare explains this notion of sacrifice—which Baptism initiates and the Eucharist deepens for the Christian—as an exodus. Then, beginning with Israel’s exodus, Millare traces salvation history and Temple worship to Christ, whose sacrificial exodus alone “achieves the communion and reconciliation between God and humanity” (72). The entire understanding of the essence of the Eucharist as sacrifice reaches its crescendo in Ratzinger’s spiritual Christology, which argues that Jesus’s identity as Son is manifest in the intimacy of the Son’s prayer—his ongoing conversation with the Father—and the manner in which “Jesus freely submits his human will to the divine will” (98). Entering into the liturgy, here and now, means entering into the Son’s eternal and self-giving dialogue with the Father—the most extreme manifestation of which the sacrifice of the Cross (and Eucharist) illustrates.

Next, Millare highlights Ratzinger’s second movement, his *communio* ecclesiology set in relation to the Eucharistic sacrifice of the *Logos*. Christ, incarnate *Logos*, encounters the individual in an objective way in the Eucharistic sacrifice, drawing the individual into *communio* with the Father. Through this dynamic relationality, the individual’s personality is restored. The Church is that “we” in which and through which individuals participate in Trinitarian *communio*. “The *communio* of the Church,” Millare says, “is expressed fully in the celebration of the liturgy that anticipates the *communio* that will be unveiled with the eschaton” (115). Thus, Millare’s treatment of Eucharistic sacrifice and spiritual Christology, which opens to Trinitarian theology, gives rise to an ecclesiology, liturgical theology,

and eschatology grounded in *communio*. And, as mentioned above, this *communio* is one of love, and love is *logos*. Therefore, Millare can also say that *logos*—the truth to which the Church holds—is *communio*. Throughout the chapter, Millare argues that Ratzinger's vision of *communio* maintains the proper tension between the primacy of the vertical *communio* (with God) and the horizontal *communio* with others. This tension orients *communio* towards mission precisely because the *Logos* is love.³ The frequent caricature of Ratzinger as disinterested in social concerns or the less fortunate is, quite simply, false. Eucharistic *communio* does not end at the communion rail; it begins there. And Millare concludes, "the unity of the Church is rooted in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, which both realizes and anticipates communion with God and neighbor" (160–61).

Having established a Eucharistic *communio*, one animated by the primacy of *logos*, Millare moves into Ratzinger's vision for what we might call a Eucharistic *ethos*. Maintaining the emphasis on *logos*, Ratzinger describes this *ethos* as *logikē latreia* (that which results from "worship according to the *logos*," as found in Romans 12:1). Said another way, "an *ethos* of charity springs forth from the *logos* of communion" (164). By entering the logic of the liturgy (i.e., the sacrifice of the *Logos* that re-establishes *communio* of humanity with God) and allowing it to shape one's life, one consequently enters into the mission of the *Logos*. Simply put, the Son's mission is pro-existence—that is, existence "for" the many. Christian hope for the future, the eschaton, is not an individualistic affair. Hope is oriented toward the many and set in motion by worship, liturgy, and Eucharistic sacrifice "transformed by the *Logos*, such that the believer is called to enter into the sacrifice of the incarnate *Logos*" (179). Therefore, the sacrifice of the *Logos* encountered in the Eucharist gives rise to a Eucharistic *ethos* that "enables a person to love all and to work ceaselessly for the world's transformation in Christ's love" (196). A Eucharistic *ethos* expresses a life of consistent offering in accord with *logos*.

Millare's final movement considers the meaningfulness of liturgical actions and postures. Based upon Ratzinger's insights, he makes a case for different aspects of a *Logos*-centric liturgy. Here, Millare gets practical in providing considerations for renewal in the liturgy. He focuses heavily on the Mass prayed *ad orientem*, the eastern orientation of which connects the past and present of liturgy with an eschatological hope. The final chapter

³ This holding together of *communio* and mission is not only a consistent theme in Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, but also visible in the work of John Paul II (e.g., *Christifideles Laici* [1988] §32) and Francis as well (e.g., *Evangelii Gaudium* [2013] §119–21).

serves as something of a catechesis on man at prayer and the symbolism of liturgical action. Again, recalling his recurring motif, Millare argues for a liturgy that frees man to be *homo adorans* as opposed to merely celebrating the modern *homo faber* (213–16). It is not we who make the liturgy, but God who does and who invites us to participate, liturgically, in the Son's perfect prayer through orientation, posture, gesture, silence, response, and beauty. Thus, Millare's book concludes in such a way that pastors, liturgists, and catechists can gain a foothold to work toward incremental and concrete renewal in liturgy at the local level.

Millare's *A Living Sacrifice* gets to the core of the crisis that impacts liturgical theology and eschatology alike. After diagnosing the problem, Millare offers Ratzinger's Christocentric response—in symphonic form—as the antidote. Ratzinger offers a vision for renewal and Millare articulates it. I recommend this book for anyone interested in Ratzinger's thought in the areas of liturgy and eschatology—and the relationship between them. Millare's work, faithfully following the thought of Joseph Ratzinger, challenges readers to consider how they might recover the primacy of *logos*—starting with the liturgy and moving into life. N.V

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Joseph Ratzinger and the Future of African Theology edited by Maurice Ashley Agbaw-Ebai and Matthew Levering (*Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021*), vii + 273 pp.

This is an interesting and well-conducted collection of essays. If the prediction is accurate that, by 2060, more than 40 percent of the world's Christians will live in sub-Saharan Africa, then it is well that we should pay attention to what is happening there now.

There are three sets of polarities which govern the concerns of most essays in the volume. One is the thought of Joseph Ratzinger and the present theological and socio-political state of sub-Saharan Africa. The second is the contrast between seeing present Africa as the potential and actual "lung" of the Church and its present condition as the abandoned and traumatized victim whom the Good Samaritan helps. Both these

images were coined by Joseph Ratzinger, and Pope Francis has reiterated the first in his Congo visit of 2023. The third polarity is also articulated by Ratzinger in his 2011 *Africae Munus* (a central document for this volume). It exists because of the tension between “immediate engagement in politics—which lies outside the Church’s direct competence—and the potential for withdrawal or evasion present in a theological and spiritual speculation which could serve as an escape from concrete historical responsibility” (*Africae Munus* §17). Many of the ten essays are directly concerned with trying to find an answer to the last problem—not always successfully, it must be said.

Dennis Kasule, for instance, in his “Pope Benedict XVI and the New Evangelization for Africa,” sets out Ratzinger’s solution to the problem, which essentially keeps the Church out of politics but through spiritual formation helps to produce those who will strive for social change. Kasule is sympathetic to this but points out boldly that this simply has not worked in Uganda. Christianity has flourished there, but political corruption is endemic. Joseph Ogbonnaya, in his “*Caritas in Veritate* and Africa’s Political Economy: the Case of Nigeria,” says much the same thing about Nigeria. Both conclude that the Church must be much more pro-active in political life than Ratzinger allows, although they are conscious of the dangers of this. Mary-Reginald N. Anibueze goes further, though her main focus is on the Eucharist. Her “Benedict XVI and Socio-Communitarian Eucharistic Exigencies in Relation to Africa” begins with extensive summaries of Ratzinger’s ideas, but then switches to lines of thought based on different references. Her title comes from P.C. Chibuko’s 1997 “The need for a socio-communitarian eucharistic liturgy.” This piece argues, for instance, that “a meaningful celebration of the liturgy . . . must be geared towards the liberation of the people and the development of peoples.” Anibueze quotes this (165) as though Ratzinger might approve, but his habit of mind and his stance on the increasing elimination of orthodox Christianity from large swathes of South America brought about by Liberation Theology suggests otherwise. Something similar to the South American experience would be a disaster in Africa, in Ratzinger’s view.

I find it hard not to disagree with the basic premises of the book given in the two Ratzingerian images of Africa as “living lung” and “actual victim.” Africa is in a mess, but it is also full of life and promise, increasing cultural self-confidence, and intellectual assurance. It has much to offer to the Church, especially at the present time. But there is always the danger of simplification. Africa is a special case in an unprecedented situation, but if, understandably, it sees its history as tainted, it is not alone in this. All

human history is tainted, albeit in varying degrees. Africa yearns and strives for a changed world and future that is natural enough and always right as an aspiration which governs actions, but Ogbonnaya helpfully quotes Ratzinger's assertion that "neither reason nor faith ever promises that there will be a perfect world someday. It does not exist" (218).

One particular issue is handled very well in Emery de Gaál's "Mission, Inculturation and 'Inculturality' in the thinking of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI in Relation to Africa." This essay has less to say about Africa than most of the other essays—mainly it presents Ratzinger's thoughts. But de Gaál very helpfully clarifies something central as an inescapable problem. All contributors agree that Africa should be grateful for the efforts of missionaries, many of them heroic, in bringing Christianity. All equally agree that these efforts were often, indeed characteristically, damaging and wrong-headed in that the missionaries suggested and often enforced the identification of Christianity and European culture with a corresponding denigration of indigenous religious thought and cultural practices. All agree that much (perhaps all) of this needs to be overturned and displaced by ideas which are rooted in African modes of understanding with corresponding styles of theology and liturgical celebration which are both new and recovered. Joseph Lugalambi's "*Lex Orandi Lex Credendi*: On exaggerations in Latin Liturgy" is not unsympathetic to this, but at the same time worries that the "received" rather than constructed character of the liturgy, about which Ratzinger is so forcefully eloquent, risks being displaced altogether. The larger problem is whether Christianity can be said to have a culture of its own. De Gaál agrees with Ratzinger that it does.

Clearly, to become a Christian you do not have to become European in outlook. It began in the Middle East! And yet the movement in Acts from Jerusalem to Rome, center of a huge empire whose lingua franca was Greek, is not a minor thing. The change from the faith of a people to a universal faith was not into some ahistorical abstraction. The formulations of the Creed could not have come about without Greek conceptual sophistication which can be interpreted, even reformulated, by later generations but never overthrown as though one can or should get back to a preceding state. For this reason, Ratzinger says that faith is not without a culture. What he resists, and rightly I think, is the notion that inculturation (everyone's buzzword) means that faith (without a culture) meets a culture (without a faith). But the African case shows how wrong this is. To become a Christian means entering Judaic convictions and Hellenic conceptions, but, just as Christianity absorbed, used, and grew from Hellenic forms of understanding, so on a reduced but real scale, it can use and grow from

modes of African thinking and practices (including religious ones). This is why, as de Gaál points out, Ratzinger preferred the term “inculturality” to “inculturation.” Something of this is well argued by Jacob Phillips in his “After *etsi volute si Deus Daretur*: Joseph Ratzinger and Robert Cardinal Sarah.” African theologians—Augustine, Origen, Tertullian—played a huge part in the life of the early Church. History does not repeat itself, but there is a real chance that Africa will play a large and fruitful role in the life of the future Church.

Tegha A Nji and Valery I. Akoh’s “The African Understanding of Solidarity and the Ratzingerian Concept of Pro-Existence: A Mutually Beneficent Dialogue” makes interesting enquiries into the styles and possible use of African fiction and music. The larger argument, attractive in itself, suggests links between customary African senses of solidarity and distrust of the self-standing individual with Ratzinger’s not-dissimilar understanding of pro-existence. On the other hand, those senses originate from tribal kinds of association based on kinship and local place, good in themselves but not the same as the universal love and crossing of kinship which the Good Samaritan parable commends. This problem is not directly faced, and it can be detected as underlying presence in some other essays.

The volume begins and ends very well. Two essays that I particularly liked are the clear and helpful introduction to the book by Matthew Levering and the last essay, Maurice Ashley Agbaw-Ebai’s “Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Reading of Political Power: Relevance for the Continent of Africa in the Twenty-First Century.” This essay, despite its long-winded title, is anything but long-winded. It reads well, close to the spoken voice and the natural intelligent thought of its author. Agbaw-Ebai brings out very clearly Ratzinger’s insistence, fundamental to his thought, that Christianity respects reason and the natural law and that this is the ground of its dialogue with the secular state. Agbaw-Ebai thoroughly understands the point, agrees with it, and presents it with a freshness of his own.

It will be obvious from my summary that this is an intelligent, well-edited collection of essays on a timely subject. It should be widely read. NV

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The Divinity of the Word: Thomas Aquinas Dividing and Reading the Gospel of John by Stefan Mangnus, O.P. (*Leuven: Peeters, 2022*), 227 pp.

An especially fruitful development over the past twenty years has been the increased interest in and attention to Thomas Aquinas's biblical commentaries. For too long, these were left largely, though not wholly, unread and untreated in the scholarly literature, even among otherwise devoted Thomists.

This lack of interest in Thomas's biblical commentaries was more than a little odd, given that Thomas's biblical commentaries were requirements of his position as a "Master of the Sacred Page" (*magister sacra pagina*), whereas his commentaries on the works of Aristotle, as valuable as they are, were largely products of his spare time. From this perspective, it might seem somewhat odd, therefore, that we had multiple editions and translations of Thomas's Aristotelian commentaries for decades before we had a complete English translation of Thomas's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Thomas Aquinas, the common doctor of the Church, and John's Gospel, one of the most theologically sophisticated of all the four Gospels—one would have thought it was a marriage made in heaven and that scholars would have jumped on it. But for the most part, they did not.

Partly, this had to do with the fact that the great "Thomistic revival" called for by Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* often emphasized the "philosophical" elements of Thomas's thought because, at the time, it was assumed that the Church needed a purely rational philosophy, untainted by "religious" ideas, to counteract the rationalism of the Enlightenment. So too, as biblical studies came more and more to be dominated by "historical-critical" methods of exegesis, it was assumed that the biblical commentaries of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church did not quite "measure up." They were not "scientific." Their authors did not appreciate the importance of historical context and contemporary literary forms, it was said, and as a result, these commentaries were simply too unsophisticated to be taken as serious interpretations of Scripture.

Even in Beryl Smalley's seminal work *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*—a book that provided a crucial inspiration to those interested in recovering the biblical commentaries of the Middle Ages—the great hero of the work was Andrew of St. Victor, to whom Smalley devoted nearly a third of the book, largely because his commentaries were seen to be precursors to the kind of serious, "critical" scholarship that had come to dominate the field of biblical studies. About biblical commentaries of theological luminaries such as Aquinas and Bonaventure, she had little to say.

So it is a welcome development to find that the sermons and biblical commentaries of Aquinas are finally getting the attention they deserve, along with a new generation of graduate students taking interest and devoting significant scholarly attention to them.

Among the more recent positive developments have been the superb conferences on Thomas's biblical commentaries which have allowed more serious consideration of Aquinas as a "biblical theologian," both at Ave Maria University, on this side of the Atlantic, and at the Nicholas Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, on the other. But I would be remiss if I failed to note another important center of this renewal, a place that perhaps not many would have expected: the Netherlands. Although the Church has taken a beating there (which is actually nothing new for Catholics in that country, seeing as how Catholicism was banned in the Dutch Republic in 1580, and the episcopal hierarchy was not restored until 1853), there are places where one finds signs of hope and future growth. One such place can be found in the beautiful Dutch city of Utrecht, an old university town that has long been considered one of the "cultural capitals" of the nation. It is there that you will find the Cardinal's residence, and there that you will find the beautiful little building of the Thomas Instituut, whose scholars and students keep alive the Catholic faith and devote themselves to scholarship on the history of the Catholic intellectual tradition, with special emphasis on the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

This book, *The Divinity of the Word: Thomas Aquinas Dividing and Reading the Gospel of John* is a product of that institute, the doctoral dissertation of its author, Stefan Mangnus, a Dominican friar in the province of the Netherlands, where he serves as the regent of studies. The book has many of the standard characteristics of a doctoral dissertation, so readers interested in the topic should know that the text was clearly prepared with the goal of satisfying a panel of serious scholars. As with all dissertations, these demands tended to cause the author to be *very* careful to show the evidence for every claim.

So, for example, in its 227 pages, the author spends the first 169 pages discussing Thomas's commentary on chapter 1 of the Gospel of John. On pages 171 through 193, we get some scattered comments about the remainder of Thomas's commentary before the author turns on p. 195 to his conclusions. Such is the characteristic of most dissertations, largely by necessity. They often contain a deep-dive consideration of a select, fairly narrow topic regarding which the prospective graduate is supposed to show his skill and mastery. Choose too big a topic, and your analysis is likely

to be too shallow; either that, or you may find yourself working on your dissertation for the next twenty years. And it is best not to do that.

So, what will you find in this book? In chapter 1, Fr. Mangnus provides a good introduction to the medieval art of *divisio textus* and provides an interesting comparison of the *divisiones textus* that Albert, Bonaventure, and Thomas each gave of the Fourth Gospel. In chapter 2, he provides a close reading of Thomas's commentary on John 1:1–5, a section in which Thomas shows how John emphasizes Christ's divinity even more than the other Gospels. In chapter 3, we get a close reading of Thomas's commentary on John 1:6–14, which Thomas believes should be taken as a separate unit dealing with the nature of the Incarnation. In chapter 4, Fr. Mangnus suggests that Thomas's commentary on John 1:14b–51 should be read as the bridge between what went before and the chapters that follow. In his *divisio textus*, Thomas states that the manifestation of the Word happens in two ways: by seeing and by hearing. This sets up his comments on the chapters that follow. In chapter 5, he reviews the remaining chapters of Thomas's commentary to show how Thomas remains focused on the divinity of Christ in his commentary on John 3–11 and on Christ's "glorification" in his comments on John 12–21. Chapter 6 contains a fairly brief (seven-page) summary and conclusion.

Two features of this particular book stand out and make the analysis especially interesting and worthwhile. The first is the author's emphasis on the art of the *divisio textus*. This skill has often gone unrecognized for its value. Medieval masters like Aquinas did not especially value being "original" in the way many scholars do today, but if a medieval master was going to exhibit his "creativity," often the way he would do so was in the way he crafted his *divisio textus*. The way a master envisioned the structure of a text said a lot about how he viewed it. Thomas, in his commentaries on the Pauline epistles, for example, tended to view them as making a long series of interrelated arguments, especially about God's grace. One might assume a "Scholastic" author like Aquinas approached every text this way. But he did not. Thomas had his own sense of what today we would call the *genre* or *literary form* of a text. And he would craft his *divisio textus* accordingly.

Though some find these divisions labored and dull, as John Boyle has argued, crafting a suitable *divisio textus* was a way of ordering the mind to prepare it for reading by viewing the parts in relation to the whole:

For a theologian such as Saint Thomas who understands the theological enterprise as the articulation of the ways in which revealed truths—indeed all truths—stand in relation one to another, the

scholastic division provides a way in which such a theological task can be undertaken in the very reading of scripture itself. It is not merely a matter of breaking the text down into component bits, but of seeing how its parts stand in relation one to another.¹

For the Scholastics, says Boyle, “the division of the text is precisely a means to arrive at ways of seeing the fundamental unity of revealed truth.”² Modern biblical exegetes might not always agree with the way these medieval scholars divided the text, but the goal of these commentators was one we should still be able to appreciate: the attempt to identify a unity of divine purpose rich enough to express itself in a variety of approaches, genres, and texts. It is for this reason I think Prof. Boyle is right to describe the creation of the *divisio textus* as a properly “theological” project.³ For this reason, Fr. Mangnus’s emphasis on Thomas’s *divisio textus* is a welcome feature. What needs to be done now, however, by him and others, is to extend this sort of sophisticated approach to Thomas’s method to the rest of his *Commentary on John* and his other biblical commentaries.

Another feature that makes this book invaluable is its comparison of Thomas’s commentary with those of Bonaventure and Albert. When one looks at modern biblical commentaries, the divisions of the text are by now pretty standard. In the thirteenth century, they were not. Each master was expected to make his own. As Prof. Boyle has argued: “Such divisions were not understood as definitive but rather as illuminative. The division of the text provides insight into a text presumed to be rich, mysterious, multivalent, and ultimately inexhaustible.”⁴ Comparing the *divisiones textus* of several (Thomas, Bonaventure, and Albert) reveals this to be the case and also demonstrates how different commentators could exhibit so much creativity and insight within what might seem like the “confines” of the medieval art of textual criticism. Their insight was not embodied in how ingeniously they were able to imagine the different ways that Matthew and Luke might have used the Q source, as has been the contemporary

¹ See John Boyle, “The Theological Character of the Scholastic ‘Division of Text’ with Particular Reference to the Commentaries of Saint Thomas Aquinas,” in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. J. McAuliffe, B. Walfish, and J. Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 277. See also by the same author, “Authorial Intention and the *Divisio Textus*,” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 3–8.

² Boyle, “Theological Character,” 277.

³ Boyle, “Theological Character,” 277.

⁴ Boyle, “Theological Character,” 279.

tendency, but by how they were able to envision the unity of the whole within the parts of the text and how in this way they were able to illuminate the multi-faceted truths being communicated in the scriptural text, especially by the divine author.

So, make no mistake, this is a *very* capable dissertation-turned-into-a-book. And if you want a serious, deep-dive analysis of Thomas's commentary on the first few verses of the Gospel of John, this is a tremendous resource, as long as you do not get the book thinking you will find an analysis of the entire *Commentary on John*. Every book can do only so much, and so one should judge a book on what it set out to do, not what it did not set out to do. Fr. Mangnus set out to say something important about how Thomas read and interpreted the first chapter of the Gospel of John, and this he does admirably well. N.V

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Neither Nature nor Grace: Aquinas, Barth, and Garrigou-Lagrange on the Epistemic Use of God's Effects by T. Adam Van Wart (*Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020*), ix + 320 pp.

When properly done, theology and philosophy are about *everything*; any problem or analysis of a thinker in these disciplines opens upon an understanding of all reality. This debut book by theologian Adam Van Wart displays an extraordinary awareness of that fact. What at first appears to be merely a critique of the theology of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange and of Bruce McCormack's reading of Karl Barth, and a defense of a Wittgensteinian reading of Thomas Aquinas (and, ultimately, of Barth too), turns out to be a profound consideration of what it is for Christians to do philosophy and theology in any sense. This praise, however, should not be taken for agreement with the book. I think that its claims, from its reading of St. Thomas to its account of the task of theology, are nearly all false. But all Christian philosophers and theologians should take this book seriously. Van Wart starkly lays out two distinct ways of thinking as a Christian, and we are all in his debt for helping us clearly see their differences and for the challenge his compelling (even if, for me, unconvincing) account of theology provides.

This book is situated in the tradition of Wittgensteinian or Grammatical Thomism, the tradition of Peter Geach and Elizabeth Anscombe, and, in a sense, of Ralph McInerny and David Burrell. It is also indebted to the post-liberal tradition, building on the work of Stanley Hauerwas, George Lindbeck, Alasdair MacIntyre, and others (264). Van Wart thinks that theology is not an inquiry into the *being* of God (or of anything else). Rather, theology is situated within the order of knowing and speaking; guided by Christian practice, it is concerned with “linguistic regulation” (3), working out what we mean by Christian speech. We can know what is true to say about God—for example, that he is simple or good—but we do not know God in himself and we do not know what it really means when we say things about God. God is a transcendent mystery, though he has taught us how to speak truly about himself.

Opposed to this account are two dominant ways of doing theology. One is the tradition of Catholic metaphysical theology, especially the reading of Thomas found in the Dominican, Jesuit, and neo-Thomistic traditions, here represented by Garrigou-Lagrange. Here, knowing is rooted in being; the word “being” is analogical because being itself is analogical. While Garrigou-Lagrange holds that we cannot *directly* know God’s essence in this life, he thinks that we can know, through effect-to-cause reasoning, *something* of God’s essence and attributes. We have pre-linguistic knowledge, by what he calls “common sense” (73), of the basic attributes of being and causality, and by reasoning about these we arrive at knowledge of God, including how *esse ipsum subsistens* is the “formal constituent” of God, from which we can derive other divine attributes (89).

Van Wart objects to this view on many grounds. He thinks that it is inconsistent with divine simplicity because it requires us to simultaneously distinguish divine attributes formally and deny that they are distinct in God. He thinks that, while this view affirms that attribute terms are said of God and creatures analogically, it applies a univocal, creaturely notion of causality to both God and creatures, making causality able to bridge the gap between them. But even “causality” and “participation,” he contends, apply to God and creatures analogously. Causality is not the basis for analogical predication, but analogy goes “all the way down” (224). Most importantly, Van Wart thinks that we can know things only insofar as we can name them, and we can name things only insofar as we live a limited, creaturely “form of life” which initiates us into naming things in a way determined by our linguistic tradition. On his view, we can do *anything* intellectual, even “arrive [at having] intelligible species” (120), only insofar as our language enables us to do so. Our finite linguistic forms of life so shape

how the world shows up for us that we cannot get beyond them; contrary to the view of most classical and Scholastic philosophers, we cannot purify our concepts of limitations or imperfections, because those concepts have meaning only within our limited, imperfect languages (135–36). Van Wart argues that, since, for Thomas, knowing issues in naming, then it is also Thomas's view that we can know something only insofar as we can name it. Van Wart continually emphasizes that we must keep the order of knowing distinct from the order of being, and the *modus significandi* from the *res significata*. While we can know (by faith and by rational arguments) what is true to say of God, and while we can know *how* we signify with our words about God (the *modus significandi*), we cannot know *what* we signify with our words about him (the *res significata*). God's natural and revelatory *effects* must substitute, for us, for his inaccessible being and definition. To think that we need to have access to being itself in order to ground our knowledge is, Van Wart thinks, to be motivated by modern anxieties about certainty. We should not argue against those anxieties, but use Wittgensteinian linguistic therapy to dissolve them, showing how they lead to incoherence. Theologians should rest content with making sense of the doxological words God has given us whereby we relate to him.

The other view Van Wart opposes is Protestant revelatory theology, represented by Bruce McCormack's interpretation of Karl Barth. On this view, what and who God is are revealed entirely in Christ: God *is* nothing—he has no attributes, he is not even a Trinity—apart from his free decision to become incarnate for us in Christ. We should think of God not first in terms of formal logic or an ontology of substances and attributes, but in terms of how God has materially revealed himself in Christ, and suit our ontology, language, and logic to that. Again, Van Wart thinks that this view is incoherent. Our language is a language of substance, accident, and formal logic; any coherent speech about God must fit within that already existing creaturely language. Van Wart applies here the same critiques he applied to the Catholic metaphysical tradition: given the limited structures of human language and knowledge, we cannot bridge the gap to God's being, and to desire to do so is motivated by modern anxieties about certainty that betray a confusion about the human situation.

Van Wart's solution is a theological "quietism" (263) or "apophaticism" (269), a setting aside of the desire to "grasp" God and instead desiring only to worship him (276) and to make sense of the language for worship that he has given us. Our only full access to God is in Christ, where divine things are expressed in a human way. We can only be *shown* how to speak about and relate to God, but cannot *state* what God is (271). Neither

natural nor graced effects, neither Protestant biblical analysis of God's self-revelation nor the Catholic *triplex via* of reasoning about nature reveal *what* God is (260). But both kinds of effects enable us to speak correctly and meaningfully about God, even if we do not know *what* we are talking about.

Before summing up some responses to Van Wart's views, let me note that there is much that any Christian philosopher or theologian should retain from his Wittgensteinian vision. We should not think our words "capture" or "grasp" things, such that they somehow "contain" their senses or referents, allowing us to master those things. Language relates to reality in many ways, and our knowledge of the world is profoundly shaped by our linguistic forms of life. There is much that we can only *show* and cannot straightforwardly *state*; language can indeed be used to gesture towards or otherwise evoke what is mysterious, and we must be aware, in all humility, of the limits of our language and of our knowledge. It is true that we do not fully know what we mean when we speak of God, and in the current life, we know God only through his effects.

But despite these salutary lessons, there is a major divide between Wittgensteinian theology and traditional Catholic or Protestant theology (which have much in common methodologically, as Van Wart helpfully shows) which has bearing on what we hold about the nature of God, the human person, and our connection to reality. In my view, the Wittgensteinian approach is blinded by language; that approach itself stands in need of a kind of therapy. The theological tradition, by contrast, was aware of many ways that we spiritually and intellectually perceive reality, including the reality of God. The Wittgensteinian approach fails to grasp how we can know otherwise than by language, such as by the spiritual perception or knowledge by connaturality described by the tradition, including Aquinas (*Summa theologiae* [ST] II-II, q. 45, a. 2). It is deeply worried about modernity, and so mis-diagnoses modern Christian thinkers as themselves plagued by Cartesian worries about certainty, when they are actually motivated by a charitable desire to show the moderns how rooted we always already are in the real.

For St. Thomas, the order of knowing is a *participation* in the order of being. Knowing does not "grasp" or "capture" being but unveils and reveals it. Van Wart worries that, in order to know how knowing and being are connected, we would need to take a stance outside of both knowing and being, which is, of course, impossible (271). But, rightly understood, St. Thomas helps us see why this is not so: we can reflect upon the act of knowing (ST I, q. 87, a. 3), and thereby come to see how intellectual knowing is

rooted in sensation and in contact with the singular thing (*ST* I, q. 86, a. 1). For example, although I know individuals through universal concepts, and although the universal as such belongs to the order of knowing, not the order of being, I can grasp how the content of my universal concepts is rooted in the essences of singular being. This does not commit us, as Van Wart worries, to a “myth of the given” (120), on which an unintelligible reality is somehow rendered intelligible. Rather, for St. Thomas, being is always at least potentially intelligible, because it is a participation in God, who is intelligibility itself. Because our minds too share in God’s intelligible *light* (and can come to participate in that light more deeply, as by faith), we can perceive reality as such, albeit to a limited extent. Knowing is prior to language, and our interior words or concepts are prior to exterior words determined by linguistic forms of life. Garrigou-Lagrange’s “common sense”—which, contrary to Van Wart’s reading, just is the *habitus* for grasping first principles described by St. Thomas (e.g., in *ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 2)—roots knowing in the fundamental structure of being. More fundamental than our linguistic forms of life is the *human and personal* form of life by which we are intellectually open to being as such. Were we not naturally rooted in being itself, we could not *know* anything. But because our minds participate in God’s light, we *can* rise above natural, linguistic forms of life, purify our concepts, and know God, the one signified by our words, albeit through the mediation of creatures. We can do this by natural reasoning, but even more by the grace through which we “have the mind of Christ” (1Cor 2:16). Because of our minds’ participation in being, we can grasp how, as Thomas says, causes (including God) are present to, and so revealed in, their effects (*ST* I, q. 8; q. 44, a. 3).

Van Wart also, I think, misunderstands divine simplicity, which is not inconsistent with there being many distinctions in God himself, but only with there being composition in God. Van Wart objects that terms like “causality” and “participation” are analogical when said of God and creatures. But “causality” and “participation” are *not* predicated of God or creatures; rather, they name the analogical relations between them in the order of being. Because our minds naturally participate in this analogical structure, we can perceive not only what God is not, but also the very perfections that belong to God and that are revealed in creatures (*ST* I, q. 4).

All of this just responds to the sections of the book on Thomism, and there are many other responses that should be given to this book which go beyond the scope of this review. To say something briefly about the sections of the book on McCormack’s reading of Barth, it should be noted

that, if McCormack is right that metaphysics and logic themselves flow from God's self-revelation in Christ, then it is question-begging to respond that this does not fit with some conception of formal logic or substance-attribute ontology. Whether an ontology rooted in substances or an ontology rooted in an act of divine freedom is right cannot be settled by turning to the language that we use to talk about God. We must attend, as the Christian tradition always has, to reality itself, and adapt our language and our philosophical categories to real being.

The chief danger of Van Wart's approach, in my view, is one that he himself dismisses (259): it is that this view turns Christianity into a sort of fideism, in which I must accept the truth of Christianity without being able to intellectually *see* that it is true. It is hard to see what reason anyone would have to be a Christian on such a view. With Van Wart, I (and the metaphysical tradition) affirm that God is a mystery, but by this is not meant something unknowable in itself in all respects, but something endlessly intelligible, even in this life. Van Wart has helped us see, by this deeply important book, how we must fundamentally discover whether theology—and human knowledge and language as such—are self-transcending and open to real being, or whether they are caught in linguistic systems. Van Wart makes a powerful (even if, I think, unsuccessful) case for the latter. It is a vision of the theological and philosophical enterprise that all Christian thinkers ought to take quite seriously, and for it, we are immensely in Van Wart's debt. N.V.

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Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St. Gregory Palamas
by Tikhon Pino (*New York: Routledge, 2022*), xiii + 218 pp.

Over the last hundred years, the thought of Gregory Palamas has taken up a prominent place in Eastern Orthodox theology. Leading “neo-Palamite” theologians such as Vladimir Lossky and John Meyendorff have proposed Palamas's famous distinction between God's essence and his energies as the key to understanding the mystical theology of the Eastern Church, which gives it its distinctive balance between God's ineffable mystery and active presence in the world. The metaphysics of Palamas's position tended to take a back seat to the contemporary theological concerns of the neo-Palamites:

to present a vital spiritual theology as an alternative to western Scholastic rationalism. In *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas*, Tikhon Pino has rectified this imbalance by providing a thorough account of Palamas's metaphysics based on a careful reading of his entire corpus.

According to Pino, Palamas's doctrine of divine energies is fundamentally a doctrine of divine naming. God's essence is his quiddity, what he is (*ti esti*). But due to God's radical transcendence over all created reality, God's essence is *in itself* absolutely unknowable and unnamable, and so our talk of God's "essence" is technically improper. God is named strictly from his activities *ad extra*. Thus, the divine energies are the referents for our names for God, which cannot be directly applied to the essence on account of its transcendence. This is why God's essence and his energies cannot be simply identical *in re*, for if they were, then the energies would give an exhaustive description of the *intrinsically* indescribable essence of God.

The category of divine energies includes all of God's actions and attributes. These energies are "uncreated" because they either do not have a created effect or are different from the created effects of which they are the principle. Palamas identifies God's energies with his powers or faculties (*dynameis*). Pino interprets this to mean that God's energies are not exactly God's activities themselves, but rather God's capacities for action, like Thomas's active potencies. Perhaps it could be said that "divine energy" connotes an always-actualized active divine potency, precisely as it is always-actualized.

Palamas identifies the divine energies as the "things around God" mentioned by the Greek Fathers which are neither essence nor accident, but a *tertium quid*. They are "those things that inhere in God by nature," the innate properties (*prosonta; idiomata; physika*) which follow on the essence. It is these properties by which we name the essence, on account of their derivation from it.

Pino emphasizes that Palamas is careful to distinguish God's energies from their distinct temporal effects. The energy that deifies, for instance, is God's eternal glory itself, which is given to human recipients in time, but the manifestation of these energies in the deified recipient is distinct from the energies themselves. Again, charisms and events in salvation history are created effects that are distinct from the uncreated energies through which they are brought about. It is this distinction that enables Palamas to say that, as properties that flow from the essence, the energies are eternal and uncreated; if an energy can be said to begin and end, this is because the manifestation of its created temporal effect begins and ends. The energy is

(notionally) the actuality of a potency, but it is not itself the manifestation of a created temporal effect, because God does not “become” more through his manifestation in creation. Rather, the energy is the proximate principle of this effect, which comes to be freely at the behest of God’s will. The counsels of God themselves do not come to be, nor are they identical with God’s essence. Therefore, they are divine and uncreated realities—energies—that surround the divine essence.

Palamas holds that the essence and energies are different (*heteron kai heteron; allo kai allo*) and not identical (*tauton*). Since they signify non-synonymously, they are non-interchangeable realities that are not reducible to each other. Palamas takes this to imply that they thus must have distinct referents *in re* as well: “essence,” “energy,” “goodness,” and “wisdom” have different conceptual content, and are thus not interchangeable in predications, and so they cannot refer to the same thing. Thus, the Palamite distinction seems to be necessary in order to speak about God in an intellectually coherent way: this is how we make variegated predications (especially negative and relative predications) of the one God, how God is both known and unknown by us, how we participate in the imparticipable essence, and how creatures proceed contingently from God’s will. In short, the absolute transcendence of the divine essence even over its operations and attributes seems to require this distinction.

Does this distinction tell against divine simplicity? Or, equivalently, is there some kind of a “real distinction” between God’s essence and energies? Contrary to the claims of many modern interpreters, Palamas himself does not think that his distinction compromises divine simplicity. The divine energies are not related as substance and accident, because an accident in the strict sense is what inheres in another by being acquired, and this implies mutability and passibility in the subject, which God cannot have. Rather, energies are properties (*physika; idia*) that flow from the essence, and thus they are necessary complements of the essence, always found indivisibly united to it. Therefore, the essence and energies are not two different “things” in God, and there is no “higher” and “lower” divinity in him (an incorrect though oft-heard claim about Palamas’s doctrine, which Pino definitively refutes). To Palamas’s mind, this sort of indivisible unity does not create inadmissible metaphysical composition in God, and hence does not tell against divine simplicity.

Is Palamas’s distinction between the energies and the essence a “real” or a “conceptual” distinction? Pino is cautious about shoehorning Palamas’s distinctive metaphysics into Scholastic categories. He does point out, however, that, for Palamas, the essence and the energies are extramentally

nonidentical, even if the energies are not themselves subsistent. We can separate the energies from the essence in our minds, but it is real separability that accounts for metaphysical composition. Therefore, in Pino's estimation, Palamas's distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies should be reckoned as a notional or conceptual distinction.

The energies–essence distinction in God is an instance of the more general problem of unity and distinction in the Godhead, a problem which was first discussed in the context of Trinitarian theology, and the classic Trinitarian theology of the Greek Fathers provides Palamas with the resources to explicate his essence–energies distinction. The distinction between the hypostases and the essence is an analogy for how there can be something uncreated in God that is not the essence, and this gives Palamas a *reductio ad absurdum* for the claim that nothing apart from the divine essence is uncreated. The assertion that “everything differing in any way from the divine nature is created” entails *either* that the hypostases are created *or* that the hypostases are unreal. In making this inference, Palamas denies that the hypostases are identical with the essence for the same reason that he denies that the energies are identical with the essence: although the essence is “what” the hypostases are, nevertheless the hypostases are not convertible with the essence or with each other.

What can a Thomist make of this? Pino's careful distinction between the uncreated energy and its created effect brings the Palamite position closer to the Thomist position on “created” grace. Both Palamites and Thomists can say that deification is God's uncreated action on a person which produces a created effect within him, rendering him formally deified. Palamites and Thomists still disagree, of course, on whether this uncreated deifying activity is identical with divine essence or not.

This is because Palamas's understanding of simplicity is different from Thomas's. For Palamas, the inseparable unity of the essence and its energies saves divine simplicity; for Thomas, it does not. Real separability is not a necessary condition for a real distinction. An essence is really distinct from its properties, because these fall outside the definition of an essence as its further determinations. Properties *are* accidents of their essence: *predicamental* accidents, not *predicable* accidents. This is especially true of properties that are actualized active potencies, because, while the essence is actualized by its act of being, active potencies are actualized by acts that regard exterior objects.

It might seem that admitting always-actualized active potencies which regard objects outside of God is the right way to characterize divine action *ad extra*, but for Thomas this is not so. Divine action *ad extra* cannot be

transient action; it must be *immanent* action. This result seems surprising, until we realize that, when God acts *ad extra*, he does not act on a patient, because he creates *ex nihilo*, and if he did act on a patient, his action would be dependent on it. Consequently, there are not a variety of exterior objects which serve to multiply God's actions *ad extra*. Creatures are not formal objects of God's act of willing. Rather, God's act of willing is a love of his own goodness as he understands it to be participatable in a variety of ways. Hence, God's act of loving his goodness terminates both at his goodness in itself and at participations in this goodness, which are only its material objects. These participations cannot be necessary, because, as *participations* in God's goodness, they add nothing to it. God gains nothing in creating; this is an act of complete generosity. Why they exist at all is a mystery, but the gratuitous exuberance of any act of creativity is a mystery. Now, if God's action *ad extra* is not the action of an agent on a patient, then there is no need to posit an actualized potency by which God regards the creature as a patient. God does not make contact with a patient through his action; God loves his goodness, and the creature is thus brought into being. In our way of considering the matter, we notice the creature, trace it back to God as its cause, and think of God as having an activity, regarding the creature. But this is not how it is for God in himself. He does not act in the way that a created agent does. For Thomas, divine simplicity is what preserves this transcendent aseity.

For Palamas, the way to ensure this transcendent aseity is to insist on the intrinsic incomprehensibility of the divine essence. Any attempt to name the essence itself is an attempt to define the undefinable. Consequently, we name the essence through the properties which flow from it. But, if the essence is *intrinsically* undefinable, then why do *these* definable properties flow from it? It must rather be the case that the essence does have a real definition (even if it cannot be known by us as it is in itself) which accounts for the properties that flow from it. However, if this is so, then it is in principle possible to name the essence itself. Palamas thinks that any name for the essence must be its real definition. But this is not true. Nothing prevents a name from inadequately yet accurately characterizing an essence. So instead of assuming that our conceptions of God must apply univocally to things around the essence, it is more reasonable to suppose that these conceptions analogically name the essence in an inadequate yet accurate way.

Which is why Palamas's criticism of the axiom that "everything differing in any way from the divine nature is created" misses the point. We need not accept Palamas's unstated assumption that non-synonymous names

must have distinct referents. The energies are uncreated because they are different refractory ways by which we inadequately signify the essence, and the persons are uncreated because they are each really identified with the essence, differing only in their relative opposition. This may be mysterious, but it is problematic to think of a divine attribute or a divine person as something *in addition to* the divine essence, for with God, there is nowhere for this addition to come from, and this is the basic reason why St. Thomas holds his version of divine simplicity.

Nevertheless, Pino has done the debates surrounding Palamism an invaluable service. By moving past shopworn polemics and focusing on metaphysics, he has clarified Palamas's position and opened the way to fruitful discussion. In doing this, he has given stimulating food for thought to all of those who are interested in how we become partakers of the divine nature. N.V.

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The Bible and the Priesthood: Priestly Participation in the One Sacrifice for Sins by Anthony Giambrone, O.P. (*Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022*), xxi + 297 pp.

Fr. Anthony Giambrone, O.P., has written a gem of a book which offers a “biblical theology of the Catholic priesthood” (255). From the outset, Giambrone delimits the scope of this project. Given the large and diverse amount of pertinent biblical material, Giambrone does not aim to give a comprehensive presentation of the topic (xv–xvi). Rather, his approach is to examine in detail select texts from both testaments and allow a larger argumentative picture to emerge from these canonical witnesses.

Giambrone has structured the book into three major parts. Part I is an introduction which sets up the project and articulates his theological-exegetical approach. Parts II and III focus on texts from the Old and New Testaments, respectively. Each of these parts comprises three major chapters, and each chapter (save the concluding one) is followed by two shorter excurses. Each chapter also concludes with a helpful summary of its major points.

In the opening chapter and the interlude that make up part I, Giambrone

introduces his project and interpretive approach. He notes that the scriptural character of the sacramental priesthood is contested territory. For major Catholic doctrines on the priesthood, as defined by the Council of Trent, are all disputed (or opposed) in Protestantism. Throughout the book, Giambrone, firmly yet charitably, stakes out a Catholic position on the matter and at times calls out instances where Protestant polemics against Catholicism have shaped (and/or warped) analysis of the biblical data. The scriptural evidence concerning the priesthood, Giambrone argues, should be situated within the larger theological setting of Christ's ecclesial headship and approached with "a hermeneutic of recognition" (22; a phrase originating with Aidan Nichols) which sees the origins and potencies of later ecclesial realities in the scriptural witnesses.

In the accompanying interlude, Giambrone outlines more fully his interpretive approach in this project. He seeks to integrate and implement the full program of biblical interpretation set forth by the Second Vatican Council in *Dei Verbum* §12. The Council here teaches the need for both historical-literary and theological-ecclesial principles of interpretation (the latter principles have been quite under-appreciated in post-conciliar Catholic exegesis). Not only does Giambrone provide a very fine exposition of the theological-ecclesial principles' substance and hermeneutical role, but his deployment of these principles in the book also shows how they can be incorporated well with the historical-literary ones.

Giambrone quotes Pope Benedict XVI, who regarded the neglect of the Old Testament witnesses concerning worship and priesthood as contributing an impoverishment of theological thinking about these topics (3).¹ The chapters and excurses that make up part II seek to remedy this situation by treating the priesthood and liturgical cult in Old Testament witnesses.

Chapter 2 focuses on the ordination of Aaron and his sons as given in Lev 8–10. Giambrone makes this oft-neglected material come vibrantly alive as he works through the various elements involved in the ordination rite. He explicates the theological substance of the different parts of the rite, connecting them to other important parts of the Pentateuch (e.g., prescriptions for ordination and the construction of the tabernacle in Exod 25–40 and the Yom Kippur liturgy). Among other things, Giambrone accents the close relationship between the priesthood and the tabernacle and the role of the priesthood in purging sin and impurity so that the

¹ Giambrone cites here Benedict XVI and Robert Cardinal Sarah, *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy, and the Crisis of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019), 25.

divine presence may luminously show forth (66). The two excurses that follow treat in succinct form the related matters of "Purity and Holiness" (69) and the distinctions between priests and Levites.

The subject of chapter 3 is the prophets' criticisms of the priests. Here, Giambrone takes on what he calls "the Antagonism Hypothesis" (82), a notion which emerged from the Reformation and Enlightenment and remains deeply embedded in modern scholarship. This notion sees a prophetic concern for morality as markedly opposed (and superior) to priestly concern with ritual. Giambrone shows in detail that this hypothesis is wrong-headed and warps analysis of the biblical data (83). He examines in detail certain prophetic texts which are critical of priests (Amos 5:21–24; Hos 4:4–10; 6:4–7; et al.) and shows that such criticisms are not indictments of the institutions of priesthood and cult as such. Rather, priests are criticized for "not functioning as priests properly should" (104), and in particular for not teaching the Torah faithfully (90, 100). The excurses which follow this chapter concern different responses to the corruption of the temple and priesthood in Hasmonean and Herodian times, and also the deposing in 1Sam of the priestly line of Eli and the sanctuary at Shiloh.

Chapter 4 treats the role of the priesthood in eschatological scenarios from the Second Temple period. The focal texts in this chapter are selections from Zechariah, Malachi, and Sirach 50. Giambrone tracks how hopes for an eschatological priest, as an end-time savior figure, emerged through processes of inner-biblical exegesis. Thus, the vision of the two olive trees in Zech 4 sets up expectation for pairs of priest and king messiahs, articulated in subsequent texts. Giambrone notes how previously distinct roles and realities (e.g., priest and prophet, priest and king, prophecy and law) came to be fused in writings of this time. In a memorable exposition of Sir 50, Giambrone shows how the fully vested high priest comes to be identified with the appearance of divine Wisdom (see Sir 24). Giambrone then adds an excursus on David's connections with the priesthood and cult in Chronicles and on the new temple and priesthood and the return of the Glory of YHWH in the eschaton (esp. in Ezekiel).

Part III concerns the priesthood in the New Testament. Chapter 5 examines the subtle presentation of Jesus as the eschatological priest in the Gospels. With respect to the Synoptics, Giambrone brings to light the associations that the Transfiguration has with priesthood (via allusions to traditions in the *Testament of Levi* and the *Assumption of Moses*). With respect to John, Giambrone focuses on Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the installation of Peter as shepherd of Christ's sheep (John 21). Important for

Giambrone is Jesus's refocusing of priestly authority in terms of self-sacrificial love and service. Appended to this chapter are two excurses: the first is a rich presentation of Jesus's own stance toward the temple and priesthood (which arguably should be a chapter in its own right); the second concerns the language used to designate leadership positions in the early Church. Significant in this excursus is Giambrone's argument that *episkopos* and *presbyteros* are synonyms in the New Testament (205–6) and do not designate separate offices.

Chapter 6 examines transformative adoption in the New Testament of priestly language and categories in light of the newness brought by Christ. Topics covered here include the application of temple language and imagery to the Church proper; the transformation of sacrificial categories to include, among other things, Paul's collection (216–17) and the Eucharist as an "unbloody sacrifice" (218–20); the relation between the liturgy in heaven and on earth in light of Christ's sacrificial death; the use of Greek "priest language" for the Church as a whole but not for its ordained ministers. The excurses that follow this concern the imposition of hands as an ordination rite in Acts and 1–2 Timothy (in light of allusions to the commissioning of Joshua as Moses' successor in Num 27) and then the relation between Christ's priesthood in heaven and his priests on earth in Hebrews (246).

The final, concluding chapter moves the discussion to bear on more contemporary issues such as priestly sin and scandal, the ordination of women, clerical celibacy, and the coincidence (not opposition) of charism and office in the sacramental priesthood. In keeping with the overall approach of the book, he situates his treatment of these topics within the biblical testimony, sound anthropology, and the Church's larger sacramental system.

The achievements of this excellent book are many. Giambrone provides a masterful exposition of the subject matter. The historical-critical analyses are careful, learned, and illuminating. He respects the integrity of the individual voices in the canon and allows them to sound out individually and in a symphonic harmony. The integration of critical exegesis with Catholic doctrine and theological thinking is likewise quite admirable. While not light reading, this book is written clearly and features some humorous commentary throughout (e.g., Giambrone's likening of the primeval waters of chaos in Gen 1, held in check by God's creating, to "a cosmos-sized junk drawer in perpetual danger of spilling over" [73]).

Especially significant is Giambrone's exposition of the Old Testament witnesses as regards the sacramental priesthood. As mentioned,

Giambrone cites Benedict XVI's lament over the lack of attention to the Old Testament when it comes to theological thinking about priesthood and liturgy. This book makes a valuable and substantive contribution in response to this problem. Indeed, upon reading this book, one can see that much as Jesus cannot be adequately understood apart from the Old Testament neither can the sacramental priesthood.

The only quibbles one might have with this book stem more from the nature of the task itself rather than Giambrone's exposition. The amount and diverse character of pertinent biblical material pose real challenges for organizing and presenting the data. The numerous excurses that demarcate the major chapters do, at times, work against the flow of the overall argument. The illuminating excursus on Jesus's attitude toward the temple and cult could probably have been a chapter in its own right (192–201). Moreover, in a series on the Catholic biblical theology of the sacraments, this project restricts itself to the priesthood and does not delve much into the other offices in the sacrament of holy orders. There are places where Giambrone speaks to the parallels between the priestly hierarchy in the Old Testament and that in the sacramental priesthood. His treatment left me wanting to see more exploration of these suggestive associations.

By way of conclusion, I heartily second the remarks of Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P., given on the book's back cover: "Every seminarian should be given this book to prosper his grace to be a priest. Every priest should read this book to fortify his vocation. Every bishop should buy this book." Biblical scholars and theologians will certainly benefit from this book, but it will be especially valuable reading for seminarians, clergy, and all involved in priestly formation. It is an outstanding treatment that illumines the scriptural character of the divine gift of God that is the sacramental priesthood. 

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