

Book Reviews

The Betrayal of Charity: The Sins That Sabotage Divine Love by Matthew Levering (*Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011*), x + 219 pp.

IN CHRISTIAN CULTURE I daresay one would be hard pressed to find a word that simultaneously is invoked with more frequency and yet is more vacuous than the word “love.” Everyone knows that “God is love” and that the Christian life can be summed up in dual injunction “love God and neighbor.” Yet, for a generation at least, since the “triumph of the therapeutic” first noted by Philip Reiff and the unfortunate popularity of Joseph Fletcher’s situation ethic, the prominence of love in the moral life has been evacuated of substantive content and replaced by emotive feeling and sentiment.

Matthew Levering, a professor of theology at Mundelein Seminary, sets out in this work to recover the substance of love for moral theology. Yet the path he travels is not, as the title might suggest, a genealogy of the contemporary world’s betrayal of love. Rather, he takes as his guide St. Thomas Aquinas, for whom charity was central to the Christian life. Specifically and intriguingly, Levering considers Aquinas’s treatment of charity by way of that which Aquinas posits as the opposite of charity: hatred, sloth, envy, discord, and so forth. Indeed, the eight chapters of this book each focus on one such practice opposed to love.

Organizing the work thus has a certain appeal, insofar as to both undergraduate readers and seminarians Aquinas can appear somewhat daunting. Approaching his ethic in this manner is sure to diminish the trepidation of many a novice reader, and so this work may serve as a salutary entry into the splendors of Aquinas. Moreover, insofar as we are in the midst of a minor renaissance in the interest in sin—here I am thinking of a number of recent publications on the seven deadly sins as

well as notable marketing campaigns (that have appealed to those sins as selling points!)—there is little question that approaching love by way of its opposite has a certain cultural appeal.

This work is not simply a treatment of Aquinas, however, for into the conversation on love and its opposite, Levering invites a host of contemporary voices. For example, Levering takes up the much-regarded arguments of Regina Schwartz and Laurel Schneider concerning the violent and imperial character of monotheism in a chapter on charity and violence. In a chapter on hatred he engages Harold Bloom's argument that the biblical God is a sadist, and in a chapter on sloth he treats the postmodern claim that true love must not expect or intend reciprocity as that argument is articulated by Timothy Jackson, who suggests Christian love should be severed from faith in the resurrection and life after death. His treatment of scandal, a much-neglected area of contemporary moral theology and ethical life in general, brings Thomas into conversation the work of René Girard.

It should be noted that the book is not a monograph carefully and sequentially developing a sustained argument. Rather, it is a collection of independent essays that hold together particularly well. For some, this will be a weakness of the book. The topic of any given chapter is not carried over and developed further in later chapters. As such, each chapter serves as an introduction and pathway to deeper research for scholars so interested. Several of the chapters in particular call out for further exploration and development. Consider, for example, the chapter on love and war. Levering chooses to approach this much-belabored topic in a novel and quite helpful manner. He engages it by taking up Aquinas's interpretation of Scripture around the subject of Christian participation in war and comparing that with the well-known pacifist John Howard Yoder's interpretation of Scripture. The result is a fascinating study that, while not pretending to resolve the issue or even fully treat Yoder's position, helpfully identifies important exegetical moves that underlie this most contentious and important debate within the Church. A second example of the novelty and helpfulness of Levering's approach is provided by his treatment of envy. Here again, Levering focuses on the reading of Scripture. This time, he takes up contemporary rabbinic interpretations of various instances of envy in the Hebrew Bible and compares that with Aquinas's reading of the Bible on envy. The re-

sult is a wonderful example of how contemporary Christian exegesis can benefit from engaging contemporary Jewish thinkers.

If this book's appeal may be lessened for some because it is not a monograph-length argument, as I read it I was increasingly convinced that it is precisely the collected character of the work that is one of its strengths. It is the kind of book that I could (and will) use in a seminar-type classroom setting. Because each chapter can stand on its own merit, it can easily be used in an undergraduate or even seminary context where workload considerations can sometimes preclude using monograph length treatments. The clever decision to engage Aquinas and the seemingly overexposed to the point of triteness topic of love by means of sins opposed to love, and to use it as a foil for such engagement with contemporary "hot" issues and authors, results in a text that is quite engaging. Furthermore, the space each chapter leaves for further development is exactly what I need to initiate discussion, stimulate intellectual engagement, and prompt further research.

In a world dominated by utilitarian and deontological modes of moral reflection, where sin is thought more interesting than holiness and the tradition downright dull, it is works such as this that just might nurture a new generation of persons interested in character and virtue and who find the tradition, and thinkers like Aquinas, relevant, interesting, and even insightful.

N&V

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The World as It Could Be: Catholic Social Thought for a New Generation by Thomas D. Williams (*New York: Crossroad, 2011*), xxiii + 230 pp.

THOMAS WILLIAMS has written a readable book to explain many aspects of Catholic social thought and Catholic social doctrine (CSD). The latter term, Williams explains, is used to characterize teachings put forth by the Magisterium of the Church. The former "refers to the broader discussion among Catholic scholars that takes this doctrine as its inspiration and permanent reference point" (5). Williams is at his best in ex-

plaining the significant contribution that Pope Benedict XVI's first and third encyclicals, *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate*, have made to the development of CSD. Williams is also good at arguing for several changes long overdue in the presentation of CSD. It is time for Catholic scholars and the lay faithful to recognize that CSD is found not only in the papal writings known as the social encyclicals, but also in other documents of the Magisterium such as Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Evangelium vitae*, and his apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*. It is also time for all Catholics to recognize that abortion is an issue pertaining to social justice and should be a part of any discussion of CSD.

Williams has insightful chapters on the common good, the use of force, capital punishment, economic development, distributive justice, global governance as opposed to global government, the great good of religious liberty, and the case for state limitation of religious liberty. These chapters are written in such a way that both scholars and non-scholars could benefit from reading them. Surprisingly, Williams's chapter on the dignity of the human person is deficient because of what it fails to say about the lifelong task of living in accordance with one's dignity. I would also argue that Williams does not sufficiently bring out the connection between the practice of virtue and the attainment of the common good. In other words, he does not adequately explain what Pope John Paul II meant by saying that "we shall reach justice through evangelization."¹ In addition, Williams does not integrate his fine comments on integral human development, as understood by Pope Paul VI and Pope Benedict XVI, into his chapter on the common good.

Williams begins his reflection on *Deus Caritas Est* (DCE) by noting that it will never be included in the list of social encyclicals, even though Pope Benedict's "careful consideration of the social question in light of the theological virtue of charity, offered an original contribution to Catholic social doctrine and merits serious study" (161). Williams, of course, is well aware that the Church from its very beginnings has encouraged individuals and the entire ecclesial community to place themselves at the service of their neighbors. This service (*diakonia*) or charity is the necessary complement to the Church's mission to proclaim God's word (*keryg-*

¹ Pope John Paul II, "Address to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops," Puebla, Mexico, January 28, 1979, III, 4.

ma-martyria) and to administer the sacraments (*leitourgia*). What is new is grounding the Church's modern social teaching in the virtue of charity.

I would note that this is not a new thought for Pope Benedict XVI. In 1986, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger discussed the origin of the Church's social doctrine in the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of which he was the head. Ratzinger wrote, "the Church's social teaching is born of the encounter of the Gospel message and of its demands (summarized in the supreme commandment of love of God and neighbor in justice) with the problems emanating from the life of society" (§72). CSD then gives valuable guidance by helping people come to know what love and justice require in the various circumstances of life, knowledge that would escape many people without instruction. St. Augustine also underscores the difficulty of carrying out the commandment to love one's neighbor: "From this commandment arise the duties pertaining to human society, about which it is difficult not to err."² Because of the difficulty in recognizing what love requires in the various circumstances of life, Pope Benedict has put great emphasis on the role of truth, attained by faith and reason, in guiding the exercise of charity.

Williams does a good job of explaining other aspects of the Church's social teaching contained in DCE. Through careful selections of quotations from the encyclical, Williams demonstrates Benedict's view that CSD is a gift to every society. For example, he quotes Benedict's statement that the Church "wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly" (166, §28). Williams also notes Pope Benedict's view that CSD "argues on the basis of reason and natural law, namely, on the basis of what is in accord with the nature of every human being" (166, §28). What Williams does not explain is how CSD can ultimately be rooted in the theological virtue of charity, as it is, and still appeal to all people of good will on the basis of reason and natural law, as it does.

The last chapter of the book is a substantial reflection on Pope Bene-

² St. Augustine, *The Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life (De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae)* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966), §49, 40.

dict's *Caritas in Veritate*. Williams begins by highlighting Benedict's view "that *Populorum progressio* (PP) deserves to be considered the *Rerum novarum* of the present age" (171, CV, §8). Pope Benedict especially admires Paul VI's 1967 encyclical because it conveys two truths that are important for the future of CSD. "The first is that the whole Church, in all her being and acting—when she proclaims, when she celebrates, when she performs works of charity—is engaged in promoting integral human development" (174, CV, §11). This means that the Church's fidelity to its threefold mission is crucial for implementing its social doctrine, the heart and soul of which is integral human development. The second truth in PP is that integral development "concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension" (174, CV, §11). This term "integral" means that development is not limited to the provision of economic goods, but includes the realm of spiritual goods for each and every individual throughout the world. In fact, Pope Paul VI teaches that "life in Christ is the first and principal factor in development" (cf. PP, §16), meaning that integral development should aim at the greatest possible perfection for every single person, in addition to overcoming poverty, disease, unemployment, and ignorance. Williams quotes Benedict, saying, "This is the central message of *Populorum Progressio* valid for today and for all time" (174, CV, §18).

Integral development, of course, needs the contributions of people motivated by love in truth. Otherwise, they would never think that working for development means bringing Christ into people's lives. *Caritas in Veritate* "is the principle around which the Church's social doctrine turns" (§6). Both faith and reason discern the truth by which love takes its bearings.

Pope Benedict's linking of truth to love is right on the mark, argues Williams. "Those who would sacrifice truth in favor of love find that they have forfeited both. When love loses its moorings to truth, it takes on a radical subjectivism where good intentions have no objective reference in action" (177).

Given what Williams says about "integral development as the kernel of Catholic social thought" (175), one would expect to see it integrated into his chapter on the common good. Williams does direct his readers' attention to the definition of the common good found in *Gaudium et spes*: "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or individuals, to reach their fulfillment [better trans-

lated as perfection] more fully and more easily” (§26). Williams could have said that one important way of explaining the fulfilment or perfection of individuals is with the concept of integral human development. Williams does make a statement that could induce his readers to think about the dependence of integral development upon the attainment of the common good. “Attention to the common good, far from destroying the particular good of persons, is essential to it. Just as the common good comprises the particular good of persons, so the particular good necessarily is achieved through attention to the common good” (15). This implies that establishing certain social conditions—such as an economy that produces enough jobs, good family life and authentic education—is crucial for promoting integral development.

Williams’s great appreciation for the concept of integral human development could have suggested to him a more inclusive understanding of the dignity of the human person. He grasps the permanent or ontological character of human dignity, but does not see that dignity is also something to be achieved over a lifetime. According to Catholic teaching, people have dignity because they are created in the image and likeness of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ and destined for eternal life in communion with God. The threefold foundation for human dignity is both unshakable and instructive. No act of the human person can remove this foundation. Even when people commit the worst sins and crimes and suffer diminished physical and spiritual capacities, they retain human dignity. While this Christian teaching about the permanent character of human dignity is often mentioned and acknowledged by informed Christians, rarely do Catholics hear that human dignity is also a goal or an achievement, or otherwise stated, is in need of perfection. Nevertheless, this is the clear implication of the threefold foundation of human dignity and the explicit teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*. Human beings have to achieve communion with God by struggling against evil and striving for holiness. *Gaudium et Spes* says that the dignity of the person “is rooted and perfected in God” (*in ipso Deo fundetur et perficiatur*, §21).

The council makes the same point when discussing the obligation of all to obey their conscience. “Man has a law in his heart inscribed by God, to obey which is his very dignity, and according to which he will be

judged.”³ The text implies that people diminish their dignity by not obeying their conscience. Everyday speech captures this human possibility in the expression, “to act beneath one’s dignity.” In sum, all people continually *achieve* or realize their dignity by seeking the truth, obeying their conscience, resisting sin, practicing virtue and repenting when they succumb to temptation. In other words, dignity is not only a permanent possession, unaffected by the way people live. All have to obey their informed conscience both to avoid acting beneath their dignity and to achieve it.

So the dignity of an individual may continually be diminished by a life of sin or, alternatively, it may progressively unfold and flourish over a lifetime of seeking perfection. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII made the same point using language characteristic of Thomas Aquinas: “true dignity and excellence in men resides in moral living, that is, in virtue.”⁴ Saint Leo the Great’s famous Christmas sermon states this point in a memorable way: “Christian, recognize your dignity, and now that you share in God’s own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition.”⁵ It is significant that this quotation stands as the first sentence in the section on morality in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). It immediately directs attention to the necessity of achieving human dignity by living without sin. Finally, Pope John Paul II goes so far as to say that martyrdom is “the supreme glorification of human dignity.”⁶ This statement makes eminent sense because martyrs achieve the summit of human dignity by laying down their lives for God and neighbor.

Every element of society should promote respect for basic human dignity and its perfection. As Vatican Council II specifically says, “it devolves on humanity to establish a political, social, and economic order which will to an even better extent serve man and help individuals as well as groups to affirm and perfect the dignity proper to them” (*ad dignitatem sibi propriam affirmandam et excolendam*).⁷ This means that the family, mediating institutions, the law and the Church all have a role to play in helping individuals to perfect their dignity. For example, the education a mother

³ *Gaudium et spes*, §16.

⁴ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, §37.

⁵ CCC, §1691.

⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Dominum et vivificantem* [On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World], §60.

⁷ *Gaudium et spes*, §9 (modified translation and my emphasis).

and father give to their children in the family will help them recognize and achieve their dignity. Schools, a primary mediating institution, to a greater or lesser extent, form the character of students so that they might be inclined to act in accordance with their dignity. The law encourages people not to act beneath their dignity by driving while drunk or acting in a discriminatory manner toward racial minorities. In *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II says that the Church contributes to the enrichment of human dignity when she “proclaims God’s salvation to man, when she offers and communicates the life of God through the sacraments, when she gives direction to human life through the commandments of love of God and neighbor.”⁸ These examples show that a correct conception of the human person provides guidance to all educators and to legislators, and also enables all people to recognize that they must strive to perfect their dignity in order to be good persons and, even, good democratic citizens. These examples just scratch the surface. Those working for social justice would have to discern what else needs to be done in the political, economic, and social order that would help people perfect their dignity and that shows respect for their permanent or basic dignity, such as insuring access to food, housing, work, health care and education.

It should be clear that the concepts of integral human development and the perfection or flourishing of human dignity are two ways of talking about the same realities, the complete temporal well-being and virtuous perfection or holiness of each and every individual. Unless the good of persons is properly understood, the common good will not be accurately understood. In the words of Williams, “A sound notion of the common good rests on the foundation of a sound Christian anthropology” (18). Otherwise stated, once we know what the perfection of the human person means, then we are in a position to recognize the political and social conditions that will realize the common good and thus help individuals achieve their perfection.

Throughout his book, Williams makes reference to various virtues that must be practiced in order to implement CSD. We have already discussed the role played by the theological virtue of charity. In his chapter on the common good, Williams also places emphasis on the virtue of solidarity, which John Paul II defines in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* as “a firm

⁸ *Centesimus annus*, no. 55.

and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good” (§38). He also brings up solidarity in the chapter on global governance arguing that the practice of solidarity by individuals and the establishment of the right structures guide globalization to a good end. Given Williams’s appreciation of virtue, I am surprised that he did not find a place to stress that the practice of the virtues by many individuals is necessary to establish justice, as Benedict has noted in not a few contexts, particularly his Latin America speeches. Anticipating a likely objection to his emphasis Benedict asks how one can justify “the priority of faith in Christ and of ‘life’ in him” when there are so many pressing political, economic, and social problems in Latin America. He answers that both Marxism and capitalism promised that just structures, an indispensable condition for promoting justice in society, could be established and maintained without “individual morality”—without individuals formed by the virtues. Benedict XVI implies that people now see that both political and economic systems failed to live up to their promises. In fact, just structures depend on a moral consensus in the body politic and lives lived by citizens in accord with the virtues. This point must be emphasized in any book on CSD because so many believe that the structures recommended by social justice are alone sufficient to bring about a just social order.

I would like to conclude my review by briefly discussing Williams’s two chapters on religion. In his chapter “‘Tolerance’ and Religious Liberty,” he astutely points out that the Vatican II’s declaration on religious liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae*, never mentions tolerance or toleration. Williams’s point is that “religion is a human good to be promoted, not an evil to be tolerated. . . . Religious practice forms part of the common good of society and should be encouraged [by the state] rather than marginalized” (131). Williams also observes that in the contemporary era, tolerance implies “a general attitude of permissiveness and openness to diversity” (132). In other words, tolerance encourages the acceptance of relativism. Williams wants to see a genuine respect for religion because of what it can do for the salvation of individuals and the preservation of modern democracies. “The respect for religious freedom stands head and shoulders above a supposed tolerance for religious belief, with the relativism, indifference and subtle disdain for religion it so often comprises” (138).

In his second chapter on religion, Williams follows Pope Benedict in pointing out that some religions can be harmful to a polity and need to be

restrained by state action. There are now “pathological forms of religion,” including some understandings of Christianity, that steer people away from the good. Williams also mentions the harm that can come to modern democracies from Islam, some primitive religions, new age religions, Hinduism, Animism, and atheistic fanaticism, which functions as a kind of dangerous religion. Williams’s treatment of this potentially inflammatory subject is well done. It would have been even better had he reflected on Pope Benedict’s point that reason can correct the aberrations of faith, and faith can correct the aberrations of reason.

Thomas Williams has written a thoughtful book that merits a close reading by anyone interested in Catholic social doctrine and Catholic social thought. 

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On Liturgical Asceticism by David W. Fagerberg (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013*), xix + 246 pp.

FOR SEVERAL DECADES now it has been relatively common to speak of the *ressourcement* movement in Catholic theology and to note the towering achievements of such figures as Congar, de Lubac, Daniélou, and Chenu, *inter alia*, and the influence of them and others on the Second Vatican Council and its reforms. To that illustrious pantheon of historians and theologians I think we can now add David Fagerberg’s name, for his splendid new book, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, is completely immersed in the major sources of monasticism, mysticism, and asceticism of the Christian East. This cogently written, deeply engaging book very much merits a place in every seminary and graduate course in liturgy and spirituality.

Fagerberg, of course, is no stranger to liturgiology or the Christian East, as his 1992 book *What Is Liturgical Theology* and his 2003 *Theologia Prima* (which I always require my graduate students to read) both manifest a deep and abiding indebtedness to the greatest liturgical theologian of the postwar period, the late Alexander Schmemmann, whose works, thirty years after his early death in December 1983, retain, as the Jesuit

historian Robert Taft recently noted, an astonishing shelf life unrivaled by anyone else in the field. But unlike those two earlier books, which attempted something of a “straddle” between East and West, Fagerberg’s present book shows a much fuller and more complete immersion in the spirituality of the Greek and Syriac Fathers as well as modern Orthodox sources (e.g., Pavel Florensky, Georges Florovsky, John Zizioulas). To them Fagerberg has turned in quest of bridges between fields he rightly regards as unhelpfully divided in the West for too long: theology, liturgy, and asceticism. By drawing extensively on Evagrius, Maximus the Confessor, and the Cappadocians (inter alia), Fagerberg demonstrates beyond all doubt that unless theology, liturgy, and asceticism are treated as a whole, each of them remains incoherent. Theology treated purely as an academic enterprise without ascetical and liturgical grounding is highly dangerous and borderline demonic.

Though he does not name them here, I take Fagerberg to be following the counsel of the English Dominican Aidan Nichols and the Jesuit Robert Taft, both of whom argued forcefully in the 1980s and 1990s that when, following Vatican II, so much of ascetical practice in the West was wrongly jettisoned by appeal to the fabled “spirit of Vatican II,” and so much of Western liturgy turned into an anthropocentric quest for “creativity” and “variety,” the way one begins to recover liturgical-ascetical stability and seriousness precisely in and for the West is by looking *ad Orientem*: to the rich literature, both ancient and modern, of the Christian East. Fagerberg has brought that literature alive in such a vibrant and accessible way, and written so compellingly and convincingly, that this book could *and should* stand alone as an excellent volume for Roman Catholics seeking an introduction to the Desert Fathers (the *apophthegmata patrum* are lavishly cited throughout), to monasticism, and to liturgical theology. This book, as I noted above, deserves a wide audience on the part of Western Christians, both Catholic and Protestant.

In turning to the East, however, Fagerberg does so without any of the triumphalism, romanticism, or fatuous preening one occasionally finds in some contemporary Orthodox writers who, ignoring the problems besetting all the Orthodox Churches today, luxuriate in long sneers at the West. Fagerberg has no truck with any of that gnat straining, instead turning to the East simply because—as the writings of Vatican II, and Pope John Paul (cf. especially *Orientale Lumen* and *Ut Unum Sint*) have

long made clear—"the East" is not an exotic land far off, but is already part and parcel of the Catholic patrimony. Fagerberg, thus a "scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven, is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52).

The hallmark of a great scribe and householder is that he makes the question of what is "old or new" or "East or West" largely irrelevant. The provenance of the treasures is not important; their purpose is. And the purpose of all these treasures is to fit us for the Kingdom of Heaven and to make us like the king Himself. The goal of asceticism, then, is nothing less than theosis.

It may be astonishing for some today to hear that theology and theosis should go hand in hand. But by drawing on the fourth-century highly influential monastic Evagrius of Pontus and by bringing him to the forefront of the Catholic household today, Fagerberg reminds its residents that theology, if it is properly understood, is not merely or even primarily intellectual or academic: its goal is not plaudits and prizes from the Catholic Theological Society of America or other self-selecting and often self-congratulatory guilds. Theology is quite simply the quest for communion with and contemplation of God, and may thus be practiced by, and open to, anyone and everyone who prays. Theology must be the product of deep, lifelong liturgical formation in the Church's cycle of feasting and fasting, and that cycle itself, especially in the fasting periods, is only intelligible through an asceticism shot through with eschatological *anamnesis*.

To make these connections clear in six chapters, Fagerberg first begins by defining what he means by "liturgical asceticism." Then, in his second through fourth chapters, he reviews our present plight without robust asceticism ("the malady"), the cure for it ("askesis"), and the fruits of that cure, namely, joy. The final two chapters look at how to live an ascetical-liturgical life not only among monastics but also among the *laic*, a neologism Fagerberg borrows from the Orthodox theologian and canonist Nicholas Afanasiev (whose ecclesiology, as is well known, had a profound impact on *Lumen Gentium*) to designate those living in the world while nonetheless striving to practice what Paul Evdokimov famously called "interiorized monasticism" to which all people, regardless of their station in life, are called by God (the "universal call to holiness" of Vatican II).

Those familiar with reforms to the liturgy following Vatican II, the section on liturgy in the 1992 universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the writings of Pope John Paul II will recognize in all these a deep indebtedness to the Christian East and a desire for the Catholic Church to rediscover Greek and Syriac sources so that ultimately the Church learns once more not so much about self-consciously breathing with “two lungs” (an overworked and inadequate metaphor) as about unconsciously living from the fullness of her one heart, which is Christ’s. To the extent that Fagerberg’s book enables the whole Church to do precisely that, we are all in his debt. 

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**The Word Made Love: The Dialogical Theology of Joseph Ratzinger/
Pope Benedict XVI** by Christopher Collins, S.J. (*Collegeville, MN:*
Liturgical Press, 2013), xiv + 181 pp.

CHRISTOPHER COLLINS, S.J., has written a book that will be received with deep gratitude. Possessing a writing style that is crisp and clear, Collins leads his readers into a fresh understanding of both the sources of Joseph Ratzinger’s theology and his theology itself. The author takes us through the fundamental themes of Ratzinger’s life’s work: revelation, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Collins leaves us with a true appreciation of the coherence of Ratzinger’s theology, a theology that was made greater still by the future pope’s own vulnerability to the Living Word, as influenced by the faith of his own family and teachers who refused to reduce Christ to an “idea” or a philosophy but who risked being drawn into communion with the Trinity as mystery. As a result of this vulnerability on Joseph Ratzinger’s part, we have been gifted with a theology that is also *a way into God* and not one that simply presents theories about him. The structure of Ratzinger’s theology is communion, dialogue. Collins is expert at taking the reader through all of Ratzinger’s dialogue partners as well. Here we meet the Evangelists and St. Paul, of course, but also Plato, St.

Bonaventure, as well as modern philosophical and theological movements such as personalism, liberation theology, relativism, neo-scholasticism, and Ratzinger's own theological contemporaries. Through this theological and philosophical dialogue the believer is invited to allow an encounter with God to occur, which begins in the eternal sharing of the Father's Word through covenants and culminates in this Word taking on flesh in human history. God is not interested in a monologue wherein he simply reveals truth; he desires to engage humanity in a loving dialogue where "I and Thou" meet within creation and within a unique intimate love (*chaburah*) known as the Church.

Collins takes us into Ratzinger's deep and dense writings on Bonaventure. In doing so, Collins delivers one of the most accessible treatments of Ratzinger's understanding of Bonaventure that I have ever read, paying particular attention to how history is part of revelation. As such, revelation progresses from the seeds of the Logos within a narrative, rather than being simply revealed as data in linear fashion. From Bonaventure, Ratzinger contemplates Christ as *the center of all history*, the center from which all flows out into time and all history returns to an eternal communion with the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. In this way, it is love that defines history and brings it to its fulfillment. And, because it is divine love that initiates and sustains the existence of all reality, Ratzinger (unlike Karl Rahner, for example) begins his theology upon the *action divina*, rather than upon an anthropological foundation.

Collins also draws the reader's attention to the fascinating theme of Christ himself being the dialogue God has with Man. Here, within Christ, we see that humanity can only be fulfilled when it responds faithfully to God acting and speaking Truth. To respond to Christ himself is to respond to God's searching love. God did not simply reveal his mind but his Word, a Person. And this Person is living still; he is not to be sequestered within the past. Ratzinger's focus upon the truth that Christ *lives now*, in and through the Spirit, uniquely marks his theology as respectful both of faith and the scientific methods that probe history. If one were to separate faith (dogma) from history, one would make Scripture irrelevant to each succeeding epoch by confining scripture further and further into the past. Summarizing Ratzinger, Collins notes

that theologians do not say things about God as one who acts in the past, but should treat God *as the one who speaks* (51).

For Ratzinger, Jesus Christ sheds light upon the deepest meaning of human life, underscoring that it is God who speaks to Man in Christ and Man understands himself only when he responds *to Christ*. God's Son is the measure of humanity and not the other way around. Even more fundamentally, one cannot understand who Jesus is and the dignity of who Man is in relation to God apart from the Church. To abstract Jesus or Man from the Church is to only dimly perceive truth. In Christ is the revelation of what a human being is: persons who long for union with the fount of love itself. Christ both reveals God and reveals who the human person is within his singular particularity, a particularity that is scandalous to a relativistic and religiously pluralistic age. Despite such scandalous thinking, Ratzinger is clear: God has spoken his Word uniquely and definitively in Jesus Christ. It is the Church's vocation to gather to hear this unique Word and respond to it by way of personal conversion and, in turn, to proclaim this Word to the world. When its members truly enter a faithful dialogue with Christ in the Spirit, they become the saints who make up the real majority of its population. The Church is historically conditioned, and hence it sins, but it is capable of receiving God, and hence it is called to give witness to what Christ means for history: God is among us—respond to him in loving trust. Fundamentally, this response is the Church's worship and such worship marks out the Church's deepest identity and ministry: to be reconciled to God and enter communion with Christ as he offers thanksgiving to the Father. Here, in the worship of the Father by Christ, death dies and becomes an act of love. In opening the human heart to the love of Christ, the believer then receives salvation in Christ, in the one who met death with love and gave birth to hope. This hope affects the entire person, and is given as a result of encountering the Savior. In such an encounter, the sinner hears from him that "it is good that you exist" (157). To know Christ is to step into the dialogical relationship between God and Man and thus be redeemed.

Father Collins begins each of his five chapters with a helpful summary of what is contained therein and then concludes each chapter with a synopsis that both deepens the reader's understanding of what was just meditated upon and prepares the reader for the next chapter.

As we read these pages, we discover that not only is Christopher Collins an excellent writer but also an insightful teacher. I recommend this work for any theologian who wishes to possess the thought of Ratzinger in one accessible volume and to any teacher looking for a text that not only introduces Ratzinger's thought but, thanks to Collins' gifts, carries with it the seed to make one a true devotee of Joseph Ratzinger's beautiful theology. 

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Eusebius of Emesa: Church and Theology in the Mid-Fourth

Century by Robert E. Winn (*Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011*), xiv + 277 pp.

Eusebius of Emesa is not one of the better-known Christian figures of the fourth century. This volume, a revised version of Winn's dissertation, makes the case that this is not as it should be, and it makes that case persuasively. Eusebius rubbed shoulders with the most powerful bishops of the eastern Roman Empire, but he disliked ecclesiastical politics, preferring what he saw as straightforward and nonpartisan evangelical exhortation. Noted by Jerome for his reputation for oratory (*De viris inlustribus* 91), Eusebius has left us a corpus of thirty-six extant sermons. With the exception of an extended quotation preserved in Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Eranistes* and some scattered fragments in catenae, none of these survive in Greek. E. M. Buytaert published an edition of twenty-nine Latin sermons in 1953. These were followed shortly by a series of Armenian sermons edited by N. Akinian, eight of which Winn follows H. Lehmann in deeming authentically Eusebian. One of these sermons survives in both Latin and Armenian; hence the total of thirty-six. Until now, despite widespread admiration for Eusebius's preaching in the ancient and medieval Christian world, no theological analysis of the sermons including both the Latin and the Armenian material has been attempted. This book steps into that lacuna. Winn discerns in these sermons a carefully executed theological program designed by Eusebius to carve out and solidify a particular "ecclesiastical identity" for his congregants in the cosmopolitan environment of fourth-century

Roman Syria.

Chapter 1 is devoted to filling out Eusebius's context by focusing on the localities that played a prominent role in his life: Eusebius's hometown of Edessa; Antioch, where he lived off and on in the 330s as an episcopal protégé, and where he would eventually die; and Emesa, his own see from 341. Winn also includes a section dedicated to George of Laodicea, whose association with Eusebius he deems the key to unlocking certain events of the last part of Eusebius's life. The chapter's geographical arrangement offers the advantage of a fairly rich sense of Eusebius's social context. It bears the slight drawback of requiring a bit of patient sleuthing on the part of the reader to piece together a full chronology of Eusebius's life. There are also a few puzzling omissions. For instance, we know, and Winn does mention, that Eusebius was favored by Constantius II and accompanied him on a military campaign. Given Winn's insistence on the centrality for Eusebius of delineating "the place of the church in fourth-century Roman society" (13) and Constantius's reputation as an eager but uninformed and fickle participant in imperial-ecclesiastical politics, some consideration of the possible meaning of his association with the emperor might have been helpful.

In chapter 2, Winn takes up Eusebius's rhetorical and exegetical strategies. Winn's burden is to show that Eusebius's use of rhetoric is exclusively aimed at inculcating his "ecclesiastical agenda." He seeks to do so in particular by examining Eusebius's use of the *encomium* rhetorical form, which he took up in praise of the apostles in four of the extant sermons. Winn shows how Eusebius consistently drifts from discussing the apostles themselves to discussing Jesus and Jesus's superiority to other religious figures. This, of course, technically violates the canons of the rhetorical form, but it does not seem particularly surprising in a Christian sermon. Nonetheless, Winn reads this as evidence of Eusebius's "agenda," concluding that the apostles "had to suffer less than normal honors in orations ostensibly delivered in their honor for the greater good of the church they founded" (68).

Winn's analysis of Eusebius's exegesis brings out interesting tensions. He argues, on the one hand, that Eusebius may well be the "missing link" (H. Lehmann's phrase) between early Antiochene exegetes like Lucian and Eustathius and later ones like Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom, whom we know to have read Eusebius

admiringly. On the other hand, Eusebius had studied under Eusebius of Caesarea, and Winn's characterization of Eusebius's view of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments smacks rather strongly at the very least of Origen, or even of the Pseudo-Barnabas. Winn even suggests that Eusebius denies the Old Testament its own integrity: apart from its New Testament fulfillment, it is essentially meaningless, a stance hardly typical of "Antiochene" exegesis.

The next four chapters (3 to 6) are devoted to what Winn regards as the most central and recurring topics of Eusebius's preaching. The synthesis involves a cumulative progression. One moves with Eusebius from a correct understanding of the natural world and of human nature, wherein the superiority of incorporeality to corporeality is established (chap. 3), to an affirmation of God's incorporeality, which Eusebius valued so highly that he warned against using natural analogies to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son (chap. 4). It is worth noting here that, in light of Eusebius's emphasis on incorporeality, his proclamation of the miraculous powers of the martyrs' relics is quite striking, but Winn does not comment on the apparent tension (230–31).

As with his exegesis, Eusebius's Trinitarian theology and Christology defy easy classification. Like Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius abhorred the ecclesiastical partisanship that swirled around extrabiblical terms like *homoousios*, urging Christians not to fall prey to factionalism over language that was not explicitly endorsed by scripture. Nonetheless, Winn demonstrates a shift over the course of Eusebius's preaching career from a marked subordinationism to passages in the sermons delivered at Jerusalem in the 350s that would not seem out of place several decades later in Augustine's *De Trinitate*; for example, "Everything that the Father is, the Son is the same, except that he is not Father. Everything that the Son is, the Father is the same, except that he is not Son and did not take flesh. And everything which the Father and the Son are, the Holy Spirit is the same except that he is not Father or Son, and did not become flesh as the Son" (quoted on 171).

The binary now established between passible corporeality and impassible incorporeality sets the terms for Eusebius's Christology (chap. 5). Winn brings out apparent vacillations in Eusebius's Christological articulations. The concern to guard against any suggestion of divine passibility often leads him to imply a two-subject Christology. At other

times, Eusebius seems to have held a more nearly one-subject Christology. In fact, if fragments preserved by Philoxenus of Mabboug are to be trusted, as Winn thinks they are, Eusebius was even able to make statements such as “God died for us” (206). Be that as it may, for Winn as for R. Gregg and D. Groh (*Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981]), fourth-century Christology is only secondarily about metaphysical analysis of one particular Person; what is really at stake is soteriology. While Eusebius expressed the purpose of the Incarnation in more than one way, the most central is a version of the “formula of exchange,” perhaps best known from Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses* 3.19.1) and Athanasius (*De incarnatione verbi* 54.3). As Eusebius puts it in one sermon, “God, the Son of God, came in a body in order to conform men to divinity” (quoted on 216). But, on Winn’s telling, since this transformation of human nature is “not an eschatological transformation” (218), what Eusebius intends thereby is exhaustively realized as ascetic renunciation of a very particular kind: “faith in Christ assumes an asexual angelic existence” (223).

This emphatically ascetical vision of the Church’s identity is the subject of chapter 6 and the culmination of the theological movement begun in chapter 3. Virginity and martyrdom are seen as the very content of an “incorporeal,” “angelic” mode of life. Accordingly, consecrated virginity should be the norm of the Christian life, and martyrdom its desired term. Celibacy could even be equated with salvation, *tout court*: “living a transformed life as an asexual angel was how Eusebius understood salvation in general” (240). Nevertheless, Winn points out that Eusebius “was not advocating an encratic church” (241). To the contrary, Eusebius took care to specify the legitimate place of marriage and active life in the Church. While consecrated virginity undoubtedly held pride of place, and eventual renunciation of the use of marriage came in second, Eusebius does seem to have begun exploring how faithful and fruitful married life could be understood as a mode of participation in the kingdom of God. Similarly, the meaning of martyrdom could be expanded from execution *in odium fidei* to its etymological sense of “witness,” comprising an entire life spent pursuing holiness, waging war against vice, and thus bearing witness to the Gospel to non-Christian observers.

As they stand in the book, these two poles of Eusebius’s thought—

the virtual equation of sexual renunciation with salvation and, at the other end, the possibility of noncelibate ways of being faithful to the Gospel—stand in unresolved tension. While that lack of resolution may be an accurate reflection of Eusebius's own thought, one wonders whether a more fulsome picture of Christian salvation might have emerged from viewing the this-worldly ascetical ideal, not as evacuating soteriology of its eschatological horizon, but as a sign of and proleptic participation in the future life of the resurrection. Such an interpretation seems entirely compatible with the ample quotations from the sermons that Winn provides.

So how does Winn's overarching thesis that "ecclesiastical identity" is the constant "underlying agenda" for Eusebius's preaching ultimately fare? There seem, in fact, to be two versions of it that run side by side throughout the book. The stronger one, that the tail of identity politics wags the doctrinal dog, appears to overreach. Certainly, Eusebius, like many late antique Christian preachers, wished his congregants to be well informed and observant of the differences between themselves as Christians and their Jewish, "heretical" (mainly Manichaean and Marcionite), and pagan neighbors. Winn has no trouble producing evidence of this, and it often strikes the modern reader as distasteful. But while it is patently one dimension of Eusebius's preaching, it is far from clear that this contrastive identity construction is its beating heart, something that is further undermined by Winn's awareness that Eusebius understood himself to be transmitting the authentic apostolic faith, not a series of spin-doctored adversarial talking points. The more modest form of the thesis simply claims that Eusebius's preaching sought to instill a distinctively Christian identity, defined as "a set of beliefs and a way of life characterized by asceticism that Eusebius considered essential to members of the church" (15). This is eminently defensible, but it is also circular: Eusebius promotes certain beliefs and practices in service of an ecclesiastical identity that comprises precisely those beliefs and practices. Like all tautologies, this is true but leads nowhere. In the end, then, the repeated emphasis on "ecclesiastical identity" is a confusing and distracting scaffolding, artificially rigged up over the book's real argument. Fortunately, the edifice of Winn's work stands perfectly upright without it, and it can safely be jettisoned. The real virtue of the book is its logically synthesized presentation of the key themes in Eusebius's sermons. Winn's progres-

sive analysis of Eusebius's preached doctrine, from right perception of the natural world and the human person to a right notion of God, and thence to an account of Christ, the salvation He wrought, and how it looks in concrete practice, is both coherent and cogent.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the book is unfortunately marred by a significant number of typographical errors and inconsistencies in conventions, and by the occasional malapropism ("perspicuity" for "perspicacity" [34], "laying" for "lying" [108]). Most problematically from a historical-theological point of view, on eight occasions Winn uses the expression "the divine economy" to refer to the theology of the immanent Trinity (126, 128, 129, 132, 144, 154, 173, 179). Thankfully, these do not detract substantively from a suggestive volume that deserves the attention of every historian of fourth-century Christian theology. 

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