

Book Reviews

Atonement: Soundings in Biblical, Trinitarian, and Spiritual Theology
by Margaret M. Turek (*San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2022*), 266 pp.

MARGARET M. TUREK'S BOOK *Atonement: Soundings in Biblical, Trinitarian, and Spiritual Theology* provides an Ariadne's thread to guide us through the maze of questions that arise when we are confronted by the reality of the Cross of Christ. The work unfolds a vision: "He who sees me, sees the Father," as Christ says in the Gospel of John (17:26). And it is only possible to see Christ himself adequately if we see the Father in him as the one who is able and willing to give himself completely in and for the Son. It is the mutual witness of the Son and the Father for each other in the unity of the Spirit which opens up the mystery of the atonement, for it shows that the redemption in Christ is the unrestricted love of God for us, for *all* of us (166)! This is the message of the chair of grace depicted on the cover of the book:¹ "Atonement is the form that the love of God takes in his Son, Jesus Christ, under sin-wrought conditions—a love than which no greater can be conceived" (13). To show this is the aim of the book, which particularly emphasizes the patrogenetic nature of atonement, a theme Turek already treated in her dissertation, *Towards a Theology of God the Father: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theodramatic Approach* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). The orientation toward the patrogenetic atonement implies that "the mysteries of faith are rooted in the mystery of the Holy Trinity and therefore somehow have a Trinitarian structure" (19).

Like Gaul, Turek's book is divided into three parts: (1) "Atonement in the Old Testament" (27–94); (2) "Atonement in the New Testament" (95–153); and (3) "Toward a Spiritual Theology of Atonement" (155–227). The book is rounded off by an introduction (13–26), a conclusion (229–37), and two appendices: "Formation of Missionary Disciples (and

¹ Tommaso di Ser Giovanni Masaccio, *The Holy Trinity with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist, and Donors* (detail), 1426–1428, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy.

a word in fairness to Balthasar)" (239–46), and "On God's Impassible Passion of Love" (247–63).

For the book's argumentation, Turek chooses the four theologians John Paul II, Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Norbert Hoffmann as guides (20). She thus achieves a multilayered perspective, as is the case with the four Gospels, which show the figure of Christ from different angles.² Turek uses the musical metaphor of the fugue to evoke the symphonic character of truth she wants to pursue in her book (25). Furthermore, in the introduction she emphasizes the unity of theology and spirituality: "Divine revelation that is not internalized and lived is in fact not fully known in the biblical sense of 'to know,' that is, to experience, to become one with" (22). Since the truth always involves our whole person, to realize the truth means to live it in all aspects of our lives.

In the first part of the book, on the Old Testament, Turek unfolds the three integral parts of atonement: First and foremost is God's sovereign initiative, which aims at the "restoration of the covenant relationship" (30). This brings her back to the patrogenetic structure of atonement: "The work of atonement will ultimately originate from and be engendered by God's own power to love" (30–31). Secondly, there is God's passionate involvement as it appears in the covenant relationship with Israel (31). The features of God's love in this relationship make it clear that God is not an apathic being enclosed in his own supposed cold perfection; rather, he is the deeply affected source of our salvation who opens himself to our fate in a way that gives us a whole new sense of perfection, showing his capacity for suffering without losing his integrity (31–47). And finally, the third point: Because the covenant implies two sides, it is important that the alienated partner may, so to speak, rise up from fallenness on his or her own to be the true partner again (47–50).

In the next section of the book, Turek approaches the core of atonement by clarifying the nature of sin and what follows from it for the possibility of restoring the broken covenant. Sin is the refusal to accept God's goodness. Turek quotes Aquinas: "The essence of guilt consists in voluntarily turning away from God" (*ST* II-II, q. 34, a. 2) (51). The consequences of sin, which distances us from God in an alienating manner, go beyond the power of the sinner to correct his deeds (53). Sin has three basic dimensions: It is an inner disposition, an evil deed, and the effects following from it. Atonement is the elimination of sin by its conversion: "If sin is

² Martin Hengel, *Die vier Evangelien und das eine Evangelium von Jesus Christus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

to be effaced, sin must be ‘converted’ in all three of its dimensions. The sinner must (1) turn *back* his heart toward God, (2) turn *away* from the evil deed(s), and (3) turn *around* the effects of sin” (54–55). This implies not only a “turning away *from* sin, but also the ‘conversion’ *of* sin itself” (59). This last conversion means voluntarily enduring the consequences of sin, suffering them “in the manner of bearing the effects of sin as an expression of filial love” (57).³ In this way, “bearing sin as *distance from* God is transformed into a mode of *nearness to* God” (62). But this is not a reaction sinners would simply be capable of on their own. Rather, it is a reaction to God’s forgiving love (60–63).

At this stage of the argument Turek offers some reflections on “God’s wrath as a modality of love” (64). In the process of atonement God does not seek vengeance for himself as a precondition for forgiveness; he seeks the transformation of the sinners as the concrete way of forgiveness itself. God’s wrath against sin *is already* suffering love aiming at the salvation of the sinners. God’s no to sin is serious, and it is the prerequisite for a healing transformation. The necessity to maintain the denial of sin toward the beloved sinner shows in what way God’s wrath is—in relation to human beings—a form of pain for God himself (64–70).

“God’s power is a forgiving power, but it takes full effect in his covenant partner only by engendering a free response of contrite love that yields to and comes to reflect (and so to glorify) the ardent passion of God’s love” (71). That’s the result of the foregone reflections on atonement. The problem is that in the history of Israel and beyond, the “free response of contrite love” was missed time and again (76). Moreover, the question has to be asked whether a normal human being is at all capable of atonement in the full sense. In the Old Testament, this led to the idea of *vicarious* atonement, as exemplified by the prophets, the Suffering Servant of the Lord (Isa 53), Moses, the martyrs and—very importantly—the sacrifices in the Temple (75–94). The purest idea of vicarious atonement was represented by the temple cult, in which the aspect of grace was most abounding because here God *offered the means of contrition without destroying the sinner*.⁴ It’s no coincidence that the Cross of Christ was interpreted with cultic terminology in the New Testament.

But by what power exactly could the cult bring about atonement? This question was not answered in the frame of the Old Testament. In the New

³ Here Turek is quoting Norbert Hoffmann, *Sühne. Zur Theologie der Stellvertretung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1981), 26.

⁴ Groundbreaking for this insight: Hartmut Gese, “Die Sühne,” in *Zur biblischen Theologie: Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1977), 85–106.

Testament it is the only Son who enacts the final vicarious atonement. In him “the two-sidedness of the covenant (Lover–beloved, Father–son, etc.) is ‘raised to the height of a “Trinitarian event”’” (97). As the eternal Son who became man, he is the living initiative of God’s forgiving love and the human response to the Father’s love at the same time. Our “place in God” is the eternal Son, who has receiving in common with us (104). That’s why Christ can take our place and carry our persons, which means that he was “made sin” for us (2 Cor 5:21) (107).⁵ By doing so, he offers us God’s inner life. This shows us that atonement in Christ is something which affects the life of the Trinity, and it shows us that sin is more than just the refusal of a moral obligation: “Sin possesses an infinite quality inasmuch as it is the rejection of a gift of infinite magnitude: the passionate love with which the Father wants to beget (divinize) us as adopted sons in his Only-Begotten” (105–6).

Since we are not able to close the abyss of alienation that sin causes between God and us by suffering contrition, God closes this abyss from his side by standing *on our side* and closing the abyss for us *from there*. But because the Son stands in this way *in front of the Father*, the abyss he closes is indefinitely greater than what we could ever realize: It’s a Trinitarian event with the corresponding consequences (108–25).

Since the atonement in its definite form is a Trinitarian event, the Son’s mission refers back to the Father, who is not a remote spectator of the Cross; “rather, in sending the Son, the Father remains *immanent in* the work of the Son, the Father’s *sending* of the Son is always at the same time his *accompanying* of the Son; his sending forth remains always a being-with (Jn 8:16, 28–29; 16:32)” (126). Therefore, the Father truly gives himself in the Son (216). Here Turek reaches the culmination of her soundings, and from this point she takes up the theme of divine wrath again. Aquinas stated that “the principal act of the irascible is to overcome even death on account for Christ” (*In IV Sent.* 49, q. 5, a. 5a co.) (144). From this we can conclude that Christ’s willingness to take the Cross upon himself for us is the highest form of divine wrath, reflecting the true nature of the Father’s wrath: that it is ultimately his mercy that goes all the way to overcome sin for our salvation (140–53). When we see Christ and in him the Father, we see *absolute love*.

This gem of a book is a vade mecum to take with you and ponder over

⁵ For “carry our persons,” see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 30.6, in *Discours 27–31: Discours théologiques*, Sources Chrétiennes 250 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978), 236.

and over again. The densely woven text with its clear pattern invites the reader to ruminate on it and to draw insight after insight from it. **REV**

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Divine Speech in Human Words: Thomistic Engagements with Scripture by Emmanuel Durand (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022*), xv + 460 pp.

FATHER DURAND'S BOOK IS, at root, inspired by the absence of God in the lives of his young philosophical students. As he remarks in the prologue's opening lines, religion and God are seen as myths, agents of oppression, or a crutch for the weak (1). In response, Durand's insightful work has one central thesis: "that the portrait of God found in scripture is fundamentally intelligible" (30). He explores this thesis by addressing various questions that arise when one attempts to make sense of the God of biblical revelation. The book focuses on the apparent contradiction surrounding the human understanding of God and the divine as revealed.

Throughout the book, Durand engages such seeming paradoxes sympathetically and thoughtfully. As a work of Thomistic ressourcement, Durand frequently uses distinctions drawn from the Thomistic tradition—relying heavily on Thomas Aquinas himself—to think through and make sense of the given difficulty for that chapter. The way Durand engages the questions at hand goes beyond logic and is heavily metaphysical while guided by the light of faith. The driving engine behind the work is the conviction that "thoughtful Thomistic practice of theology can enable one to navigate through theological problems (both contemporary and perennial)" (31).

The book is a compilation of newly edited essays, taken and reworked from publications such as *Modern Theology*, *Nova et Vetera*, *The Thomist*, and others. It is divided into two parts, not including the prologue.

Chapters one through ten examine the divine names and attributes. Throughout these chapters, Durand examines the idea of God's holiness and transcendence, the passions of the biblical God, divine immutability, almightiness versus the impossible, and providence and prayer, as well as God's saving will and human freedom. These chapters use reason and

scripture, the two working together to form what Durand calls a biblical and metaphysical theology.

Chapters eleven through eighteen focus on the Trinity and Christ, tracking the characteristics of a theology with its foundation in the economy of revelation. In these chapters, Durand has arguments about epistemology, the elucidative work of the Trinitarian faith, the position of God the Father, Christ's transcendence of the world he enters, the conversations of Christ with his contemporaries, and the breadth of the Incarnation for the sake of man's salvation.

Through the whole of the book, Durand has each successive chapter deal with topics that build off of the subject of the previous one. The first part, "The Holy One and His Providence," begins giving what he calls a "reappraisal of transcendence." The overall thesis of the second chapter is that God's revealed holiness allows us to adequately respond to the notion that transcendence is merely a species of projective difference. Durand argues that God's holiness is his transforming power; it is who God is: the power that has raised Jesus from the dead and called into existence all things out of nothing.

The second chapter serves as a foundation for the first section, and in doing so, it repeatedly emphasizes the need for a doctrine of simplicity. This doctrine of divine simplicity is then immediately put to the test in chapter three, which discusses what appear to be unfitting attributes for the divine. Durand summarizes the problem with reference to Spinoza, who claims that, "strictly speaking, God does not love or hate anyone" (51). In answering the difficulty, we are given an exposition of the nature of metaphor, which will be crucial for Durand's subsequent chapters throughout the rest of part one.

Chapter four examines the foundational "passion" of the divine: love (1 John 4:7–12). In establishing the characteristic of divine love as found in Scripture, with a focus on Hosea, Durand wants to understand the way in which God enters into a truly covenantal reciprocity with man. In chapter five, after establishing certain characteristics and traits of divine love, Durand explores the notion of divine anger. Here it is brought forth that anger is a "derivative passion, the antecedents of which are love or sadness" (118). In continuing with his defense of divine simplicity in light of biblical difficulties, the next passion treated is sorrow in chapter six. Building from simplicity, this chapter on sorrow focuses on divine immutability. The chapter concludes with the insight that it is neither the divine nature nor the human nature of Christ that is sorrowful and weeps. Instead, we must attribute this to the Son of God, personally incarnate in his flesh.

If chapters two through six examine the passions and attributes of the divine found in Scripture—focusing on the nature of God, his simplicity, and his immutability—chapters seven through ten deal with God's power, providence, and saving will, focusing on how such a God engages with mutable creation.

In chapter seven, the general sense of providence is established, and some discussion of obediential potency is made. Picking up from seven, in chapter eight, Durand attempts to make sense of prayer and its compatibility with providence, concluding that it "is not God who answers our prayers, but rather these prayers which answer to his call" (178–79).

In chapter nine, Durand makes the claim that "in an era when metaphysics has become inconceivable for most of our contemporaries, it is also necessary and, indeed, opportune that we offer alternative paths of access to these mysteries" (191). I personally found this somewhat questionable, and for the most part, Durand does not veer from classical metaphysics. It seems to me that a similar claim would be to say that since a certain culture does not have a developed system for counting, as is the case with the Mundurukú or Pirahã tribes, then we must find other ways to teach engineering, physics, or even the Trinity. My critique, however, is not entirely fair; for example, Durand will later criticize theologians that stubbornly reject metaphysical language (345). Furthermore, many of the theological difficulties with which Durand deals do not have easily accessible answers for fallen man. Here, Durand offers the task of the theologian when approaching such mysteries—that is, "to avoid false representations and to overcome apparent contradictions so that our faith in God may be freer and purer, without tampering with the mystery he has revealed" (205). These themes will continue through part two, particularly in chapter twelve.

Part two of the book is named "Analogy, Trinity, and Christ the Savior." This section of the book picks up from where part one left off and begins with a discussion of the effects of nature and grace in knowing God and the interplay between the two. From discussing knowledge and analogy in chapter eleven, chapter twelve looks at truthful speech about God, and Durand attempts to find "the decisive parameters of the truth of our statements concerning God" (255).

Chapter thirteen stands out as an examination of Richard of St. Victor and Thomas Aquinas's distancing of himself from the Victorine theologian. Durand hypothesizes that "the mystery of the Trinity is the unfolding of what is enclosed within God's beatitude; moreover, the theological gaze at the trinitarian mystery is itself a movement toward the divine beatitude"

(281). The chapter's discussion on the Trinity's accessibility to natural knowledge is timely, as an increasing number of a priori arguments for the Trinity are gaining popularity in today's literature.

Chapter fourteen engages with Hans Urs von Balthasar's thought, while Durand maintains his theological anchor in Augustine and Aquinas. Nevertheless, I am surprised at how much Durand concedes to Balthasar; and while I am not familiar with the greater discourse on the analogies of Augustine versus those of Balthasar, the absence of Augustine's discussion of the love, the loved, and the lover in book viii of *De Trinitate* seemed conspicuous.

In chapter fifteen, Durand argues that Christocentrism cannot be the last word in interpreting revelation. In this chapter, he works through subtle difficulties, engaging Barth, the Cappadocians, Bonaventure, and Aquinas. He develops the notion that theology is rooted in an eschatological Trinitarian theocentrism. Beyond this, however, Durand argues that we also need to remain open to a paternal theocentrism. Nevertheless, the following chapter refocuses on Christology and the doctrine of the preexistence of Christ as implied by his mission. Durand reflects on Gathercole's exegesis and Aquinas's scriptural demonstration, developing the argument scripturally and concluding that the Synoptic Gospels equal the Pauline and Johannine bodies of literature in enabling us to engage in robust Christological dialogue.

The seventeenth chapter looks closely at the idea of *conversatio*, particularly in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, and Durand relates this to the theology of charity. This chapter focuses on the friendship that man shares with God and how the Incarnation is the way people of all ages—even the very young—can understand God's proximity to man (406). The final chapter, chapter eighteen, concludes the book with a reflection on the particularity and singularity of Christ. Durand takes this and develops a notion of universal application by which the life, temptations, and sufferings of Christ as they happened can be seen as having a universal scope and affinity to the life, temptations, and suffering of all men. What Durand says here is that while St. Paul desired to be all things for all men to save them—and by the power of grace, Paul was a "Pharisee with the Pharisees, as one without the Law when among the pagans, poor with the needy" (431) and so forth—Jesus Christ, in the flesh, exemplifies this beyond any of his apostles.

Overall, the structure of the book moves from the one God to God and creation, then from the Trinity to Christ incarnate. In this way, the book's main project of understanding the scriptural God follows the

outline of Scripture itself. The dynamic exploration Durand offers us is thought-provoking and exciting. The book is populated with bullet points, clear summaries, and flow charts, all aiding the reader's understanding. Some chapters have, at most, twenty-one footnotes—demonstrating how the book is a primary, rather than secondary, source.

A recurring theme is that we are wayfaring pilgrims in the faith—for we, as Christians, are citizens of God's kingdom, and in this life, only see through a glass darkly. The task of considering God as an acting subject with whom we have a living interlocutor is a great and noble one, one at which Durand excels in each article of the book. And it seems to me that the concluding remarks of chapter thirteen, which are said of Trinitarian theology, might be said of the project of scriptural elucidation as a whole: "Theology leads, at least at certain moments of its unfolding, to a form of intellectual doxology, at once arduous and joyful, as well as animated by an authentic intellectual hope" (300). N·V

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Israel: A Christian Grammar by Paul J. Griffiths (*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023*), xvi + 242 pp.

ACCORDING TO GRIFFITHS'S *GRAMMAR*, Israel includes two assemblies: the Church and the Synagogue—that is, Christians and Jews (13). While the Church calls herself "the new or true Israel," Griffiths disapproves since this phraseology implies that "the Synagogue no longer belongs to Israel" (13). He agrees with the ecclesial view that the fundamental dividing line of human creatures falls between Israel and non-Israel but disagrees that this line falls between baptized and nonbaptized persons (144). On his view, Jews are non-Christian Israelites who do not need the washing of baptism (166).

What is the Synagogue? By this capitalized term, Griffiths intends "primarily Jews taken collectively, whether or not observant or believing" (x). This answer only kicks the question downfield. *Who is a Jew?* A non-Gentile: "one who is related to the god in ways that no other human creatures are," and this relation is "theologically definable" (10). "Gentile" and "Israelite" are mutually exclusive theological categories: "A gentile is

a non-Israelite; an Israelite is a nongentile; and there is no *tertium quid*" (4). *How does one acquire the special theological relation to God which Jews enjoy?* One must be "descended matrilineally from Jacob-Israel or recruited into Israel otherwise than by baptism" (21).

The main limit in this endeavor regards methodology. Griffiths, who is Catholic, does not try to derive conclusions from Scripture or magisterial teaching as one might expect. He intentionally sidesteps such demonstrations because he has "no interest in convincing readers of anything" (xiii). Nor does he show awareness of, much less engage with, the works of other scholars. In his view, "exegesis of what others have written would smudge the line" (x). Though this approach makes for easy reading, it lacks the deeper erudition proper to academia.¹ Still, with polished prose enriched with Latin (even for citations of the Greek New Testament), his proposal presents itself with an air of authority. D'Costa and Kaminsky give it high praise while Levering's blurb is kind but critical.²

To be sure, Griffiths gets much right. Jews today are God's "beloved" and "chosen for particular purposes" (10). Since God's gifts are irrevocable (Rom 11:29), and since they conduce to the fullness of his plan, Christians cannot advocate or abide antisemitism. Rather, insofar as Jews enjoy divine Revelation and intimacy with the LORD, all Christians should be "philosemites" (222). Griffiths rightly decries the ways in which Jews have been hated and aggressed (54). Insofar as Christians have solidarity with such un-Christian behavior (48), contrition, confession, and reparation are indeed required (29).

In my view, Mansini's articulation is precise: "Insofar as there is no culpable rejection of the gospel, therefore, we may suppose that God remains faithful to the covenants with Abraham and Moses, and that practicing the Jewish religion is pleasing in his sight and rewarded with grace and blessings."³ Griffiths's proposal, however, goes much further.

His understanding "runs counter to strong currents in both secular and ecclesial usage of the word [Israel]" (13). His decision not to exegete the

¹ As found, for example, in Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel: A Christian Israelology in Dialogue with Ongoing Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021).

² The back jacket misquotes R. Kendall Soulen as saying, "A rightly ordered Christian doctrine of Israel." In fact, he wrote, "Everyone who cares about a rightly ordered Christian doctrine of Israel will want to read and weigh this original and provocative book." See Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology, "Paul Griffiths' 'Israel: A Christian Grammar' Panel Discussion SPST 2024," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbcWC-qHO67A>, 52:10.

³ Guy Mansini, OSB, *Ecclesiology, Sacra Doctrina* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 273.

scriptural and magisterial teaching on Israel ultimately proves unhelpful because it is there that we find a different grammar. Jesus warns those Jews who reject him that some Israelites forfeit the kingdom: “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits” (Matt 21:43). He teaches that in the post-paschal age, Israel is the assembly governed by him, who is enthroned now in glory, and by those apostles appointed and empowered by the One who continually comes to earth on the clouds of heaven (Matt 19:28; cf. 2:6; 16:28; 26:64; 28:20; CCC §765). Israel and Church (whether *qāhāl* or *ekklēsia*) are labels for one and the same reality: the People of God (*Lumen gentium* §9).

Lumen gentium §9 regards “Israel according to the flesh” as “the Church of God” (citing 2 Esd 13:1; cf. Num 20:4; Deut 23:1ff) and “the new Israel” as “the Church of Christ” (citing Matt 16:18). The dogmatic constitution does not affirm two numerically distinct entities. Rather, it refers to two stages in the life of one covenant family. The distinction between old and new Israel is analogous to that of a life in and out of the womb. The Church gestating in OT times was “born” from the side of Christ crucified (cf. CCC §766; *LG* §3). To shift metaphors, one might say that Caterpillar-Israel has become Butterfly-Israel. The theological use of the term “Israel” today throughout the *Roman Missal* reflects the understanding that the post-paschal Church is “the new Israel, gathered from every people.”⁴ These observations go unmentioned by Griffiths. He does not desire to expound Church principles and praxis but to “correct [her] theological and liturgical error” (167).

But Griffiths makes errors of his own. In one sense, he is right to regard Israelites and Gentiles as mutually exclusive categories. But his binary requires further nuance. He fails to see how both terms can operate in either a theological or merely ethnical register. This lacuna creates problems at every turn. One may speak intelligibly of a “Gentile Israelite.” Indeed, the NT refers to Gentile Christians (Acts 15:23). Although this terminology does not fit Griffiths’s grammar, he would rightly regard these Christians as theological Israelites and ex-Gentiles (8), even if their merely ethnic, genealogical *gentilitas* remains. Similarly—according to the grammar consistent with the Church’s theology and liturgical practice—though in the merely ethnical sense today’s Jews are not Gentiles, they are Gentiles in the theological sense. *Pace* Griffiths, baptism is necessary for them—as for all—to be washed of original sin, incorporated into Christ, and initiated into God’s kingdom-church (Israel).

Griffiths does not confront the difficulty presented by the Bible’s

⁴ Pentecost, Vigil Mass, Prayers After the Readings.

emphasis on patrilineal lineage. Using a circular definition, he affirms that “birth to a *Jewish* mother makes you a *Jew*” (36, emphasis added). On this view, all who are from Israel are Israel, even though Scripture explicitly affirms that “not all who are from Israel are Israel” (Rom 9:6). Griffiths does not attend to this verse. For the apostle Paul, being the progeny of Israelite parents need not imply being an Israelite oneself. The making of an Israelite, theologically construed, is a divine act. As such, being an Israelite is not contingent upon one’s biological makeup or genealogical past, nor can one’s family tree guarantee Israelite status. Thus, Jesus warns the Pharisees and Sadducees, “Do not to presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham” (Matt 3:9). Indeed, Ishmael was a son of Abraham but not an heir of God’s promises (Gen 17:19–21), whereas Gentile believers are (Gal 3:6–9; Rom 4:11–12).

Furthermore, “adoption” is God’s gift to Israel (Rom 9:4). Adoption implies *becoming* a covenant child. Every kingdom son experienced a kingdom *transfer* (cf. Col 1:13). The Church fittingly teaches that natural generation transmits original sin, such that human beings enter this world in need of God’s saving help (CCC §404). Born enemies of God by nature, we become sons of God by grace—the grace of *adoption*. Only the God-man is God’s Son by nature. Every other Israelite is *Israelized*. Even Jacob *became* Israel.

For Griffiths, filiation occurs not only by being born into Israel but also “by whatever liturgies the Synagogue uses for that purpose” (34). Of course, “the Synagogue” is not a monolithic reality, nor does it have a single Sanhedrin to authoritatively sift out erroneous ideas and unacceptable practices. Does *any* rite a Jew deems fit effect the grace of divine adoption? For his part, Griffiths offers little help in discerning which Jewish liturgies effectively attain the fruit of filiation. After all, “the Church lacks standing to intervene in the Synagogue’s life in any way other than by penitential offerings” (213). Without imposing himself, therefore, he suggests that “Jews . . . come to be either in the amniotic fluids of the wombs of Jewish mothers, or in the waters of the mikvah” (167). In the latter case, birth to a Jewish mother does not make you a Jew. Here, Griffiths counters Griffiths.

Nevertheless, regarding incorporation into the non-Christian part of Israel, one must not belabor questions of valid matter and form. These, we are told, are for “the Synagogue” to declare, never mind that one cannot know the extension of this category—“that is, which human creatures should be taken to belong to it” (13). While Griffiths discusses the Jewish people at length, he admits confusion about which people these are! The

Israel/Gentile distinction, though “brightlined and binary” in the order of being, turns dim and fuzzy in the order of knowing (5–6). According to the Church, there is such a distinction between those in a state of grace and those in a state of sin. But, whereas the state of one’s soul is invisible, the Church is a visible society with a juridical dimension (*LG* §8; *CCC* §1880). Ecclesial incorporation is a public affair governed by canon law.⁵

These observations help expose an error which, according to the jacket cover, constitutes “the book’s central claim.” That claim is this: Israel properly includes both the Synagogue and the Church, “which is the same as to say” that Israel properly includes both Christians and Jews. Here, Griffiths imagines that it is the same to say “the Synagogue” and “Jews” (13). Likewise, he imagines that “the Church” and “Christians” are interchangeable, for the Church is the assembly of Christians—that is, those who are baptized (21). But he unwittingly counters his own claims when he rightly observes how candidates enter the Church by means other than baptism (164). Candidates, unlike unbaptized catechumens, are non-Catholic Christians who have been baptized into ecclesial communities separated from the Holy See. But some communities lack full communion with the Church: these communities are ecclesial, but not *Ekklēsia tout court*.⁶ Jesus himself hints that some Christians are yet outside the Church: “I have other sheep who are not of this fold” (John 10:16). The fold is a common metaphor for God’s covenant family, whether conceptualized as the Church in NT times (cf. Matt 18; John 10:11; Acts 20:28) or as Israel in OT times (Ps 80:1; 100:3; Num 27:17; Ezek 34:31). The Lord shepherds this people via Christ, the chief Shepherd, and the disciple-shepherds who act in his name (cf. Matt 2:6; John 21:15–17; 1 Pet 5:1–5). Just as there are *egregious Christians* (John 10:16)—righteous disciples not yet incorporated into the flock (*grex*) of the Church—so there are Jews outside the Synagogue. The biblical theme of excommunication further supports this view. The New Testament discusses the exclusion of certain Jews from the Synagogue (John 9:22; 12:42) as well as the exclusion of certain Christians from the Church (Matt 18:15–17; 1 Cor 5:5). In sum, it is imprecise, both magisterially and exegetically, to conflate *tout court* Jews with the Synagogue and Christians with the Church.

Apropos of poor exegesis, in this book, the assembly of God’s people is not described as the Bride nuptially united to the divine Bridegroom.

⁵ Cf. Andrew D. Dalton, “Saving Faith and Kingdom Entry: Decoupling Membership and Communion in Scripture and Tradition,” *Alpha and Omega* (forthcoming).

⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964), §§3–4, 22.

Griffiths does refer to the Song of Songs, where Bride-and-Groom imagery appears, but only to adulterate the biblical schema in view of his original thesis—namely, that God enjoys a “ménage à trois” with two partners: the Synagogue and the Church (87). No scriptural or magisterial warrant for this bold revision is offered. According to Griffiths, the two creaturely lovers in God’s throuple are not equally intimate with him. *Contra* St. Anselm, “the Synagogue is more intimate with the god in Israel than is the Church” (13). And she “shows holiness to the world” better than the Church (41).

These claims counter Church teaching. The Eucharist—though lacking to Jews—is “the source and summit” of the life of the Church (*LG* §11; cf. *CCC* §1324) and “the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being” (*CCC* §1325). The covenant of Christ’s Blood is a new and better covenant vis-à-vis the Old Covenant (cf. *LG* §9; Jer 31:31–34; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 8:1–13). Notably absent from Griffiths’s analysis are discussions of “covenant” and “Eucharist.” Insofar as covenant communicates kinship, these omissions are egregious.

According to Griffiths, the Church should cease being “intentional and explicit” in her efforts to make Christian disciples out of Jews (141). However, Christians may live their lives as one might tend one’s own garden, quietly hoping that foreign passersby might gaze upon its beauty and feel drawn to enter it (140–41). But “baptizing Jews is a solecism” (174). For “Jews are already washed, rectified, removed from the gentile’s incurvation into self and absorption into the world. They therefore do not need baptism’s washing” (166).

What then of Jesus’s explicit command in Matthew 28:19–20? When citing the Great Commission, Griffiths stops short of the phrase, “teaching them all I have commanded.” He advocates “ecclesial restraint in proselytizing Jews,” hinting that God does not want the world to be emptied of unbaptized Jews but, rather, is preserving them until the end that they might always bear witness to the Church (145). Yet, one may rightly acknowledge how God positively wills all the elements of truth and goodness among Jews (partial though they be) and only permissively wills their lack of distinctively Christian truth and goodness without denying that the Great Commission applies to Jews today. Similarly, one may acknowledge the goodness of old wine without denying the transcendent goodness of new wine, such that one may desire that both be preserved (cf. Matt 9:17).

What new wine—what novelty—comes in and through Christ? Though Griffiths does not say so, by virtue of her nuptial union with Christ,

fulfilled Israel enjoys the very fullness of God: she participates in his life and love, power and providence, righteousness and perfection, virtue and glory, identity and mission.⁷ For all the truth and goodness non-Christians enjoy—and Christians should acknowledge that God's plan involves those whose enjoyment is presently partial—tasting the newness Christ ushered in will necessarily imply more than old wineskins. A new creation and transcendent perfection are required: “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (cf. Matt 5:20; cf. 5:48). Unfortunately, the idea of Israel's fulfillment (*plērōsis/theosis*) does not yet appear in Griffiths's *Grammar*. Perhaps one day it will. Until then, one may remain skeptical that his is a *Christian Grammar*. The idea that the OT *qāhāl* and the NT *ekklēsia* share the same life is sound. But the claim that members of today's Synagogue (even nonobservant, atheist ones) and members of the post-paschal Church (even mystics and saints) share the same form of life is highly dubious, to say the least. NEV

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Healing Fractures in Contemporary Theology edited by Peter John McGregor and Tracey Rowland (*Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022*), xvi + 286 pp.

SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE OF the contemporary university, one is struck by the remarkably fragmentary nature of academic discourse. Untethered from any sense of how their discipline is related to truth, academics from diverse disciplines are isolated from one another, and desires to work together amount to little more than an extrinsic and thus largely superficial interdisciplinarity. To make things worse, such fragmentation does not exist merely between diverse disciplines but reaches down into the disciplines themselves, seeing researchers and students stranded within the confines of their respective subdisciplines, further isolated.

⁷ See Andrew D. Dalton, *Fulfilled Israel According to Matthew's Plerosis Paradigm*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2: Reihe 601 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2024), 326.

One might think that such a phenomenon would be prevalent in disciplines that are predicated exclusively upon functionalist notions of truth and, therefore, less visible in other disciplines for which truth is a much more robust, even personal concept. Alas, this is simply not the case. One particularly astute observer of this phenomenon, especially as it is manifest within the discipline of theology, is the Australian Peter John McGregor (Catholic Institute of Sydney). McGregor, together with Tracey Rowland (University of Notre Dame Australia) have set about gathering an impressive team of theologians and philosophers with a passion for truth and the unity that flows from it to address a wide array of fractures that they have seen develop within the discipline over the course of modernity.

The book emerges as a response to a provocation that came in the form of a paper originally delivered by McGregor at a conference of the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA), wherein he sought not only to identify and diagnose a number of pathologies that he has been able to discern within the discipline but to propose adequate remedies. McGregor, surveying the academic landscape of the discipline, has masterfully utilized the metaphor of the fracture to help him and his fellow authors to conceive of the issues he seeks to address. He explains the fittingness of the metaphor thus: "I choose the term 'fracture' deliberately. Fractures vary in seriousness. It is one thing to fracture a femur, and another to fracture the distal phalanx bone in a little toe. It is one thing to have a fracture where a bone is shattering into pieces, and another to have a stress fracture that is only a crack" (x). The medical metaphor is apt also in its alignment to the late Pope Francis's vision of the Church as field hospital. If the Church is to be understood as a field hospital, as Pope Francis so vividly described it, it is important that the medics and doctors charged with the provision of frontline care are adequately prepared for their task. What McGregor and Rowland offer here is a collection of papers of great value to the Church, and specifically to those of her membership who are charged with tending the intellectual formation of the faithful as well as future ministers of God's Church.

The book comprises of thirteen chapters, each of which analyzes the various fractures identified by McGregor, as well as others observed by contributing authors. Each paper details the manifestations of these fractures and their causes before proceeding to offer proposals as to how theologians working within these subdisciplines can contribute toward the healing of such fractures. McGregor's opening chapter deals with what can be considered the *ur* fracture—namely, that which exists between academic theology and spirituality. Resonances to Balthasar's classic essay "Theology

and Sanctity” abound, but what comes to the fore in McGregor’s paper is the model of the theological style and methodology of Joseph Ratzinger / Pope Benedict XVI. We see throughout each of the papers that follow the abiding significance of this fundamental fracture as it manifests in specific ways.

Papers on the nature of philosophy and its relationship with theology by William C. Hackett and D. C. Schindler offer much to contemplate, and while they approach the question from rather different angles, theirs is an engagement which will be welcomed by most. The interdependence and interpenetration of theology and philosophy is shown to be crucial to the good functioning of both. Offering a vision of the relationship between the disciplines that would see each as interdependent though truly distinct, Schindler argues that “If theology has refused to open up to philosophy at its centre, it will lose the capacity to receive God’s self-disclosure as meaningful, as capable of being unfolded and sounded in its depths through reflection, and therefore as a genuine truth to be contemplated” (63). Separated from faith, however, he points out, reason has to retreat from its own center and is recast into a compartmentalized and instrumentalized form.

Other intradisciplinary fractures treated include those which exist between “Theology and Liturgy” (Fagerberg); “The Literal and Spiritual Senses of Scripture” (Huizenga); “Theology, Preaching, and Apologetics” (Baxter); “Theology and Ethics” (Morrissey); “Theology and Social Theory” (Tan); and “Dogmatic and Pastoral Theology” (Rowland). Each of these offers deeply learned assessments of the issues at hand and creative approaches to possible remedies.

While the division is not clearly demarcated in the volume, the book takes a turn with an exceptional paper by Kevin Wagner (University of Notre Dame Australia), whose essay, entitled “Theology and the *Koinonial* Christian Life,” presents a solid case for what might be called a proper “recontextualizing” of Catholic theology—returning the practice of the theologian back from the isolated desk, library, or archive, or from a variety of extra-ecclesial ideological contexts, into the natural home of the ecclesial communion. As the supernatural gift of faith is mediated through the Church, the theologian needs to be connected with and participating in the life of the Church so as to have the sense to interpret that faith and the sense to “trust in the guidance of the magisterium” (226).

The remaining chapters then treat some of the fractures that face theologians within the Church, namely: “Theologians and Non-Theologians” (Cihak), “The Generation Gap between Gen X and Millennial/

Post-Millennial Catholics” (Mannering), and “Theologians and the Magisterium” (Zimmermann). Again, these papers provoke much thought concerning the nature of the vocation of the theologian in the Church today. The contribution from Helenka Mannering addressing the fracture of the generational gap between generation X and subsequent millennial and post-millennial generations is noteworthy. It stands out especially in light of contemporary discussions pertaining to synodality, and particularly for any concerned with the looming pastoral crisis stemming from the fact that many of the younger generation, raised in a hyper-online world and dealing with a serious shift in a shared sense of public rationality, are seeking doctrinal solidity and moral clarity and are attracted to (or at least are not as afraid of) more traditional expressions of piety as many of those of their parents’ age might be. It can be hoped that Mannering’s essay, as well as each of the other papers within this volume, can spark further and ongoing reflection on the nature and purpose of theology and the vocation of the theologian in the Church and the world today.

The volume presented here is an excellent one, and it makes a useful contribution to an increasingly polemicized academic discourse. This book will prove to be essential reading for graduate level theology students, for whom the intellectual silos of the contemporary academy, even within a discipline itself, can seem both stifling and impenetrable. This will also prove enlightening and edifying reading for the educated layperson who is struggling to make sense of a heavily politicized ecclesial landscape. For theologians engaged in teaching and research, the papers presented here should serve as a reminder of the whole to which their research, however important, remains partial, as David W. Fagerberg writes: “As a body is more than the sum of its organs, theology would benefit from being understood as more than the sum of its specializations, and in order for that understanding to take root in our minds, theology must overcome its fragmentary character” (69). McGregor and Rowland are to be commended for bringing this volume to press and offering it to a Church and a world in need. N.V.

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Matter and Mathematics: An Essentialist Account of Laws of Nature by Andrew Younan (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2023*), xiii + 228 pp.

MANY SCIENTISTS AND HISTORIANS of science have characterized the scientific revolution as a rebellion against Aristotle. From Francis Bacon to Newton and beyond, direct or oblique repudiations of categories like substance, teleology, and form abound in early modern philosophical literature, abandoning Aristotle for an empirically testable, mathematical approach to the sciences. With the advances in the modern sciences of the past 400 years, Aristotle and his ideas were proven to be unscientific and relegated to the history books.

Or so it seemed. Once universally derided, Aristotelian notions of scientific causality have made a roaring comeback over the course of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, becoming an acceptable philosophical school once more in analytic metaphysics and philosophy of science. Commonly growing out of modal logic, analytic philosophers craft Aristotle-inspired theories of “dispositionalism” and “essentialism” that attempt to explain phenomena as diverse as emergent properties and identity persistence through material change.

Rarely, however, are the texts of Aristotle himself placed in direct conversation with contemporary philosophical questions. This is what Andrew Younan does in *Matter and Mathematics: An Essentialist Account of the Laws of Nature*. Younan’s ambitious scope aims to accomplish two chief goals, as reflected in the two-part division of the book. The first goal is to show that early modern critiques of Aristotle (especially those of Descartes and Hume) fail to show Aristotle’s inadequacy. The second goal is to show that Aristotle’s philosophy of mathematics and nature provide answers to contemporary questions of laws of nature and the sciences inadequately answered by either contemporary Humeans or their Anti-Humean critics. Chapters 1–3 address the first goal, explicitly attempting to be an “objections and replies” (21) section of the text. Chapters 4–6, on the other hand, exposit Younan’s positive exegesis and application of Aristotle’s thought to the laws of nature.

Younan’s introduction sets out contemporary intellectual camps on laws of nature into Nominalists and Platonists, or Humeans and Anti-Humeans. The first group, consisting of David Lewis, W. V. O. Quine, and R. W. Hamming, holds that the patterns of the universe are a result of mere chance and that there are no entities that are designated by the phrase “the laws of nature”; rather, “the laws of nature” are a merely nominal way

of speaking about the universe. In Younan's exposition, such figures tend to attribute the patterns of the universe more to the human psychological projection of order onto the cosmos than to the cosmos itself. Younan portrays the anti-Humeans (including D. M. Armstrong, A. Zee, and Max Tegmark) as Platonists regarding laws of nature, a camp that holds that the laws of nature are some sort of immaterial entities which actively govern the regularities of the cosmos.

The first two chapters consist in detailed engagement with the primary texts of Descartes and Hume, whom Younan chooses because they directly critique Aristotle on the sciences. Interpreting Descartes as holding a universe full of bodies of mere extension which need an occasionalistic divine causality, Younan argues that Descartes's critique of Aristotelian substances and bodies prematurely rejects the concepts, not based on any intellectual inconsistencies on the part of the concepts, but on Descartes's inappropriate narrowing of epistemological scope to those things that are "clear and distinct." Younan compares this to fishermen who declare that there are no objects in their waters smaller than the size of the holes in their nets. Against Hume's denial of causality, Younan marshals the regularity of the cosmos in support of the argument rendering Hume's mosaic of unrelated series of events completely improbable, leading the reader to search for at least some connection between the regularity of the cosmos and causality.

The third chapter rounds out the "objections and replies" section by invoking the "quantum revolution" (71) as an example of how Descartes's clarity of extended bodies and Hume's refusal of causality fail to account for the contemporary sciences. While quantum mechanics has been widely abused by philosophers and theologians, this chapter by Younan is the clearest Aristotelian explanation of quantum mechanics I have ever read. Neither simply reading quantum phenomena through de Broglie-Bohm determinism nor necessarily wholeheartedly endorsing the Copenhagen Interpretation, Younan follows Heisenberg and introduces the Aristotelian concept of intermediate entities between prime matter and fully actual substances, putting forth the possibility that precollapse quantum phenomena are entities with a high amount of potency but very little actuality. The observed quantum wave collapse would then be a sudden actualization of this potentiality. While an earlier version of this chapter appeared in the *Heythrop Journal*, this chapter is highly recommended for any Aristotelian interested in the quantum metaphysical question.

The second part of the book is mostly concerned with exegesis of Aristotle's thought on the philosophy of mathematics and necessity. Chapter four covers Aristotle's philosophy of mathematics from

Metaphysics, books 13 and 14. Younan's reading of Aristotle's philosophy of mathematical entities follows both anti-Plato polemic and, he argues, a recontextualizing of *Metaphysics* 14.6 as a positive statement of why one would be led to believe in Plato's interpretation of numbers as separate substances. While largely following others' work on how Aristotle's philosophy of mathematics derives from an experience of matter, Younan adds a bit more structure to the back end of the *Metaphysics* by reading it in light of this mathematical controversy, plausibly adding a unity to this section of the *Metaphysics* helpful to historical scholars of Aristotle.

In chapter five, Younan treats Aristotelian necessity as found in the second book of the *Physics*, particularly focusing on the role of simple and hypothetical necessity. While the previous chapter focused on mathematics in general, this chapter focuses on the apparent necessity of mathematics and the *aporia* which arises given the Aristotelian position that all knowledge starts from the senses. Younan asks which kind of necessity belongs to which category. Crucially, he argues that simple necessity actually belongs to matter abstracted from particulars (common matter) *and* from form-specific determinations, rendering it intellectual matter, or a study of the first accident of substance in the *Categories*: quantity. The study of intellectual matter is the study of quantity itself, the necessity of which Younan calls "the boundary conditions" of matter (133). This explains Wigner's "unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics" without recourse to possible worlds and imagination, as mathematical necessity is the necessity of all material substances in abstraction from their specific forms.¹ This high level of abstraction leads to a high level of necessity and applicability, separated from the hypothetical necessity of specific forms.

In chapter six, Younan's expositions of Aristotle provide answers to Wigner and contemporary thinkers, especially dispositionalist essentialists. Lange's (and Mumford's) critique of Ellis lands inasmuch as Ellis requires laws of nature to be of the essence and a result of the natural kinds of that which they describe. Younan is able to avoid such a critique by locating the mathematical study of creatures not in their essences but in the accident of quantity. This location, as explained in chapter five, makes the mathematical study of physical beings one of abstract study of intellectual matter, giving it the level of necessity and applicability that is so striking in Wigner. Younan does an excellent job in showing how Aristotelian notions

¹ See Eugene Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences. Richard Courant Lecture in Mathematical Sciences Delivered at New York University, May 11, 1959," *Communications on Pure and Applied Mathematics* 13 (1960): 1–14.

of simple (matter-bound) and hypothetical (form-bound) necessity answer the questions in contemporary conversations about laws of nature and the sciences, especially in Lange. Younan's Aristotelian approach gives answers to deep contemporary questions in the philosophy of science, neither creating unnecessary metaphysical apparatus like the ontological independence of laws of nature or ceding to Humean (or even dispositionalist Aristotelian) metaphysical skepticism, both of which seem to cause more philosophical problems than they solve. Younan's presentation not of Aristotelianism but of Aristotle himself provides a plausible and philosophically robust account of the role of mathematics in the physical sciences. This final chapter provides a strong argument for Aristotle as the best solution for the heart of the problems in contemporary questions of mathematics and the sciences, with a surprisingly minimal emphasis on Aristotle's metaphysics. Outside of chapter three, Younan largely restricts himself to questions of necessity and mathematics, bringing in metaphysics only briefly for illustrations. Theology is largely restricted to the appendix, and Aquinas is only used in the main body of the text as an interpreter of Aristotle.

The appendix is a fascinating foray into the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, grappling with necessity and freedom in God's action in the cosmos. While it is a theological section (or at least a section that goes well beyond Aristotle) and is thus set apart after the main text, the appendix itself provides important context to theologians looking to apply the findings of the book to a picture of the cosmos with God at the helm. Younan here treats law, necessity, emanation, the divine ideas, and inherent contradictions in ways familiar to Thomists but helpful to Aristotelians and Thomists alike in light of his exposition of the epistemology of mathematics. Younan here calls for a renewed Fifth Way of St. Thomas, looking at the regularity of the cosmos and teleology as strong evidence for the intelligence of the Creator.

This is a book about Aristotle and Aristotle's philosophy of mathematics as applied to the sciences. The subtitle is a bit misleading, as those looking for a sustained, contemporary analytic essentialist approach to mathematics and the sciences will find neither dispositionalism nor an analytic mode of presentation here. The second part of this book (wherein lies most of the meat) consists in exegeses of Aristotelian primary texts with a sudden and weighty payoff in the final chapter in its application to contemporary philosophers of science. Younan's devotion to Aristotelian scholarship and exegesis makes such a payoff almost seem like sleight of hand for how

directly and clearly his exposition of Aristotle solves the contemporary questions set up in the introduction and in chapter six.

I must reluctantly call readers' attention to some infelicities in the first two chapters of the book. These chapters suffer from problems of scope and raise early questions to the reader about the intended audience for the book. The treatments of both Descartes and Hume are too long to be merely representative of trends in relation to Aristotle and the philosophy of science but too short to be robust historical accounts of the transmission of Aristotelian ideas to these figures and the historical influence of such figures in the spread of anti-Aristotelianism. Not that either the applicability to Aristotle or historical discussions are completely absent in Younan's chapters, but he spends too much time on the primary texts while not providing independent contributions to the general knowledge of Descartes and Hume among professional philosophers. One wishes that these chapters had either been condensed into a more streamlined treatment of Descartes and Hume in direct relation to chapter six or expanded in their own right to constitute clear lines of historical transmission. As the latter has been done repeatedly in the history and philosophy of science, the former would have made it clear that this is a book for professional philosophers looking for how Aristotle's mathematics can contribute to our concepts of laws of nature—a task to which this book provides a welcome contribution.

Matter and Mathematics presents a robust and clear account of Aristotle's philosophy of mathematics as applicable to contemporary debate about laws of nature. The unique focus of the epistemology of mathematics and its inherent connection to the material in Aristotle's thought makes a compelling case for both the order of the universe and a "minimalist" commitment to nonobservable entities as an alternative to the Platonist school. Younan's account moves from classic exegesis to contemporary application organically and rigorously, without sacrificing accuracy in either domain. *Matter and Mathematics* is a very helpful book for Aristotelians of any kind, exegetes, neo-Aristotelians, or Thomists who are interested in Aristotle's philosophy of mathematics or Aristotle's application to contemporary thought on laws of nature. NEV

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Thinking as Though God Exists: Newman on Evangelizing the “Nones”
by Ryan N. S. Topping (*Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2023*), 186 pp.

WRITING IN A SIMILAR vein as Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* and Rod Dreher’s *The Benedict Option*, Ryan Topping is responding to the complete secularization of contemporary society. MacIntyre pointed to two options: return to Aristotle or embrace Nietzsche. Dreher notices that society has basically embraced Nietzsche’s morals of power and offers survival tactics to Christians. Dreher is often criticized for apparently forgetting about evangelization. Whether or not this is a fair critique, Topping offers a definitive solution to the question of *how* to evangelize a post-Christian society. A unique, helpful, and delightful feature about his approach is that it centers around St. John Henry Newman, whose example and thought, along with that of St. Thomas Aquinas, Topping argues are essential for accomplishing the New Evangelization envisioned by St. John Paul II.

Topping begins in chapter one by pointing to Newman’s great power of integration: faith and reason, art and philosophy, simplicity and erudition, life and thought. Topping’s main argument is that the successful evangelization of the “Nones,” those post-Christians who live on borrowed Christian values they inherited, requires that we become integrated Catholics ourselves and then build an integrated Catholic culture. The integration envisioned by Topping, with Newman’s help, is simply a life and culture where every aspect is shaped by the faith and, in turn, helps foster the faith. Thus, following Vatican II’s teaching that the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life (*Lumen gentium* §11), Topping repeatedly stresses that a vibrant and beautiful liturgy, incorporating lovely art, is essential.

Next, chapter two explains that reform must start at home, with ourselves and the Church. Catholics must overcome their lukewarm love, which, he explains, stems from a lack of integration between our beliefs and our lives. If we want zealous love, we need strong conviction of our beliefs. Thus, clear and orthodox catechesis is essential.

In chapter three Topping examines the “Nones” in need of evangelizing. He explains that most secular people are not hardened atheists; they are merely ignorant people who are doubtful about the possibility of knowing truth and identifying moral goodness. The “Nones” have not been formed by good art or moral education. Thus, they have difficulties, not thought-out counterarguments. So, Newman’s epistemology of belief is very applicable, especially when paired with effective apologetics carried

out more by encounter with an integrated Catholic culture than by logical arguments.

A key part of an integrated Catholic culture is the cultivation of the affections and incorporating them into the spiritual life—one must love God with all one's being, including with the sensitive appetites. This is the work of chapter four. Topping identifies Newman's affections with Aquinas's passions and argues that Newman offers a pastoral contribution to Aquinas's account by explaining the necessity for religion to involve and satisfy all the desires of an integrated person, including our affectionate desires.¹ The way to incorporate the affections into a Catholic life and to sanctify them is through good secular arts and good religious arts. One art especially needed is the liturgical art of preaching. Topping points to Newman as an ideal preacher who engages much with Scripture, focuses on one point throughout the sermon, and employs various rhetorical devices learned through the study of the liberal arts.

Then, in chapters five through seven, Topping addresses the need to de-normalize atheism—acting as though God does not exist—in all areas of life. This is accomplished through several means. First, encouraging the liberal arts, beautiful liturgy, and orthodox catechesis (chapter five). Secondly, apologetically refuting the myths about the faith that most secular people believe. The myth that religion breeds violence is proven false by the violent history of atheistic societies in the twentieth century (chapter six). The myth that science or reason contradicts faith is beautifully refuted by Newman's account of faith and reason: Reason demands and presupposes a natural faith (chapter six). The myth that human dignity demands radical autonomy is answered by Newman's understanding of conscience, which is subjective but not relative (chapter seven).

Chapter eight explains the type of apologetics that Topping encourages. It is based on two successful bishops of the last hundred years: Fulton Sheen and Robert Barron. Since secular society does not respect reason as a path to speculative knowledge, we cannot rely on classical scholastic arguments for God's existence; at least we cannot begin with them. Instead of *proving* God's existence, we must *persuade* people of it by demonstrating first its beauty, then its goodness, and finally its truth. This mode of apologetics should remind us of G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, in which he argues that Christianity is the only belief system that enables one to

¹ As a lover of both Newman and Aquinas, I certainly desire this convergence to be correct, and I think it is likely true, but it certainly needs a more detailed study to demonstrate it.

live a romantic life, so it must be true.² Topping follows in this heritage by starting with the desirability of Christianity and then ending with proofs of its truth.

Finally, in chapter nine, Topping stresses the importance of the liberal arts in Catholic higher education. He calls it essential for the success of the New Evangelization, especially with the open hostility against Christian ideas one finds in secular universities, which contributes to seventy percent of otherwise Christian students losing their faith in college. He also offers strategies for helping students at secular universities.

To conclude the work, chapter ten proposes three concrete steps: (1) Renew the Church by orthodox catechesis and education, moving liturgy, art, and lively charisma; (2) undermine public atheism by publicly living an integrated Catholic life and culture; and (3) integrate our thinking by incorporating faith and reason ever more deeply.

There are two small issues with this wonderful text. First, there seems to be tension throughout about how Newman fits into the work. The title would have us believe that it is a study on how Newman specifically can contribute to the New Evangelization. But often it reads more like a study on how to accomplish the New Evangelization effectively, and Newman's thought happens to come up often. At many places the reader can go five or more pages without encountering Newman. Indeed, at some points it seems that Topping's arguments about the New Evangelization could be elucidated by referencing other writers, but he seems hesitant to do so. When other writers are brought up, such as Sheen or Barron or Aquinas, the references are quite brief and never thoroughly explained. Overall, the text is successful at pointing out how Newman is helpful for the New Evangelization and as a text about how to accomplish the New Evangelization, but it seems that either of these goals on their own could have been focused on more directly. In a way, this tension doubles as a feature of the book—the reader gets two books in one—learning about both the applicability of Newman's life and thought and about how to evangelize well.

The second minor issue is that Topping typically does not offer an outline for each chapter at its beginning. Thus, one is reading a line of argumentation or exposition and is sometimes unclear on how it fits into the whole or even what the point of it is—that is, it is not always apparent

² Ian Ker calls Chesterton "the obvious successor to Newman," so Chesterton is relevant to a discussion about the applicability of Newman's ideas. *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), viii.

what work is being accomplished. But, if one keeps reading, Topping does eventually explain how the parts fit together and what each section is trying to show. So, his argumentation is very effective, but sometimes the main point only becomes clear when he concludes a section.

On the whole, this book offers a practical, sound, and hopeful path forward in the New Evangelization. It integrates both the theoretical and the applicable, the speculative and the practical. It will be very helpful for any Christian seeking to evangelize the “Nones,” including professors whose students who have grown up and been shaped by the secular culture.

NEV

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Ave Maria, FL

Thomas Aquinas: Selected Commentaries on the New Testament

edited by Jason C. Paone (*Park Ridge, IL: Word on Fire Academic, 2022*), xxiv + 445 pp.

THOMAS AQUINAS: SELECTED COMMENTARIES on the New Testament, edited by Jason C. Paone and published by Word on Fire Academic, is a scholarly endeavor demonstrating Thomas Aquinas’s exegetical prowess. Unlike his *Summa theologiae*, this anthology reveals Aquinas as a scriptural exegete. Through careful selection, Paone organizes Aquinas’s commentaries to accentuate the Christocentric nature of his theology, offering readers a structured path to explore theological virtues and Christ’s life, thereby facilitating a nuanced engagement with doctrinal complexities via scriptural insights.

What sets this volume apart is not just its academic rigor—evident in the comprehensive introduction, footnotes, and indices—but its accessibility to readers at various stages of their theological exploration. Whether one is a student, a teacher, or a devout learner, Paone’s editorial work opens up the rich context and unique world of Aquinas’s thought with unprecedented clarity. The inclusion of patristic source citations and research utilities further enhances its value as a scholarly resource.

Paone’s anthology endeavors to rectify the underrepresentation of Thomas Aquinas’s scriptural commentaries within the broader scholarly perception of his works. By elevating this aspect of Aquinas’s oeuvre, the volume challenges contemporary misconceptions of medieval theology as

disengaged from the biblical text. It is posited that Aquinas, and indeed his contemporaries, were inextricably embedded within the fabric of Scripture, which acted as the bedrock of their theological inquiry.

The volume is presented as an effort to revitalize the biblical commentaries of Aquinas, positioning them as pivotal in gaining a comprehensive understanding of his theological and methodological approach. Paone asserts that a well-rounded perception of Aquinas necessitates rigorous engagement with these commentaries, advocating for their inclusion in both introductory and advanced Catholic theological curricula (xi–xii). The volume demonstrates the integration of the patristic tradition and biblical exegesis within Aquinas's thought. By intertwining numerous cross-references to both Old and New Testament passages and interactions with a diverse array of Church Fathers, the volume embodies the essence of *ressourcement*, which is foundational for modern theological scholarship. Furthering the reader's connection to historical sources, the volume incorporates hundreds of newly added footnote citations, a product of meticulous research, linking Aquinas's patristic references to their original contexts. This feature, designed to enhance scholarly research, ensures that readers can trace the multifaceted influences that shaped Aquinas's commentaries.

The anthology's organization and Paone's editorial commentary underscore the methodological rigor and spiritual depth of Aquinas's biblical exegesis. The structured presentation facilitates readers' engagement with the Scriptures, inviting a richer dialogue between Aquinas's theological insights and contemporary scholarly inquiry. This engagement showcases the anthology's contribution beyond academic circles, including to potential personal and spiritual growth.

However, the task of interpreting Aquinas's commentaries is complicated by the historical and cultural distance separating his context from contemporary biblical scholarship. Modern readers must navigate the gap between Aquinas's medieval understanding and current historical-critical methodologies that offer a deeper insight into Jesus's life and the Second Temple period, such as Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth* volumes. These methodologies emphasize the importance of historical context in interpreting biblical texts, a dimension Aquinas could not fully access due to the limitations of his time.

Paone's editorial decisions are crucial in bridging this gap. By selecting commentaries that resonate with today's theological questions while acknowledging their historical context, Paone provides a framework for contemporary readers to appreciate Aquinas's insights. The volume's

introductions, footnotes, and indices offer necessary historical background and scholarly resources, enabling readers to engage with Aquinas's work in a way that is informed by modern scholarship and respectful of its medieval origins. This careful navigation of historical and contextual limitations enriches the understanding of Aquinas's exegesis, affirming its value for contemporary theological discourse.

The editorial decision to organize Aquinas's commentaries thematically rather than canonically further enriches this experience by injecting both narrative and memetic value. This innovative arrangement encourages readers to approach the text meditatively, allowing for a more profound reflection on the Christian mysteries elucidated by Aquinas. By presenting the commentaries in this manner, the book acts as a bridge connecting the reader to Aquinas's spiritual and intellectual journey, making it more than just a text to be studied; it becomes a companion for contemplation and personal discovery.

The volume, extending close to 400 pages, is meticulously divided into five parts, each further segmented into three chapters, totaling fifteen chapters that guide readers through a comprehensive exploration of the New Testament from Aquinas's perspective. This organizational strategy enhances the accessibility of Aquinas's thought for deep study, making the volume a valuable addition to any library, particularly for those seeking insights into the New Testament through the lens of one of Christianity's most revered saints. The thematic divisions—ranging from the Being and Incarnation of the Word through the redemptive Passion and death of Christ to Christian discipleship and the Mystical Body of Christ—mirror key doctrinal pillars, facilitating a systematic study of Christian theology as Aquinas interprets.

In the anthology, the emphasis on John's Gospel as a central element of Aquinas's scriptural exegesis is not arbitrary. This focus reflects Aquinas's theological framework, in which the divine authorship of Scripture plays a paramount role, transcending the significance of human authorship. Aquinas's perspective on the authority of Scripture underscores its divine inspiration and the Church's reception as the ultimate validation of its sacredness. This view situates God as the principal author of Sacred Scripture. This reverence is not merely academic; it shows Aquinas's view of John as an exemplary theologian and disciple whose intimate relationship with Christ offers a model for understanding divine Revelation. The unique authority attributed to John's Gospel in Aquinas's work is intertwined with this view of authorship, highlighting a special devotion to the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:24) as a source of theological insight.

The organization of the volume, starting with the prologue to John and proceeding through the narrative flow of the Gospel, showcases Aquinas's methodical and contemplative approach to exegesis. Paone's arrangement highlights the dual nature of Christ as both divine and human, a theme Aquinas explores through his commentary on John's Gospel and on Matthew's genealogy. The thematic organization extends to discussions on the power of the Word, the Incarnation, and the kenotic self-emptying of Christ, culminating in an exploration of Christ's Passion, death, and Resurrection. These sections not only highlight Aquinas's theological insights but also integrate narrative elements from the Gospels and Pauline epistles, offering a comprehensive view of Christ's salvific work.

Further, the volume delves into the participation in Christ's supernatural life through grace, as seen in Aquinas's commentaries on the enlightenment that grace brings and the sacraments as mediums of divine grace. The discussion on the beatific vision and the ultimate union with the Triune God through Christ's grace underscores the transformative potential of Aquinas's exegesis for contemporary faith practice. By foregrounding the Commentary on John, Paone's editorial work does not merely present Aquinas's thoughts but also situates them within the broader theological discourse, offering insights into Aquinas's devotion and scholarly approach to Scripture. This engagement with Aquinas's work invites readers to a deeper reflection on the divine mysteries through a meditative and scholarly lens, emphasizing the indissoluble link between theology, prayer, and the practice of faith in Aquinas's thought.

Fundamentally, the volume addresses the reader's contemporary context by highlighting the medieval fourfold sense of Scripture and Aquinas's nuanced understanding of literal and spiritual meanings. This approach encourages modern readers to appreciate the depth of Aquinas's scriptural interpretations and the relevance of his methodological perspectives for today's theological inquiries, bridging historical distance with enduring spiritual and intellectual insights.

Unique, albeit effective, is the inclusion of Aquinas's prayers at the opening and closing of the volume. They not only enrich the scholarly work with a devotional dimension but also serve as a testament to the enduring relevance of Aquinas's spiritual practice for contemporary study and prayer. The commentaries, adhering to Aquinas's systematic approach, blend patristic sources with intra-scriptural references, showcasing Aquinas's skill in synthesizing diverse theological insights into a coherent exposition of the New Testament. For example, in his commentary on Hebrews 2:9, in which the Incarnation is considered as a self-emptying *kenosis*, the "for all"

in 2:9 is accompanied by the commentary of John Chrysostom, who says, "He died for all in general, because the price was sufficient for all. And if all do not believe, he nevertheless fulfilled his part" (95, citing Chrysostom, *On 1 Corinthians* 36).

Moreover, and as Paone aptly notes, Aquinas's engagement with Scripture is inseparably imbued with his personal faith, a characteristic that distinguishes his exegesis from much of the contemporary biblical scholarship (xxii). Unlike the modern academic environment that often values secular neutrality, Aquinas's writings are devoid of any pretense of religious indifference. His approach to theology, firmly rooted in faith, integrates scholarly investigation with spiritual practice, embodying a conviction that authentic theological inquiry is inseparable from the practice of prayer and contemplation.

For this reason, Paone highlights how Aquinas champions the Apostle John not for intellectual prowess but for the depth of love and insight into Jesus's teachings, a trait Aquinas views as foundational for theological understanding. This model of theological reflection, centered on love and intimacy with Christ, is pivotal for Aquinas, guiding his exegesis and theological endeavors, which differ both in content and style from his more syllogistic and formal *Summa*. For example, concerning love in John 21:24–25, Aquinas cites John 13:35, saying,

John is said to have been loved more than the others because of his unique charity: *By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another* (John 13:35). None of the other apostles speak so much of love for other as does John in his letters. We also read that as an old man he was carried to the church by his followers to teach the faithful. He taught only one thing: *Little children love one another*. This is the perfection of the Christian life. (389)

It is this profound love, Aquinas contends, that enables the deepest insights into the divine mysteries, surpassing mere intellectual acumen.

Aquinas's own testament to the efficacy of prayer over intellectual effort in discerning theological truths further demonstrates his approach to scriptural analysis. His reliance on prayer, as recounted by one of his contemporary biographers, William of Tocco, underscores a belief in divine assistance in understanding Scripture.¹ This practice, where prayer clears

¹ William of Tocco, *Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis*, in *The Life of St. Thomas Aquinas*:

the path to clarity and insight, exemplifies Aquinas's holistic approach to theology in which intellectual study and spiritual devotion converge, offering a model for engaging with Scripture that is both profoundly contemplative and rigorously scholarly.

In sum, *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Commentaries on the New Testament* can be described as nothing other than a monumental work, bridging the historical expanse between the medieval and modern worlds through the timeless theological insights of St. Thomas Aquinas. Expertly curated by Paone, this volume serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of Aquinas's scriptural commentaries, offering readers a critical engagement with the New Testament through the eyes of one of Catholicism's most revered Doctors by placing his thought within the broader context of modern biblical exegesis.

The audience that stands to benefit most from this volume is remarkably broad, encompassing a spectrum from devout lay readers seeking a deeper understanding of their faith to scholars and theologians pursuing advanced studies in biblical exegesis and Thomistic thought. Seminarians and clergy will find rich material for homily preparation and spiritual reflection in its pages, while educators can leverage its structured thematic arrangement to enhance religious studies curricula. Indeed, anyone with an interest in the intersection of Scripture, theology, and the pursuit of spiritual wisdom will find this book an invaluable resource.

Making Aquinas's commentaries accessible and engaging not only enriches individual faith journeys but also contributes significantly to collective theological scholarship. It invites readers to encounter the New Testament anew through the lens of Aquinas's profound reverence for and insight into the scriptural text. In doing so, it embodies the mission of the publisher, Word on Fire Academic, to evangelize culture by illuminating the beauty, depth, and wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Given the substantial contributions this volume makes to spiritual practice and theological scholarship, amassing a similar anthology focused on Aquinas's commentaries on the Old Testament would be equally fruitful, given that extant volumes on Old Testament commentary are separated and lack the cohesiveness of a thematic organization like that of Paone's volume. Such a companion volume would complete the scriptural landscape, offering readers a comprehensive view of Aquinas's biblical theology. It would enrich our understanding of Aquinas's approach to Scripture as

a whole and provide invaluable insights into the continuity and depth of Christian doctrine from Genesis to Revelation.

Thomas Aquinas: Selected Commentaries on the New Testament is more than a simple accumulation of Aquinas's commentaries; it is a gateway to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the Christian faith. It invites readers into a contemplative engagement with the New Testament, guided by one of the Church's most brilliant minds and accompanied by the rich history and contemporary developments in biblical scholarship. Its publication is a significant event for all those committed to exploring the riches of Catholic theology and the transformative power of Scripture. 

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