

Book Reviews

Dogma im Wandel: Wie Glaubenslehren sich entwickeln by Michael Seewald (*Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2018*), 334 pp.

Reform: Dieselbe Kirche anders denken by Michael Seewald (*Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2019*), 174 pp.

TWO RECENT BOOKS from Michael Seewald, professor of dogmatics at the University of Münster, are influenced by Walter Kasper and attempt to show that “there is more room for change [in the Church] than many people think” (*Dogma im Wandel*, 20). By analyzing the development of the magisterium (*Lehramt*) over the past 150 years, and especially under John Paul II, Seewald argues that some of the teachings we take to be definitive are, in truth, questionable. The Church is thus ripe for reform.

Dogma is prefaced by a German translation of Evelyn Waugh’s foreword to his 1964 *Sword of Honour* (a trilogy comprising his novels *Men at Arms* [1952], *Officers and Gentlemen* [1955], and *Unconditional Surrender* [1961]):

On reading the book I realized that I had done something quite outside my original intention. I had written an obituary of the Roman Catholic Church in England as it had existed for many centuries. All the rites and most of the opinions here described are already obsolete. When I wrote *Brideshead Revisited* I was consciously writing an obituary of the doomed English upper class. It never occurred to me, writing *Sword of Honour*, that the Church was susceptible to change. I was wrong and I have seen a superficial revolution in what then seemed permanent.¹

This becomes programmatic for Seewald’s two books, addressed to a

¹ However, instead of Waugh’s original English “superficial revolution” reproduced here, Seewald’s German translation has the equivalent of “revolution with permanent results” (*Dogma*, 9).

semi-popular audience. One of Seewald's concerns seems to be to demonstrate that those who are alienated by Pope Francis's changes in doctrine and complain of the Holy Father's innovations are themselves inheritors of a revolution in Church doctrine concerning the magisterium that occurred under the cloak of conservatism.² Those who oppose Francis's changes, it is implied, are like Waugh, who did not see that there is no historical end to the development of doctrine (*Dogma*, 294).

After an introductory chapter, an important second chapter of *Dogma*, "Definition of Terms: Dogma and Development" (22–73), provides a foreshadowing of the conclusion of the book. The first half of the chapter presents a history of the idea of dogma as both the whole of Catholic teaching and (later) individual doctrines. As is true of his analysis in both books, it is Seewald's presentation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideas ("modernity") that are central to his argument. In the first half of chapter 2, Seewald argues that Pius IX's "Syllabus of Errors" was itself an innovation with an anti-innovation intention (36–42) and that the reception of the Second Vatican Council in the pontificate of John Paul II betrayed the desire of the Council to reposition the teaching authority of the Church in the entire college of bishops. Seewald also introduces here an inquiry into the change in the conception of dogma introduced by John Paul II that will be essential to his analysis of the present state of the Church in both books.

John Paul II's 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, says Seewald, contains a revolution in §88 when it says that dogmas are those truths that are either contained in revelation or those truths that have a necessary connection to the truths contained in revelation (*Dogma*, 45). There are two ways in which a secondary truth can be necessarily tied to revelation in such a way as to qualify as dogma: it can be bound to revelation either logically or historically (47). This is highly innovative and a significant departure or advance from the first Vatican Council, according to Seewald. However, he argues, secondary truths that were once thought to be dogmas can be overturned (51). Thus monogenism, declared a dogma in Pius XII's *Humani Generis*, is no longer held by the 1992 *Catechism*.

I would here make two suggestions. First, with Karl Rahner, I would argue that the teaching on monogenism had a conditional element to it. That is, it was dependent on whether or not the key claims about the Fall could be defended in any other way. Second, the *Catechism* both lacks

² See *Reform*, 66. For opponents of Francis's *Amoris Laetitia*, see *Dogma*, 19–20 and 288. For a discussion of those opposed to changes in the *Catechism* concerning the death penalty, see *Reform*, 85–87 and 120.

the authority of dogma and does not contain all of the doctrinal claims of the Church.

In the following section, Seewald considers the notion of the development of dogma. Asserting that human beings are cooperators in God's grace, Seewald argues that those who exclude history from their understanding of dogma exclude humanity's role and are guilty of idolatry while those who see the development of dogma exclusively from a historical perspective do not see God at work in human affairs (*Dogma*, 54). This is central to Seewald's argument in both books. He thus concludes his second chapter of *Dogma* with a criticism of theories of the development of dogma that see it as a process in which, in Aristotelian terms, the potential of a subject is actualized. Seewald objects that such a conception does not include the active contribution of human beings. This seems to me to be something of a strawman, as such conceptions of development, while perhaps popular in the beginning of the twentieth century when John Henry Newman's were resisted by neo-Scholasticism, carry no currency today, when Newman's influence has become more pronounced. On the other hand, Seewald might argue that, when pressed, even advocates of Newman resort to the claim that the Church holds all future doctrinal development at least implicitly. Seewald argues that such a view does not account for the genuine human contribution to doctrinal development. However, I would ask: if truths not held implicitly are added on to the apostolic deposit, have we not altered the substance of that deposit and hence altered the substance of the Church?

Chapters 3–6 (*Dogma*, 74–229), which present a history of the idea of development of dogma, are engaging but do little to further Seewald's argument other than to demonstrate that the idea of change while preserving identity has been with the Church since her beginning. A few points are salient, however. Seewald, following the nineteenth-century theologian Adam Gengler, argues that it is only after a doctrinal dispute that the canon of Vincent of Lerins can be applied to determine true doctrine (137). From Johann Adam Möhler we learn that "the truth of ecclesial doctrine can only be truly understood within the Church. . . . The same can only be known by the same, *similis simili cognoscitur*" (190).

The seventh chapter of *Dogma*, "The Twentieth Century: From the Sphere of Anti-modernism to the Assimilation of the Second Vatican Council" (230–69), addresses the doctrine of the Assumption and the reflections of Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger, and Kasper. Consideration of the thought of the three German theologians leads to the important eighth chapter, "Synopsis and Prospect: More Leeway than We Thought" (270–93).

Seewald states that none of the theories of development of dogma that he has reviewed can say what must or must not happen in a particular situation. Those who are looking for such a theory view history as a “deterministic preprogrammed course of events” (*Dogma*, 270). I would ask here, then, whether we cannot rule out statements such as “Jesus did not rise from the dead.” I am not sure that Seewald’s account allows us to rule out such propositions. Indeed, it is quite difficult to determine what must remain and what must change, but Seewald sketches three aspects of what he thinks must be the basis for future theories of the development of dogma in the last section of the book (8.4, “A Look Forward” [281–93]).

First, dogma is not an end in itself, but rather has an instrumental character. Here Seewald positions himself as being in agreement with Vatican I. His further elaboration of what he means by “instrument” seems to leave Vatican I behind, however, for Seewald proceeds to distinguish sharply revelation, the word of God and the Gospel, from dogma. The Gospel is more important than the dogma which serves it (*Dogma*, 284). I wonder, however, whether if we are not bound by doctrine we will be tempted to distort the Gospel to fit our own cultural norms. Seewald does not address this question, but assures his readers that his proposal is the opposite of relativism, because dogmatic development is about better understanding the Gospel (285). This better understanding of the Gospel neither leads to an arrogance toward the past nor precludes a correction of the present. However, Seewald does not clearly articulate how this correction of the present might occur.

This strikes me as inadequate as a theory. It is true that dogma is not itself “the truth” as it exists in its fullness in Christ. But it gains whatever authority it has by being an adequate expression of that revelation; that is, dogma truthfully expresses the reality of the Gospel. If the revelation does not change (“Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever”), then, while it is true that dogmatic formulations may change, they can change only in the sense of being various attempts to express a revealed reality that does not change. If dogmatic formulations do not agree with one another, they can hardly be said to express the same truths of revelation. That is, contradictions of dogmatic statements imply either an incoherence in the revealed reality or that the unchanging apostolic deposit that defines the Church can in fact change.

Here we see a further weakness in Seewald’s account that is common in many contemporary Catholic accounts of the development of doctrine and that Orthodox theologians such as Andrew Louth rightly criticize. In such accounts, the present is in danger of becoming the criterion of judgment both of the past and of the apostolic deposit. There is a sense

that we necessarily know the Gospel or the deposit better than Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine, Aquinas, or Thérèse of Lisieux. Ideas such as Newman's corruptions or Matthias Scheeben's forgetting of aspects of the apostolic deposit seem an essential corrective to contemporary theology.

Seewald's second aspect for a future theology of the development of dogma is that continuity is an ecclesial desideratum, not just a doctrinal one. Pure continuity would be to stand still. The guarantor of continuity is the community of the Church, not doctrine. I submit that divorcing doctrine from the Church is a particularly dangerous move. How can we know what the Church is if our knowledge of the Church, expressed in dogma, is subject to radical reversal? Is not the Church herself historicized and her principle of continuity lost?

The third consideration is that we do not have a divine view of the development of dogma. There is no magic formula for dogmatic development which occurs in diverse languages and cultures and, therefore, necessarily appears contingent to us. Theology as a science of belief (*Glaubenswissenschaft*) never has the last word (*Dogma*, 293). The Church proceeds by the faith, not knowledge, so that she will not entirely lose the Gospel. However, I would argue that dogma here becomes an eschatological horizon, never attainable as a sure propositional judgment of truth prior to the eschaton. If so, then "Gospel" and "Church" are also eschatological in this same sense, and are not identifiable here.

An epilogue of *Dogma* reconsiders what Seewald calls Waugh's obituary for the Church and, harkening back to his earlier consideration of the Darwinian context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories of development, concludes that "a healthy evolutionism allows her [the Church] to remain forever young" (295). Of course, one might suggest that an evolution, in Darwin's sense, is a gradual change to a new substance, or rather, for Darwin and perhaps Seewald, there is no species or enduring form to the Church. Of course, Seewald argues for a *Gestalt* or form to the Church, but his argument about dogma would seem to empty the *Gestalt* of its content.

In his 2019 *Reform*, Seewald elaborates many of the themes broached in his 2018 *Dogma*. Here, as in *Dogma*, Seewald does not propose a wish list of changes, but proposes to look at the history of the Church to reclaim different configurations (*Gestalten*) of the Church with the intention of bringing about reform (*Reform*, 10). As in *Dogma*, attention is drawn to the increase in papal claims under Vatican I, Pius IX, the reforms of Vatican II, and the re-entrenchment under John Paul II. As in *Dogma*, the second chapter of *Reform* is central to understanding the work and focuses on the development of the teaching authority of the Church from Vatican

I to John Paul II. Section 2.2, “The Catholic Church and Modernity” (21–49), concludes by stating that modernity refuses to accept Church authority and that the Church can respond in two ways: by giving reasons for her doctrines (which she rarely has done) or by increasing her claims to authority (which she has done) (48). Allow me here to interject and ask whether it is true that, for instance, John Paul II and Benedict XVI did not provide extensive theological and philosophical arguments in support of dogma.

The following section, “The Teaching Office, a Modern Construct” (*Reform*, 49–64) covers much the same ground as did “The Contemporary Concept of Dogma” in *Dogma* (42–51), although in greater detail. His argument in this section of *Reform* is central to the book. In the nineteenth century, the pope was elevated to the status of supertheologian by Joseph Kleutgen and others (52). The increase in papal authority in teaching the faith was not, according to Seewald and Herman Josef Pottmeyer, a logical or organic development of the Petrine idea. “Rather,” in Seewald’s citation of Pottmeyer:

Much more it was an increase of the consciousness of the Church as not only a protector and witness to the inheritance that was given her, but also a more active creator of this inheritance, in contemporary terms, she is the active subject of her own history. (55; citing p. 29 of Pottmeyer, *Die Rolle des Papstums im Dritten Jahrtausend* [1999])

This development is traced through Vatican I, Scheeben, the Code of Canon Law of 1917, and the seismic shift at Vatican II. And yet, as in *Dogma*, Seewald is keen in *Reform* to point out that the operative definition of dogma in these texts extends only to revealed truths (60). No mention is made of ancillary truths as dogma. This remains the case at Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* §25. And yet there is a great change at Vatican II in that there was an attempt to mute or dampen the pope’s role in the magisterium by emphasizing the infallibility of the Church as a whole (*Reform*, 57) and by speaking first of the role of the bishops, and only then the pope, in the articulation of doctrine (*Reform*, 59).

Seewald argues that this self-limitation of the Church’s infallible teaching authority as limited to revelation—in the texts of Vatican I and Vatican II—ended under John Paul II (*Reform*, 62) and the emphasis on the bishops was overturned under the same Pontiff (61). These changes, Seewald argues, were made with the stated goal of preserving perennial Church teaching but in fact amount to a revolution in the Church in the name of

conservativism (66). Once we put the development of the magisterium in its historical context as Seewald does, we can go about the work of reform by considering other *Gestalten* of the Church (64).

In chapter 3, Seewald analyzes the three ways that the Church has gone about dogmatic development. The first, and most rare, is self-correction (*Reform*, 74–87). Seewald gives the example of the matter of the sacrament of Holy Orders. At the Council of Florence in the fifteenth century, the matter of the ordination of priests was defined with the very highest binding (*allerhöchster Verbindlichkeit* [81]) as the giving of the chalice with wine and the paten with bread by the bishop to the priest (79). In his 1947 *Sacramentum Ordinis*, Pius XII declares that the matter of the sacrament is the laying on of hands, not the giving of the chalice and paten.

This obviously created a problem. Two infallible subjects (an ecumenical council and the pope) have stated in authoritative documents a contradiction about important issues (*Reform*, 83). Pius XII responded to this dilemma with two strategies. First, and this may be surprising to find in 1947, Pius said that the Church can change what she has established (*Sacramentum Ordinis*, §3). This may not be surprising *in ius mere ecclesiasticum*, but the question here is about a sacrament, about the substance of which the Church has no authority, since Christ himself established them (*Reform*, 83). Secondly, Pius declares with great solemnity (*declaramus . . . decernimus . . . disponimus . . . statuimus . . . constituimus* [*Reform*, 84]) that the laying on of hands by the bishop is the matter. In this text, Pius XII distinguishes in §§3–4 between what was once (*aliquando*) taught and what the Church will hold in the future (*in posterum*) (84–85). Seewald concludes that “it is possible in principle that the Church can correct herself even in important matters” (85). For what is more substantial than the office of priest, which Christ himself established? (One might suggest here that clarity about the interpretation of a rite of the Church may take centuries, just as it took centuries for the Church to define that marriage is a sacrament.)

Seewald then compares Pius’s self-correction of the Church teaching with Francis’s 2018 change of the *Catechism* regarding the death penalty. Like Pius’s language of *aliquando* and *in posterum*, the revised *Catechism* contrasts teaching on the death penalty as it stood for a long time with how the Church thinks about it now (§2267 [*diu* and *hodie*; although one might quibble that there is quite a difference between *aliquando* and *diu*]). Although Seewald believes it to be an issue of less dogmatic import than the transmission of the priestly office, the question of the revision of Church teaching on the legitimacy of the death penalty has been grounds for accusing Francis of heresy, as can be seen in *First Things*’s August 2018

“An Appeal to the Cardinals of the Catholic Church” (*Reform*, 86). It is ironic that those who think so highly of Pius XII, seeing him as a preserver of Church teaching, do not see that Francis is less an innovator than his predecessor (87).

The second way is by forgetting earlier pronouncements. Here Seewald brings up the example of monogenism, which was proposed as dogma in Pius XII’s *Humani Generis* and silently passed over in the 1992 *Catechism* (*Reform*, 92). Although the magisterium has never thematized how this process of forgetting works, it has often employed it. Mother Church nourishes her children with the milk of knowledge and the water of Lethe. Seewald asks whether the Church can forget in the same way John Paul II’s ban on the ordination of women (95). Here, I might ask: is there not something more fundamental at stake than the question of the paten or the laying on of hands?

The third way the Church teaching can be changed, according to the author, is by camouflaging the innovation. As an illustration of this, Seewald provides an analysis of religious liberty and Vatican II’s *Dignitatis Humanae*, which presents a new understanding of religious liberty under the cloak of continuity.

Of course, in his example of the new dogma of religious liberty, Seewald is not presenting a novel argument or one that does not have opposing accounts. Ian Ker and Avery Dulles, for instance, have argued that the articulation of religious freedom in *Dignitatis Humanae* is not novel but rather preserves the type of the perennial Christian teaching about the duty of human beings toward the truth. Earlier ecclesial condemnations of religious liberty, rather than contradicting *Dignitatis Humanae*, in fact agree with it, for both the earlier condemnations and Vatican II condemn the idea that one can choose whatever religion one pleases. Indeed, *Dignitatis Humanae* does not teach that one can choose just any religion, but rather that the conscience bears the duty of seeking and adhering to the truth (§1). Even the conscience has its limits, for freedom of conscience is allowed as long as “the requirements of public order are observed” (§2). In other contexts, such as in the Latin Middle Ages, when public order was grounded in a shared religious vision, the shape of religious liberty would appear differently from how it does in the twentieth century.

In his ante-penultimate chapter in *Reform*, Seewald reminds us of Hugh of St. Victor’s distinction between *affectus* and *cognitio* (124; cf. *Dogma*, 156–67). The substance of the faith, known by the *affectus* accessible even to the uneducated, has primacy over the propositions of theologians. What is central to the faith is not doctrine, but conviction that God has proven

his power in raising Jesus from the dead (*Reform*, 128).³

In these two books, Seewald presents an argument for a kind of continuity and another of discontinuity. He wants a continuity of the Gospel and discontinuity of dogma. That dogma has changed is a historical fact, according to Seewald (although certain illustrations of that claim can certainly be challenged). That it should change is a theological possibility.

It is noteworthy that Seewald is not arguing for either continuity or discontinuity (an impasse in contemporary theology, it seems), but rather for both continuity and discontinuity: continuity of the Gospel and discontinuity in dogma (in one sense of the term). The discontinuity in dogma is both historical fact and theological possibility, according to Seewald. Certain changes in dogma would in fact better preserve the continuity of the *Gestalt* of the Church, while preserving fossilized doctrines might distort the Church. Here Seewald differs from some contemporary American theologians and ecclesiastical historians in that he is not criticizing R. G. Collingwood's "substantialism" in history, for Seewald sees a substance to the Church, but that substance is not as closely linked to the dogmas that many would consider definitive.

On the other hand, I wonder whether divorcing dogma from the Church would allow the Church to retain her *Gestalt*. Without the supra-historical claims to truth that dogma entails, what is left of the Church? The implication of Seewald's argument is that history (meaning the present) judges divine revelation rather than revelation judging history. One cannot help but suggest that Seewald's argument is grounded in a kind of historicism in which there are no fixed truths articulated in the past that shape the present or future.

In the end, Seewald's books are marked by a kind of confusion present in his use of the foreword to Waugh's *Sword of Honour*. Waugh never criticized texts such as *Dignitatis Humanae*. Indeed, he did not think that Vatican II fundamentally changed the dogma of the Church. That Waugh calls Vatican II a "superficial revolution" points to this. He abhorred the liturgical changes of the Council because he thought that they would unravel far more than was intended, but he never lost his faith in the Church. Seewald's opponents—and they are rarely mentioned directly—similarly have not lost their faith in the living authoritative magisterium of the Church, but they are concerned that there is a temptation of certain

³ On the other hand, one might argue that the claim that God raised Jesus from the dead is itself a doctrine! Rather than a dichotomy between faith and propositions, one might consider the propositions of theologians are simply expressions of the substance of the faith.

members of the hierarchy to change the form of the Church by preaching a Gospel without dogma. N.V.

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That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation by David Bentley Hart (*New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019*), 222 pp.

THE FACT THAT Paul Griffiths calls David Hart “the most eminent living Anglophone theologian” (back cover), despite Hart’s rebuttal to annihilationist proposals (see 86-87 and 194) like that advanced by Griffiths’s book *Decreation*, is quite significant, given Griffiths’s own prestige. However, no matter how esteemed a theologian might be, he may not claim either infallibility or immunity to criticism. As an Eastern Orthodox theologian, Hart feels particular freedom to follow the Cappadocian Father St. Gregory of Nyssa in affirming the salvation of all creatures in the new creation, subsequent to purification appropriate for each. In addition to Nyssa, Hart invokes Origen, St. Basil the Great, St. Maximus the Confessor, Evagrius Ponticus, and a couple lesser-known Eastern thinkers who follow in the same line. Scholars have questioned some of these invocations (e.g., Brian Daley, S.J., has a different view of Maximus, at least). Catholics, of course, are constrained by a broader and more developed tradition, which is therefore more restrictive. I will focus on Hart’s more expansive, speculative argumentation proffered against the notion of an eternal hell.

The book is structured into three parts: “The Question of an Eternal Hell,” which contains two chapters more or less introducing his reasoning concerning the problem; “*Apokatastasis*: Four Meditations,” the meat of the book (four chapters); and “What May be Believed,” which is simply an epilogue of sorts. I think Hart eventually makes some robust arguments for his position (especially in the final meditations of part 2), even though I respectfully disagree with them for reasons to be explained. However, the tone of the book—a revised compilation of talks delivered by Hart on the topic—strikes this reader as incredibly arrogant, which does not make for healthy intellectual debate. Besides the lack of source citations (although he appends a few bibliographic notes to the end), which I suppose is to be expected in this type of publication (although one would think Yale had higher editorial standards), repetitive *ad hominem* attacks

against those who profess belief in an eternal hell, whom he calls “infernalists,” cannot help his cause, even though he claims not to be interested in persuading anyone, given the apparent remoteness of such a possibility (4–6, 18, 202–3, and 207–8). He provides, perhaps, a window into his own psychology by continuously attempting to psychoanalyze the reasons people believe in an eternal hell (e.g., 19–21, 146–51, and 206): in adolescence he experienced a philosophico-theological dilemma (see 10–16), similar conceptually to the one I also suffered—simply put, an indignation towards any god that would not be so good, wise, and powerful as to convert everyone to his love.

Throughout the various chapters of this collection are the same fundamental arguments, articulated in slightly different ways and contexts. He repeatedly asserts that there is no reason why an omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent God would will or even permit the eternal condemnation of any of his (intellectual) creatures, whom he created precisely for everlasting communion with him. He argues that such a God would be a failure or a contradiction because, only if He could ensure the salvation of all, would an infinitely loving, powerful, and wise God create at all. He sees the view that the condemnation of some is necessary for the greater manifestation of God’s glory as both merciful and just in nature as simply sadistic. Hence, in the penultimate meditation of the second part, he takes particular umbrage at the claim of Aquinas and others that the blessed must rejoice at the justice manifested in the punishments imposed upon those who are eternally condemned (see especially 169).

Probably the strongest part of the book is the final meditation of the second part—“What is Freedom? A Reflection on the Rational Will”—which I cannot address here in adequate detail. He argues there that creatures are incapable of making eternal or everlasting decisions; that is, there is no reason to suppose it even possible for intellectual beings limited in freedom to possess the power to determine their unending futures. He is staunchly committed to an “intellectualist,” even determinist, view of freedom (see especially 178), according to which there is no such thing as indifference between two apparently equal goods, but only rational process that guarantees eventual attainment of the ultimate good toward which all things are directed by the supreme good. He does not even deem the contemporary compatibilist–libertarian debate worth addressing, although it is not difficult to determine on which side he lands, assuming the debate can be so nicely separated into two basic camps (a questionable division, indeed).

He takes it as axiomatic that perfect freedom would be required for an everlasting choice to be possible, and at the same time, he insists that

choices are free only insofar as they are good. But, if only perfect freedom is true freedom, why would God grant us the capacity for evil at all? If only the good must be chosen in the end, why must it not be chosen now? In other words, if it is incompatible with God's omnibenevolence to permit eternal self-exclusion from glory, why would it not be incompatible with God's omnibenevolence to permit evil at all? Hart never seeks to answer this obvious rebuttal to his rhetorically aggressive case against the goodness of a God that would create immaterial beings capable of self-condemnation. Is it not incumbent upon him to show why it is not plausible for God to create imperfectly free beings capable of determining their everlasting destinies precisely by deciding finally (before disembodiment transports them into aeviternity) between loving self above God and loving God above self? The most he can do is point out that the power to choose evil must not be essential to created freedom, given that Christ was truly human and could not have chosen evil (see especially 212). Still, is not *non posse peccare* the fulfillment of freedom rather than its beginning or means (*posse non peccare*) [see 173]? Furthermore, it might be argued just as easily that it is fitting for most (if not all) intellectual beings, besides the God-man, to be granted, in accordance with their imperfection as mere creatures, the possibility of choosing evil precisely so that the good of choosing good *when evil was really possible* would also exist alongside the perfect freedom granted a select few (at least the Blessed Virgin). In this way, *bonum est diffusivum sui* (the good is diffusive of itself) in truly Dionysian fashion—hierarchically!

I agree with his view (articulated in part 1) that we ought to scrutinize the goodness of purported divine acts. I also agree that the notion of the blessed rejoicing at the justice of family members languishing forever in flames is repellant to the (modern) Christian imagination, as he displays in the penultimate meditation of part 2. It is certainly hard, at least, to imagine "a heaven above [a hell]" (as Ratzinger says in *Eschatology*, 188). At the same time, there are good reasons for believing that some (perhaps few) people have chosen recalcitrance in evil, despite the prayers of all the saints, and yet true suffering ought not to touch the blessed any more than it does the divine essence, as they see him even as he sees himself (see 1 John 3:2 and 1 Cor 13:12). Part of the reason why Hart finds an eternal hell incomprehensible is his prior commitment to *epektasis*, an everlasting dynamic "reaching out" for God, Nyssa's term for the creature's temporal relationship to the only timeless One in the afterlife (see 191 and 203). I am inclined to agree that, if hell is metronomic (to use Griffiths's characterization of *chronos*), everlasting anguish for any sin seems disproportionate, in which case either hell is not metronomic, the anguish we imagine in hell

is not everlasting (as Hart argues), or it is not actually disproportionate. The argument for the last option is that turning toward evil not merely as a means but as an end (albeit proximate, given that the ultimate good must always be intended implicitly) at the moment when the human being ceases to live as an embodied whole (i.e., death in the state of mortal sin) is a relatively infinite offense because of the infinite dignity of the good offended and the intrinsically perverse nature of the object of the act. Nonetheless, I do not see why the time of hell cannot be complete *stasis* (as Newman suggests it might in “Note III” appended to the 1930 Longmans reprint edition of *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*) or why this should be reserved to God alone. If, however, time beyond this world must be progressive, rather than aeviternal (a notion Hart does not engage), why not admit the possibility of an ever-increasing natural beatitude granted miraculously in the new creation to those without the beatific vision?

In terms of the channels of divine revelation, Hart does not address here the condemnations of Origenism by Pope Vigilius or Pope St. Martin I (although he briefly addresses the former in a *First Things* article) or the subsequent papal and conciliar restatements of the doctrine of hell. He does, however, address some of the scriptural arguments. He appeals ultimately to his recent translation of the New Testament (see 3 and 95–105), also published by Yale, and lays out a number of passages he thinks plainly speak of universal salvation, compared to the passages traditionally invoked against such a position, which he interprets as merely parabolic, figurative, and misinterpreted due to misleading translations (see 93–95, 106–14, and 119–20). Particularly, he makes a Nyssan argument that the Greek word typically translated as “eternal” or “everlasting”—*aiōnios*—ought to be understood, rather, as an “age” that will pass away when God becomes “all in all” (see 103–4 and 121–26). Despite Hart’s argumentation, which is to appeal to third- and fourth-century Greek Christian authorities (see esp. 123), it remains unclear, at least to me, as to whether there were better ancient Greek words that could have been used to convey “eternal” or “everlasting” (he grants that there were no Hebrew equivalents [see 125–26]).

Furthermore, many of the apparently universalist passages may be fairly interpreted simply to refer to God’s intent to save all, not the actual accomplishment of saving all from perdition. Obviously, the question then circles back to whether God can truly desire something and not bring it to fruition. I suggest that the Scriptures, read within the larger tradition, clearly indicate the plausibility, at least, that God desires all men to be saved, but more specifically to *convert without being coerced*, and absent such conversion, permits some to fall down the rabbit’s hole, as it were. Bishop Robert

Barron would say it is simple “spiritual physics” that those who choose evil consistently have less and less ability not to choose it. In other words, evil is a spiritual addiction that eats away at the very desire to escape it and, thus, ultimately destroys the freedom of the one persistently lured by its snares. Since it is possible for finite intellects to choose myopically to focus in on a finite good out of love of self and fear of losing such, that is, to turn a blind eye to what is beyond that which is *apparently* good for self, it is possible for the free creature to become “absorbed,” as it were, by the chaos to which it succumbs. But Hart, in the end, finds it intolerable to imagine a good God willing to permit this (see 6 and 166).

Thus, the question ultimately boils down to how one understands the divine economy of supernatural grace and finite freedom. While Hart, in other places, seems to reject the predestinarian logic and argues even here against “the late Augustinian tradition” and its “early modern variants” (199), he still—at least, tacitly—accepts the premise that the grace–freedom dynamic ought to be conceived in terms of infinite versus finite power (see 13, 140–41, and 183–84). I have argued elsewhere that this is a mistaken paradigm for understanding predestination and providence, if we are to grant the *apparently* conflicting realities of persistent moral evil and divine innocence. I think, however, the crux of the issue for Hart is the question of the nature of human freedom, or at least that is the aspect of the problem on which he seems fixated. At the same time, I think a more developed understanding of the relationship between nature and grace in general would benefit Hart in making further distinctions with regard to how God may become “all in all” without simply overriding the obduracy in evil that some evidently choose during their lifetime. (Why are they guaranteed to change?) For instance, Jacques Maritain’s proposal for how God might permeate all things (not merely ontologically speaking, but morally speaking) in the new creation includes the universal restoration of all creatures on the *natural* level, not the supernatural (i.e., those who exclude themselves from the beatific vision are possibly granted eternal *natural* happiness, despite not receiving perfect union with the triune God). As is mentioned even in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *Dare We Hope* (see 245n21), whose universalism Hart thinks too timid (see 66 and 102–3), Maximus the Confessor interprets Gregory of Nyssa’s final *apokatastasis* as a universal restoration *of nature*, not *of grace*, wiping away all remnants of evil, as if evil men will be restored to their original childhood innocence after aeons (*aiōnion*) of purification (see Maximus, *Questiones et dubia* 13). Perhaps, then, the following words of Jesus provide the best reconciliation of the so-called universalist scriptural passages (esp. 1 Cor 15:28) and the many passages that speak of final judgment (e.g., Matt 25:

31–46): “In my Father’s house [*oikia*], there are many dwelling-places [*monai*]” (John 14:2). N.V.

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That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation by David Bentley Hart (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019*), 222 pp.

WHAT CAN ONE SAY about David Bentley Hart’s *That All Shall Be Saved*? It does not seem to be a text which admits of moderate responses. Its readers seem almost exclusively to laud it as a new epoch in Christian theology or to condemn it as a screed of *ad hominem*s which rejects the vast majority of Christians throughout history. Still, one wants to be as positive as one can, if for no other reason than that after reading *That All Shall Be Saved* one thirsts desperately for even a drop of irenicism. I have three major thoughts about Hart’s work, which is broken up into four “Meditations.” My first thought deals with the mode of Hart’s prose and argumentation; the second and third deal briefly with two of the arguments themselves.

First, much has been made about the form of Hart’s delivery (both here and in previous works), and I think justifiably so. Even after completing the work, I am still unsure as to what Hart’s intentions with the book were. It often reads more like a personal journal or the beginnings of a comprehensive work which is still gestating than a work of speculative theology. Hart spends substantial time earlier in the book discussing his own experiences and history. He never directly engages any particular theological text, historical or contemporary. Names and ideas are referenced in passing but never cited. A single contemporary text is mentioned but hardly explored (Brian Davies’s *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* takes that honor). One keeps expecting the rhetorical setup to punch through to a complete argument on the next page, but the blow never lands. There are the beginnings of very interesting ideas here, but the times in which they are argued forcefully or even fleshed out are few and far between. The work concludes with a basic re-hashing of the post-modern trope on the genesis of the doctrine of hell: the Church, especially when it mixed with temporal powers, duplicitously concocted an error to keep the rabble in line. The rhetoric is rich, but there is not an ounce of historical evidence to back up the claim. On the very final pages of the book, Hart seems to be alert to

the lack of argumentation, saying: "I could go on. I could, if nothing else, spend a few hundred pages more dealing with certain highly technical issues of Christian metaphysical tradition. . . . But I do not think that it would actually add anything to the essential arguments of these pages," (207–8). It is hard to overstate how frustrating it is to find this statement nestled at the end of over two hundred pages. Indeed, the debate about the existence of an eternal hell is *in so many ways* a debate which absolutely *must* take place upon the metaphysical level. I would like to see this argument in its fullest and most robust form. Instead, all we receive is, frankly, a lot of preaching to the choir with rhetorical flourishes. Hart's grasp of the English language is probably unmatched by any living theologian, and yet he transgresses the fundamental principle of writing: show rather than tell.

One particularly disappointing trend throughout the work is the use of false dilemmas. Hart tends to pick the lowest hanging fruit as a bogey man, threatening you with the most radical of positions as the only alternative to his own. One is either a Hartian or a double-predestinarian, Calvinist infernalist. And gleeful about it too! One agrees with Hart that St. John's Revelation is "hazy to the point of unintelligibility" or else one is looking for "some kind of visionary script for the end of time, a magic mirror for scrying out things yet to come" (108). Either universalism or else radical individualism where "the ethos of heaven turns out to be 'every soul for itself'" (149). The second meditation *does* attempt to give some scriptural evidence for Hart's claims. However, immediately after Hart mocks the idea of being "swayed simply by the brute force of arithmetic" (95), he proceeds to list scriptural passages for seven pages straight without any commentary at all.

But setting aside the style of Hart's work, his most interesting thoughts are to be found in the final two meditations. In the third meditation, Hart contemplates the truly social character of personhood, emphasizing the notion that resurrection does not merely mean receiving a reconstituted body, but is indeed the dying off of the selfish nature and the self's transformation into a "communal condition," the Body of Christ. Hart considers the question of whether persons could be saved individually, in such a way that would ontologically permit that others would fall. If being a person means that we are intimately united with one another, how can it be the case that certain persons could be saved and others not saved? Would we not really be *losing* essential parts of ourselves, thus making it impossible to be truly *found* in God?

But this reflection, as beautiful and penetrating as it is in itself, is still insufficient evidence for the overarching claim of universalism. The questions posed above are good ones, but Hart never gives serious response to

possible tertiary positions. Perhaps in the direct vision of God and the providential plan for the cosmos, the love of persons is subordinate (not just morally but indeed ontologically) to the love of God and the totality of his plan. Indeed, some of us have been significantly shaped by strong bonds made with pets or even inanimate things like a work of art, a landscape, or a building. True, our relations to these things are not the same as that between two persons, but they can significantly shape the person that I am all the same. I can scarcely imagine the rest promised by Hebrews or St. Augustine without some *contactus* with elements from my childhood, things that I now *ache for* with all of the sting of nostalgia. How can I be me without my relation to these ephemeral goods continuing on into the eternal? Well, presumably such relations are not quite so substantive in themselves as they are echoes of God, the goodness of which still subsists in him. I need not go back to precisely the location of my childhood happiness, for what I long to return to is found not in things or even people themselves, but is to be found *in toto* in God alone. The good of relationships that we experience, as constitutive of ourselves as they are, are only borrowed goods. They are good because they participate in the divine. Those relationships are not lost, but consummated in one's direct gaze upon God, for without him, they are nothing.

I see no immediate reason why such a position would necessarily obliterate all personhood, but Hart does not allow for these kinds of speculative thoughts to breathe. He scarcely considers what such an objection might look like or how it might be answered. The closest we get is a hasty condemnation of any view besides his own, since it would "reduce each personhood to nothing," (152) the "annihilation of everything that ever made us who we were" (156).

The irony in this particular argument is that it is Hart himself who maintains a radical individualism. For Hart, the success or failure of the cosmos (and the success or failure of God) begins and ends with the fate of individual souls, related yes, but each considered in and of themselves. What Hart does not adequately consider is that the final judgment is not particularly a judgment of individuals, but of the whole of creation. Hart contends that maintaining this necessitates universal salvation, for all individuals make up the whole of humanity. However, in this case, the success of the providential plan for the cosmos is contingent upon amassing successes on the scale of the individual. In contrast, the tradition (or at least the tradition which flows from Sts. Augustine and Thomas) maintains that the universe as a whole is not simply the sum of individual parts. It is its own organic whole, its own creature, and its end is not the greatest number of individual successes, but rather the greatest manifestation of

God's creative self-revelation. In short, the cosmos does not have so many ends as there are men in history, but rather has one, collective end. This is what many minds in the tradition have maintained in their own way: St. Augustine's language of the chiaroscuro; St. Thomas's manifestation of the divine justice and mercy; Julian of Norwich's "sin is behovely."

The universalist argument cannot be based in of a lack of imagination. Hart presents us with the picture of a parent who is saved and yet also aware of a child who is damned. He gestures at it wildly with his words as if to say: "See how strange this looks! Look at how ugly this picture is. It could not possibly be the case." I admit that it appears strange to me. So do many aspects of the Faith. But strange does not equal contradictory. Since none of us really understand what heaven *is*, my first takeaway from the image is that I am indeed contemplating a mystery, the reconciliation of which necessarily extends beyond my temporal purview. For Hart, however, the mystery has been cast aside. Either the child is saved or the parent cannot taste heaven. The issue is that the argument is presented as an appeal to the emotions. If one even begins to contemplate how these two truths might be reconciled, one can almost hear Hart already begin to question one's qualities as a parent. As with many arguments within this text, one has the feeling that Hart is pushing the *analogia entis* to its breaking point. At times, he seems to push it straight into univocity. We cannot forget that parental imagery is just that: imagery meant to aid but not exhaust our contemplation of the divine. It does not take much theological acumen to see how quickly the metaphor can fail. The human father owes many things to his son by nature, while participation in the divine life of God is radically unowed to man on account of the infinite disparity between natures. We might say that the Father owes the divine life to the begotten Son, but it is in no way owed to the creature qua creature. This is the very definition of grace: *supernatural* and utterly gratuitous.

Finally, the fourth meditation ought to be applauded for rejecting the free-will defense and adding to a growing tide of voices recovering the traditional understanding of the compatible relation between divine causality and human free will. As Hart says, "Real omnipotence would require a power coterminous with the whole of being, from its innermost wellsprings and principles to its outermost consequences and effects; it would even require possession of the power belonging to the deepest source of all the facts of every rational will, without operating as a rival force in contest with those movements" (182). In fact, at times Hart even sounds downright Báñezian, stating, "Insofar as we are able freely to will anything at all, therefore, it is precisely because he [God] is *making* us to do so" (183).

However, as with the third meditation, Hart takes this to mean more than it actually does. For Hart, compatibilism and a rejection of the free-will defense necessitate universal salvation. Since all men are oriented by nature to the Good and would infallibly choose the Good if they were presented with it, it is impossible for any truly free and rational creature ultimately to reject God. As such, Hart argues, no one could rationally choose to abandon the Good. As he says, "Only one truly *free* choice is possible" (179).

But this thesis is rooted in the error of collapsing free will and freedom into a singular reality. True freedom is indeed characterized by the possession of that to which the will is inclined, the Good. But the power to pursue ends and choose means is what we call free will, and by its operation for good or ill we merit reward or punishment, as well as find rest or restlessness. Freedom or liberty, the possession of the Good as such, is therefore the perfection of the power of free will and is not synonymous with its operation. In the same way, winning the World Series is not the only way to play professional baseball. According to Hart's view, it would be hard to conceive of how sin could exist at all, for man is either acting in a subhuman manner (and thus nonculpably), choosing lesser goods, or he is in the beatific vision! Indeed, even meriting such vision would also be impossible since the only truly free choice is the exhaustive embrace of the Good itself. One would have to already have achieved one's supernatural end to merit, in which case such merit would be superfluous, since the object merited is already possessed.

In all, I found *That All Shall Be Saved* to be a disappointment. While I am not a universalist, I recognize that such a view has some striking theological force behind it. At the very least, the universalist thesis helps to prune the wilder and less theologically robust edges off of the so-called infernalist position. Unfortunately, Hart's work largely falls short. N.V

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Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus by Andrew Hofer, O.P. (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013*), xiii + 270 pp.

SAINT GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS challenges first-time readers with his abundance of self-referential tropes throughout his orations and

poetry. "Upon whom are you fixated, Gregory, yourself or Christ?" The Nazianzen seems to be the most narcissistic of all the Church Fathers. Further, Gregory does not give us the satisfaction of a "*dogmengeschichtliche* Christology," and so it seems one may even question the extent to which he deserves to be called *the* Theologian. But Andrew Hofer, O.P., in his book *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus*, shows that it is not narcissism at the heart of Gregory's preaching. Instead, it is precisely Gregory's love for Christ that propels him to discover all convergences with his own life and the life and mystery of Christ. Hofer writes that Gregory's "writings exude a highly sophisticated and profoundly personal insight into the mystery of Christ. He crafts his presentation to persuade others to be purified and, with Gregory himself as their model, to become like Christ in deification" (195).

The text is well-structured around Hofer's thesis. Hofer observes that Gregory is "the most autobiographical of all the Greek Fathers," but not in the modern sense of the term "autobiography" (4). Gregory is eager to set himself up as an example of discipleship to his audience. Gregory writes about his life to show Christ hidden in it. Plus, it is not only Gregory's life that is interwoven into Christ's and Christ's into his. Gregory presents other saintly figures, such as his sister, Gorgonia, an exemplar of biblical living (45). Athanasius, too, rides triumphantly into Alexandria upon a colt like "my Jesus" (206). Confronting the injustice of Emperor Valens, Basil of Caesarea becomes "the fleshless one," a bloodless martyr standing like "my Jesus before the judgment seat of Pilate" (208). For Gregory, that is the point. The commingling of one's life with that of the Incarnate Word is not only a mark of discipleship but even the path to deification.

Hofer organizes the book in the following manner. He builds a case in chapter 1 for a logo-centric theology, one that remains integral throughout the book. Gregory, often referred to as the second Demosthenes for his powerful rhetoric, is interested to claim rhetoric from the secular domain for his preaching, because his love for words is really a love for the Word. Contrary to the accusations of Emperor Julian that Christians were without reason (*alogos*), Gregory shows that Christ has assumed our rational nature (*logikē physis*). Hofer makes several key points: that "Gregory's words must not be separated from his faith in the Word"; that "the attention to words should be seen in relation to Gregory's training as a rhetor who seeks to persuade others to accept this philosophy of living by the Word"; and that "the Word in Scripture is channeled through Gregory's own earthly life and teaching for people to worship rightly" (53). Hofer argues that Gregory's autobiography is "Christomorphic," a notion he develops in chapter 2. Further, Gregory's Christology is "autobiographical," which

Hofer develops in three parts in chapters 3–5. Chapter 3 explores a theological challenge in the “mixture” language that Gregory uses concerning his life and that of Christ. Gregory even uses mixture language to describe the Incarnation itself, though the Word does not become a single nature after the Incarnation (94–95). When Gregory ponders the rational soul of Christ, he exclaims: “O new mixture! O unexpected blending! He who is has come to be, the uncreated one is created, the limitless one is contained, through the mediation of a rational soul standing between divinity and the coarseness of flesh” (115; quoting Brian Daley’s translation of *Or.* 38). Chapter 4 focuses on Epistle 101 and the ten anathemas from the perspective of Gregory’s own salvation, and the impossibility of Gregory’s salvation under the account of Apollinarius or Paul of Samosata. For example, if Christ had no human soul, then he did not really experience death, the separation of the soul from the body, but rather the separation of the godhead from the body (142), a theological point in anticipation of the formula of Chalcedon. In chapter 5, Hofer expounds what he calls “the distinctive blend of *logos* and *bios*” in Christ’s and Gregory’s respective lives (154). Gregory claims for his possession *all* of the mysteries of Christ’s life for his own sanctification. For example, Gregory finds no small parallel between the stoning of the Word in the Gospels and Gregory’s own stoning at Constantinople by anti-Nicene monks. Finally, in chapter 6, Gregory’s ministry—like his autobiography—is “Christomorphic,” which is to say patterned upon the life and ministry of Christ. As Hofer puts it, “Gregory articulates his relationship with Christ for a pastoral purpose. Indeed, this exemplifies how all Gregory’s writing, which so frequently appears self-referential, could be read as expressing Gregory’s ministry to others” (195). Indeed, by his priestly ministry he wishes to transform his flock one sacrifice at a time themselves into a deified offering (199).

Though the reader may initially find Hofer’s terminology unnecessarily cumbersome, such as “Christomorphic ministry,” or intentionally ambiguous, such as the seeming interchangeability of “autobiographical Christology” with “Christomorphic autobiography,” the patient reader will net rewards in wrestling with them. By such terms, Hofer carefully carves boundaries around notions vital to his project. It is important for any instructor who uses this text in coursework to locate the definitions of these terms in the text, which I include here. Hofer explains that the “phenomenon of Gregory’s rhetorical blend of Christ and himself is so comprehensive and penetrating that Gregory’s teachings on Christ could be called an ‘autobiographical Christology’” (5). But what does Hofer mean by “Christomorphic autobiography”? After a bit of digging through the text, “Christomorphic autobiography” is best illumined by an example

from the *Epitaph and Summary of His Earthly Life* (*Carm.* 2.1.92). Gregory's own life takes the form of Christ's, which is what Hofer suggests by defining Christomorphic autobiography as "Christ's omnipresence in Gregory's writings on his own life." He explains: "Through the high literary arts and deep personal faith of his Christomorphic autobiography, Gregory repeatedly evokes Christ in a way that blends Christ into the troubles, fears, and joys of his own life" (56). Thus, also, Gregory's pastoral ministry likewise becomes Christomorphic in that it patterns itself after the form of Christ's own ministry.

On the one hand, it may seem to the reader of this review that "autobiographical Christology" and "Christomorphic autobiography" remain logically indistinct. To what extent is there any real, logical difference in Gregory's self-referential Christology and his locating his own life within Christ's? This presents, in my view, the biggest challenge to Hofer's text. On the other hand, the challenge of unmixing what Gregory has intentionally mixed proves paradoxically that Hofer really has put his finger on something. The terminological challenge does not obscure what Hofer carefully develops throughout, which is a very simple idea at the heart of discipleship and especially in the episcopacy. Gregory's life and Christ's life are perichoretic—that is, mutually interpenetrating—lives that shed light upon one another. "Christomorphic" means that Gregory's life takes the "form" (*morphē*) of Christ's life. "Christologic" means that Christ's life is a word (*logos*) that illumines the trials and mysteries of Gregory's own life.

In many ways, Hofer's text represents a significant contribution to the study of Gregory Nazianzen. The unfortunate cost of the text may prove prohibitive for students and theologians outside of academia, but faculty whose institutions have access to Oxford's digital texts will find a valuable resource to incorporate into their coursework. Despite the minor challenges I mentioned above, Hofer's text is remarkably accessible and enters deeply into ongoing conversations about the Theologian, as evidenced by the copious footnotes. He does so as a fair and careful interlocutor. Readers will find impressive erudition in Hofer, who engages the secondary literature broadly (see also his bibliography [229–48]). What's more, Hofer deftly navigates the Theologian's works, incorporating oft-neglected theological resources, especially Gregory's poetry. As evidence of this, see the useful index of citations to Gregory's work (249–55), wherein one sees that Hofer has cited or quoted in his text six index columns of Gregory's poetry, about fifty of his letters, and all of Gregory's orations. And the text is full of gems, both from Gregory and from Hofer. If I may tease the reader of this review with only a small taste, one of the images I found most striking was soteriology as cheese-making: the blood of Christ unites all of

mankind in the way a little curdling agent makes milk into “one block of cheese” (190). Such fine theological churning has aged well.

In closing, I echo Hofer’s epilogue, wherein he identifies the importance of recovering Gregory’s theological significance. Hofer identifies four gains to be attained in recovering the mutual interpenetration of the mystery of Christ and Gregory’s own life. First, one has to understand Gregory’s “rhetoric prowess” in order to fully understand his doctrinal elucidations; secondly, one can set aside certain judgments against what appears “too ambiguous or too narcissistic” to contemporary readers; thirdly, Hofer encourages readers to wrest the theological wheels from the deep tracks created by patrologies of preceding centuries, which paid too little attention to Gregory’s theological poetry; finally, one can understand that Gregory’s prominent reception history among the later Greek Fathers is not unmerited, but derives from Gregory’s contribution “to the Christian spiritual vision” as “the most autobiographical of the Greek Fathers [who] wants to write continuously about God at work in his life” (228). N.V.

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Conferences on the Six Days of Creation: The Illuminations of the Church by St. Bonaventure, translated by Jay M. Hammond, Works of St. Bonaventure 18 (*St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2018*), 588 pp.

HOW TO READ ST. BONAVENTURE, and whether it is important to do so, is a lively, though rarely explicitly voiced, question in historical theology. A handful of texts have become standard in undergraduate and graduate theological study even among non-specialists: *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, at least portions of the *Breviloquium*, and the disputed questions *De scientia Christi* are widely known, with such texts as the *Lignum vitae*, the *Legenda maior*, and *De triplici via* not unknown to students of the history of spiritual theology. The Franciscan Institute is to be commended for great service in continuing to bring out translations in the “Works of St. Bonaventure” series, including two recent volumes of translations from his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.

Into this field comes a new translation of Bonaventure’s last major work,

the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* (*Conferences on the Six Days of Creation*), by Jay M. Hammond. The only previous English translation—by José de Vinck (Franciscan Herald Press, 1970)—has been out of print for some years and has been widely criticized as deficient in terms of accuracy, helpfulness to the reader, and even de Vinck's occasional obvious frustration with the text. (The reader is bemused to see an escalating frustration in de Vinck's footnotes, culminating in expressions of disdain for "the childish medieval delight" in the coincidence and significance of numbers).

This review therefore consists of two parts. In the first, I will summarize and comment on Hammond's introduction and translation. In the second, I will comment more broadly on the recovery of the *Hexaëmeron* as an important text today.

Hammond's introduction is divided into three parts. Part 1, "Historical Context," very helpfully contextualizes the *Hexaëmeron* in light of practices of medieval reading, the influence of Aristotelianism at the University of Paris, the secular-mendicant controversy, and, perhaps most striking, Bonaventure's concerns as minister general for the reform and renewal of the Franciscan order. Hammond argues that all three sets of collations should be regarded as part of Bonaventure's attempt to reform the friars' identity-ministry: in accord with the law (collations *De decem praeceptis* [1267]), in accord with grace (collations *De septem donis Spiritus sancti* [1268]), and unto glory (collations *In Hexaëmeron* [1273]). The delay between the second and third sets of collations was, according to Hammond, accidental and due to the need to defend the order after the death of Pope Clement IV in 1268. Hammond makes the important claim that Bonaventure intended these collations for the reform of the whole order: Paris being the "epicenter of the Franciscan *studia* network" (24), Bonaventure is instructing those who would be returning to their provinces to implement his pastoral directives—he is teaching the teachers of the order.

In part 2 of the introduction, "The *Hexaëmeron* and the Contemplative Praxis of Reflexive Reading," Hammond orients the reader to the reading of the text. The bulk of the *Hexaëmeron* is a reading of the six days of creation as corresponding to a sixfold vision of understanding: (1) implanted by nature (colls. 4–7), (2) lifted up by faith (colls. 8–12), (3) taught by Scripture (colls. 13–19), (4) suspended by contemplation (colls. 20–23), (5) enlightened by prophecy, and (6) absorbed into God by rapture. (Bonaventure completed only the first four before having to leave for the Second Council of Lyon, where he died on July 15, 1274.) The three collations that form the introduction take as their theme Sirach 15:5: "In the midst of the Church the Lord will open one's mouth and will fill one

with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and will clothe one with a robe of glory." Bonaventure explains this in terms of who is addressed by this discourse (i.e., what it means properly to be "in the Church"), Christ as the center of all sciences ("midst"—medium), and the fullness of wisdom and understanding.

Most of Hammond's commentary in his introduction concerns the first three collations. With respect to each, he offers an interpretation that emphasizes the pedagogical purpose of the text, and the way it should be understood as a patterned whole.

In collation 1, after an introductory consideration of those to whom the text is addressed in *Hexaëmeron* 1.1–9, Bonaventure speaks at length about Christ as the center (*medium*) of all the sciences: metaphysics, physics, mathematics, logic, ethics, law, and theology. Hammond emphasizes that to begin one's classification of the sciences with metaphysics runs contrary to a philosophical view that regards metaphysics as the culmination of the sciences. Bonaventure is addressing friars whose primary concerns should be the understanding of Scripture, and by this prioritizing of metaphysics, he is in effect urging them to engage in their studies from the top down, centering on their knowledge of God and interpreting lower knowledge in this light. (Hammond refers to this as a deductive rather than an inductive approach.) Moreover, Bonaventure's emphasis in this presentation of metaphysics is the exemplarity of Christ. The conclusion seems to be that, if the friars approach their studies from the perspective of the metaphysical exemplarity of Christ, they will have a proper orientation to the divine truth that is indeed present in other sciences. According to Hammond, Bonaventure is allegorizing the sciences, rather than allegorizing Christ.

Hammond says little about the sciences treated in general here, other than noting that the first three are theoretical and the last three are moral or practical. The center of this classification of the sciences is therefore the only "rational science" that Bonaventure mentions in this context, logic, which he associates with doctrine and with the resurrection. As Hammond puts it, Christian reasoning centers on the crucifixion and resurrection.

Collation 2 concerns wisdom. Bonaventure himself speaks of it as a continuation of the treatment of the gift of wisdom in collation 9 on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The first part of the collation concerns the *door* to wisdom, that is, the proper disposition toward it. This involves an ordered progression from desire, to justice, to discipline, to love, to sanctity, and ultimately to a wisdom that involves a rightly ordered "affective subjectivity" (45).

The larger part of the collation concerns the fourfold *form* of wisdom.

Hammond's interpretation of the *Hexaëmeron* in terms of the formation of the friars leads him to postulate the following division in Bonaventure's doctrine here. (1) Uniform wisdom, which is the impression of the rules of the divine law, prepares the reader to understand the literal sense of Scripture. (2) Multiform wisdom, the openness of the reader to the mysteries of Scripture in faith, hope, and love, leads to the understanding of the spiritual sense. (3) Omniform wisdom is the reader's openness to seeing the vestiges and images of God in all of creation; it is the highest achievement of the intellect as transformed by grace. (4) Nulliform wisdom is rather affective: it is the perfect disposition of the reader in his affection to the presence of God. Fourfold wisdom may thus be divided in two: uniform and multiform wisdom "[prepare] the exegete for discerning Scripture's intentionality," literal and spiritual; while omniform and nulliform wisdom "[reform] the exegete's intentionality." Bonaventure is urging not only the understanding of Scripture, but the formation of the reader of Scripture according to both intellect and affect.

Collation 3 concerns understanding. The "key to contemplation" in *Hexaëmeron* 3.2 is an understanding of the threefold Word: the uncreated Word, "through whom all things are made"; the incarnate Word, "through whom all things are restored"; and the inspired Word, "through whom all things are revealed." Hammond presents this as "a Trinitarian dynamic of exit-exemplar-return, which unfolds *per Verbum*" (54). These are not really separable elements. Understanding how the truth of things is related to the eternal generation of the Word prepares one for illumination by the incarnate Word; understanding the incarnate Word is the key to understanding Scripture, and requires participation in the inspired Word; and participation in the inspired Word returns one to the Trinitarian source of all that is. Finally, Bonaventure turns from the discussion of the inspired Word in general to the specific visions that are inspired, which are the six forms of vision that correspond to the six days of creation.

Hammond closes his introduction with a few comments on the translation and the editions of the text. The *Hexaëmeron* comes to us not as a text written by Bonaventure, but only via the *reportationes* of his listeners. There are two such *reportationes* that are important: one that exists in multiple manuscripts and was published in the Quaracchi critical edition in 1891; the other, of which there is a single manuscript, which was published by Ferdinand Delorme in 1934. While the two editions are remarkably similar, they differ on certain points that have received considerable attention. For example, the more apocalyptic passages in Bonaventure's theology of history are peculiar to the Quaracchi edition, while the greater elaborations of Aristotelian philosophy belong to the

Delorme edition. Hammond uses the Quaracchi edition as the basis for his translation, but he also, throughout the book, identifies in his footnotes the notable variation in Delorme, giving the full variant text in Latin when it is practicable to do so.

Hammond's knowledge of the *Hexaëmeron* is profound. It would be too-faint praise to say that readers will be better served by this translation than they were by the earlier one. Hammond's orientation to and explication of the text in his introduction are packed, and most readers will be hard-pressed to digest them at a first reading; however, they will prove rewarding for the reader who will take the time to refer back to them after pondering the text itself.

Bonaventure specialists have long considered the *Hexaëmeron* to be a text worthy of special note. Its scope is obviously impressive, encompassing philosophy, theology, and spirituality, and as Bonaventure's last great work, it is obviously important to consider for his mature thought on a variety of subjects. Recently, some scholars have promoted the idea that the *Hexaëmeron* is especially important as a testimony to Bonaventure's unique proposal for a way to do theology. Hammond clearly falls into this camp. But if this is to happen, if the *Hexaëmeron* is to receive the attention it merits, there needs to be a "buy-in" from the theological community at large. It is therefore worthwhile to explore reasons why someone other than a Bonaventure specialist should particularly care about the *Hexaëmeron*.

In one way, this is easy to see. If there is a single word that expresses the topic of the *Hexaëmeron* as a whole, it is "understanding." The whole of the text is undoubtedly pertinent to the intellectual life of Christians, which by itself justifies its interest for the theological academy today. It is also easy to enumerate specific topics in the text that are of speculative interest: Christ as the center of all sciences, the divine exemplarity, a theology of history, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and so on.

In another way, the text can seem impossibly opaque. Even a reader sympathetic to the use of symbols in medieval theology can wonder whether Bonaventure's myriad distinctions and patterns are important. Hammond, recognizing this, includes in the volume a detailed outline of the whole, something of an "at a glance" summary. Yet that summary/outline runs 110 pages (the text itself is 345 pages). It is a useful tool, but may not do much to convince the modern reader of the text's contemporary interest. Examples of the same thing in smaller portions of the text abound. The philosopher can easily appreciate Bonaventure's division of "the truth of things" (i.e., natural philosophy) into metaphysics, mathematics, and physics in *Hexaëmeron* 4.6–17. But what is he to make of the multiplication of the four cardinal virtues by the three theological virtues

so as to make twelve—and their doubling “in prosperity and adversity” to make twenty-four in *Hexaëmeron* 7.22? To return to the theme of “Christ the center”: most commentators focus, like Hammond, on the claim that Christ, as the uncreated Word, is the center of metaphysics as the exemplar of all things. Many readers will rightly understand this to mean that exemplarity is for Bonaventure to be understood in light of the eternal procession of the Word, and that this is a clue to the philosophical truth of exemplarity. But how is one to understand the very next topic, that Christ as the incarnate Word is the center of physics? Is there in Bonaventure’s view a clue in the incarnate Christ to a necessary truth of physics? More generally, if the reader wants to speak about a “Christocentric” theology here, is this more than a generality? Can one really answer on the basis of this text how this theology is Christocentric while that of another medieval master is not?

If the modern reader is at all inclined to read the *Hexaëmeron*, I want to suggest two foci that are necessary for understanding it: on the one hand, its *summa*-like quality; on the other hand, its program for the reformation of the life of understanding.

The comprehensive nature of the undertaking of the *Hexaëmeron* is apparent when Bonaventure lays out the visions corresponding to the days of creation in *Hexaëmeron* 3.24. Turning to the actual collations on the days, the reader sees a trajectory from philosophy in collations 4–7 to the upward reaches of contemplation in collations 20–23, via theology. This theme of the ascent of the mind is a familiar one in Bonaventure. Not only is there something like it in the *Itinerarium*, but he lays it out also in *De septem donis* 4, when the sciences are divided into philosophical, theological, graced, and glorious. All this is to say the reader of the *Hexaëmeron*—especially one with any familiarity with other major texts of Bonaventure—immediately has a sense of this comprehensive ascent.

In its comprehensiveness, the *Hexaëmeron* is *summa*-like. To be sure, Bonaventure does not here use the disputed-question format common among the *summae* of his contemporaries (though he could use that format, as we see in his commentary on the *Sentences* and his various disputed questions), nor does he endeavor to give a treatment of all of even the most obvious topics that fall within the purview of the text (as he does, by contrast, in the *Breviloquium*, which he himself describes as a *summa*). But the reader can and should have the sense that to follow Bonaventure in what he says about philosophy, faith, Scripture, and contemplation is to get to the heart of his understanding of each. It therefore becomes important to explore with precision exactly what he says about the different subjects, comparing it to pertinent passages in other works, as well as to

the architectonic structure of the whole *Hexaëmeron*. For example, what is the relation between day 2's understanding lifted up by faith and day 3's understanding taught by Scripture? There is an obvious way in which they both belong to theology, though neither of them is called that. Why should they be separated, when they both seem to fit his earlier description of theological science (from *De septem donis* 4) as "the pious knowledge of things having to be believed"? To ask this is not to impose a rationality on the text that is foreign to it; it is to see more precisely what Bonaventure regards as essential to his topic.

The other necessary focus for the understanding of the *Hexaëmeron* is Bonaventure's repeated evocation of the reformation of the understanding. This is a topic of perennial interest in theology, and so should strike the modern reader of the *Hexaëmeron*. Bonaventure is perhaps an especially important figure to consider here, because he was not only a university master but also a pastoral leader, called by Pope Leo XIII the "Prince of mystics," and because the Franciscan tradition to which he belongs is sometimes compared to the Dominican tradition as the affective to the intellectual. In any case, examples abound in the *Hexaëmeron* of exhortations to a right view of a reformed understanding. Collation 2 describes the way the *affectus* is involved in the attainment of wisdom. The detailed definition of the philosophical sciences is followed, in *Hexaëmeron* 5.19, by a description of the way they all "ran wild." Collation 6 excoriates the errors of Aristotelian philosophy, while collation 7 lists the errors of the Platonists, who did not understand the way true philosophy requires the healing of the affect. Collation 10 lists twelve "speculations" of faith, truths that are not so much revealed as self-evident to the mind that is raised by grace. Collations 17 and 18 speak of the way Scripture nourishes both the intellect and the affect, and the danger of the former without the latter. Collation 19, ostensibly the last of the collations on Scripture, is more significantly a kind of pause within the whole *Hexaëmeron*, explaining the transition from knowledge to wisdom by means of holiness.

Such passages, and more, testify to the thoroughgoing and profound nature of Bonaventure's conviction regarding the intellectual life of the Christian. The translation of this into simple maxims—such as "theology should be done on one's knees" and "metaphysics must ultimately be theological"—will not suffice. Instead, the reader should pay attention to what Hammond says in his introduction: Bonaventure is concerned with the whole formation of the friars. Therefore, the modern reader is invited to explore the whole vision of the intellectual life on display here. The promise is that it will prove to have a contemporary relevance.

One may expect to see Hammond's translation of the *Hexaëmeron* on

library shelves, thanks to its inclusion in the “Works of St. Bonaventure” series. Because of the clarity of the translation, one may also expect it to prompt increased conversation about Bonaventure at academic conferences. But my hope—and indeed my expectation—is also that it will find its way onto the reading list of more and more courses and comprehensive exams. The new interest in Bonaventure today makes this an apt moment for discussion of his significance within the theological tradition; and if Bonaventureans do their work well, the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* will more and more be seen as essential to understanding the Seraphic Doctor.

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N.V.

Revelation, History, and Truth: A Hermeneutics of Dogma by Eduardo J. Echeverria (*New York: Peter Lang, 2018*), xxi + 199.

CATHOLIC FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGIANS ought to attend to Eduardo Echeverria’s wide-ranging new book, appearing when foundational theological issues stand in the foreground, as witnessed by debates over *Amoris Laetitia*, critiques from the *Dubia* Cardinals, controversies over the death penalty, and the 2019 Amazon Synod. The scope of argumentation in Echeverria’s work is ambitious, encompassing essentialist-versus-historicist disputes over Vatican II (1–45), the nature of revelation, Scripture, and Tradition (47–92), questions of epistemic and theological foundationalism (93–152), and definitions of a Lérinian hermeneutics of tradition (153–74), as well as the development of dogma (175–95). While each theme might have filled out an entire volume, Echeverria in surveying each theme provides a compact yet comprehensive vision. The book is a contemporary manifesto for Catholic fundamental theology.

Catholic readers will be struck by the many Protestant (and especially Protestant Evangelical) authors cited here, including such luminaries as G. C. Berkouwer, G. E. Ladd, Colin Gunton, Paul Helm, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Oliver Crisp. This engagement with non-Catholic authors reflects Echeverria’s earlier, PhD-level training in Protestant dogmatics at the Free University of Amsterdam. Nonetheless, this work is not a mediation between Catholic and Evangelical reasoning, but rather a *constitutively Catholic argument* that selectively deploys ideas from Protestant as well as Catholic sources. Protestant insights here serve Catholic purposes. It is

not just that non-Catholics have good things to say, but that Evangelical thinkers in their two-century-long battle against modernist Protestantism have accumulated their own rich repertoire of arguments that prove useful. For Echeverria, ecumenism involves co-belligerency: the enemy of my enemy may prove to be my friend.

Among the Catholic thinkers whom Echeverria cites appreciatively are Thomas Aquinas, Yves Congar, Pope John XXIII, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Avery Dulles, Pope Benedict XVI, Aidan Nichols, Germain Grisez, Thomas Guarino, and (more surprisingly) Karl Rahner and David Tracy. Edward Schillebeeckx receives a mixed review in the book in light of his mid-career shift from realism to non-realism (24), as does Gavin D'Costa, since D'Costa rejects relativism but offers a position that Echeverria says is in need of a more robust metaphysical underpinning (27–29). Catholic historians and theologians who serve as a foil, against whom Echeverria reasons, include Giuseppe Alberigo, John O'Malley, Massimo Faggioli, Richard Gaillardetz, Lieven Boeve, and Christoph Theobald.

Echeverria opens his book by stating that “I am centrally concerned with the matter of diversity and discontinuity in theological expressions and formulations within a fundamental unity of truth” (1). As collectively “the specter of relativism, antirealism, or fideism” (97), he opposes a cluster of interrelated ideas: that theological assertions make no objective claims regarding the world (non-realism), involve no intellectual or propositional content (non-cognitivism, non-propositionalism), and are always subject to revision or replacement by some new assertion (fallibilism). He writes that “the rejection of a realist notion of truth and language is behind why many find implausible the normative truth of dogmas, creeds, and confessions” (129). The author displays constructive as well as polemical intent in his book, seeking not only to refute false ideas but also to propose better, alternative formulations.

Continuity and change in Catholic teaching, argues Echeverria, can be properly understood only if one distinguishes the universal and unchanging truths of the faith from their particular and time-bound forms of expression. What remain changeless are not specific words, nor even doctrinal concepts *per se*, but the underlying theological judgments and patterns of judgment (xvi). This core claim sets Echeverria at odds with John O'Malley, who uses the words “substantialism” or “essentialism” to typify those who in this way distinguish unchanging truths from their changing expressions (11). Echeverria argues that the truth-expression distinction is not only legitimate but necessary, and that it serves a central purpose in what he calls “the Lérianian legacy of Vatican II” (11). In defense of the truth-expression distinction, Echeverria appeals to

Congar's claim that the *nouvelle theologie* distinguished the "deposit of faith" from its "concrete expressions" (9). In "properly dogmatic formulas," wrote Congar, "this evolution [of dogma] can only mean development by way of clarification" (quoted on 10).

Echeverria takes issue with Alberigo's historicist (or Bologna) school of interpretation of Vatican II. For Alberigo, the "event character of the Council marks it as a 'rupture,' 'break,' or 'discontinuity'" vis-à-vis pre-Vatican II Catholicism (5).

By focusing on the "event" or "spirit" of Vatican II, Alberigo and others like him have held that the council's "spirit" is only partially captured in the texts emanating from the council (4). "The central thesis of the Bologna School is that the Council's texts . . . are not its primary elements." Instead, "primacy should be ascribed to the event itself, that is, the event of an emerging '*conciliar* consciousness'" (5). Echeverria notes the epistemic problems posed by this focus on "consciousness": Where exactly does this "consciousness" exist? In the minds of the council fathers? In all of them? In some of them? In the minds of later scholars? Among the Catholic faithful? Echeverria states the obvious by noting that one must read the texts to discern their "spirit." The carefully constructed compromise statements in the council texts need to be read on their own terms, and not reconstructed through a *Tendenzkritik* that purports to identify the textual "tendencies" in the documents and then aligns itself with preferred progressive "tendencies" (e.g., greater collaboration of the Vatican with the bishops, empowerment of the laity, cultural adaptations of liturgy and theology, etc.).

Echeverria appeals to Pope Benedict XVI's "hermeneutics of continuity," which he thinks Faggioli has misunderstood as a total continuity, and not as nuanced in terms of the truth-expression distinction (2). As noted already, O'Malley rejects "essentialist" notions of doctrine in favor of a "historicist" model, repudiating "the notion that dogma is immutable and irreformable, for historical expressions are always mutable and contingent and not divine truth per se" (quoted on 23). On the other hand, O'Malley seeks to deploy history as a means of challenging the *status quo*, as he writes: "*Ressourcement* is skeptical of the present because of what it has discovered in the past. It entails a return to the sources with a view not to confirming the present but to make changes in it" (quoted on 8). O'Malley takes issue with Newmanian development as an ever-richer understanding of age-old truths. In favor of Newman's—and his own—understanding of doctrinal development, Echeverria cites *Dei Verbum*, §8: "The Tradition that comes to us from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is growth in insight into the realities and

words that are being passed on" (quoted on 8).

Echeverria defends "doctrinal essentialism" in the sense that there is a core of truths—such as the Trinity and the Incarnation—that does not change when doctrines are expressed in differing historical contexts (22). If not only the formulations of truth, but the truth itself, were perpetually subject to revision, then the Church's dogmatic tradition would itself be constantly subject to revision. In such a case the deposit would no longer function as a foundation for the Church, and the Church would become a free-floating entity, continually subject to revisions of all sorts (19). The anti-essentialist line of reasoning thus ends up in a very un-Catholic sort of Catholicism. Yet Echeverria wants to free "essentialism" and "propositionalism" from misunderstandings, stating the "essentialist position" is consistent with "the need for new expressions," and that "there is no reason to think that the acceptance of truth as propositional leads to the claim that doctrinally correct formulations or expressions of revealed truth completely express such truth" (22). Following Congar, Echeverria argues that contrasting formulations of theological truth may be juxtaposed to give a more complete truth, and yet contrast is not the same thing as contradiction (17). Echeverria argues "that nonfoundationalism is incompatible with realism" (95) and refers to his own position as a "weak foundationalism," like that of Alvin Plantinga (101, 113). He is attentive to the biblical foundations of Catholic dogma, and situates divine revelation in a nexus that includes events as well as words: "Jointly constitutive of God's special revelation are its inseparably connected words (verbal revelation) and deeds, intrinsically bound to each other because neither is complete without the other" (57). Divine revelation also involves personal encounter, per *Dei Verbum* (63).

Echeverria's book highlights a number of key issues in fundamental theology. An unremittingly historicist interpretation of Christianity runs headlong into the modernist problem regarding the Church's founding—how can the contemporary Church look to an earlier Church for guidance if the Church in every era must always be judged in terms of its own historical context?—and the equally distressing Christological dilemma: why should Jesus remain religiously central for all times and places, when Jesus was a particular man, limited to one place, time, and culture? Echeverria's argument also underscores an often unacknowledged difficulty for the Catholic progressive. If he or she adopts a discontinuous or "rupture" interpretation of Vatican II, then this might serve to legitimate change in Church teaching and practice away from the *status quo*. Yet, logically speaking, such an interpretation might equally legitimate further changes as well, including changes in the reverse direction. No one need suppose

that any change will be permanent, and so the progressive notion of being on “the right side of history” becomes untenable when founded on the premises of a discontinuous history.

The Vatican’s theological practice contradicts a historically relativized view of Catholic teaching. Not only such compendia as Denzinger’s *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, but Vatican webpages too, offer abundant quotations and annotations linking present-day affirmations with texts stretching back for decades, generations, centuries, and millennia. Why all this fuss with documenting the Church’s past teaching if the teaching is wholly contextualized in each new generation? Vatican documents read in some sense like a legal code, with continual references to past precedents. Thus the very form of Vatican documents manifests a “hermeneutics of continuity” and suggests that theories of basic discontinuity are out of step with the content and format of the documents. In May 2019, German Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck predicted that the Amazon Synod later in the year would bring the Church to a “point of no return” and that thereafter “nothing will be the same.” Yet Echeverria’s argument rules out any future Catholicism in which “nothing will be the same.”

Echeverria’s argument against anti-foundationalism is, in my view, a weak part of his argument. Here the theological discussion of the “deposit of faith” becomes entangled with philosophical questions regarding the relation between epistemically foundational or derivative truths. To me these seem to be different sorts of issues. Perhaps because of my own training (partly at Yale, in the 1980s, under post-liberal thinkers), I am not initially convinced that realist epistemology and orthodox theological commitment to a “deposit of faith” rule out all versions of nonfoundationalist epistemology. Echeverria comes down hard on “critical realists,” including hermeneutical thinkers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer (128), who emphasized the essentially finite and limited nature of human understanding, along with the possibility and actuality of progress over time from less to more adequate formulations of the same truth. Phenomenologically speaking, is not Gadamer’s position congruent with daily experience? Pope John Paul II viewed Gadamer’s historically rooted yet non-relativistic conception of human understanding as foundational to his own theological work, and at Gadamer’s death the late Pontiff commented that “Gadamer was a committed defender of the importance of tradition for a correct way of knowing” (“Death Saddens John Paul II,” *Zenit*, March 17, 2002). Gadamerian “critical realism” might thus be sympatico with Catholic theology.

To continue this point: Echeverria opposes fallibilism in all forms, and yet there are construals of Charles Sanders Peirce that interpret his

fallibilism as a realist and non-relativist account of how truth is gradually uncovered through a convergent process within a community of inquiry. Peirce's fallibilism does a rather good job of accounting for continuity and change in scientific investigation, and I suspect that Peirce's ideas—including his fallibilism—could have a legitimate Catholic theological application. One of my worries regarding *Revelation, History, and Truth* is that Echeverría's argument against theological relativism may not be sufficiently safeguarded on the other side to escape the opposite error of theological rationalism. As Thomas Aquinas argued, divine revelation is conditioned both by the character of the Revealer (as infinite, all-knowing, perfectly truthful) and by the character of those receiving revelation (as finite, limited in knowledge, and biased against certain truths). Yes, God is Truth itself (or himself), but we know God always and only in a finite and human fashion. *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*. (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 75, a. 5, and elsewhere).

Because of Rahner's influential, non-referential rendering of biblical eschatological language, I would like to have learned more as to what critique Rahner's overall project might receive on the basis of Echeverría's premises. Moreover, I suspect that contemporary Evangelical thinkers may be sympathetic to his account of the nexus of word, event, and experience in divine revelation, and the gradual appropriation of divine revelation through Church Tradition. Evangelical thinkers today generally acknowledge a traditioning process in Church history. Yet Marian dogma remains a stumbling block to Evangelicals. Echeverría states that he is concerned with "level 1 teachings: *de fide* dogmas of the faith" (175), yet this must include Marian dogma, which is discussed only in a brief footnote (192n25). Marian dogma is a crucial though undeveloped test case for Echeverría's fundamental theology and for understanding how magisterial teaching regarding the Virgin Mary arises out of revelatory word-event-experience.

Setting aside these quibbles over certain details, the main line of argument in *Revelation, History, and Truth* is both clear and compelling. In his battle against doctrinal relativism, non-realism, and non-cognitivism, Echeverría has made an utterly convincing case. He summarizes: "Doctrinal relativism and its corollary of a perpetual hermeneutics is rejected because of its emphasis on doctrinal discontinuity, not merely discontinuity in expression of formulation, but a discontinuity that denies the enduring validity of truth, recognizing nothing but interpretations of interpretations, with our judgments never reaching the reality that makes them true" (26). Echeverría quotes Dulles: "If we are to worship, speak, and behave as though the Son of God were himself God . . . is it not

because the Son really and ontologically is God, whether anyone believes it or not?" (quoted on 24). Unremitting historicism and non-cognitivism among Catholic thinkers will lead finally to the same sort of intellectual dead-end and ecclesial shipwreck that modernist Protestantism arrived at via Ernest Troeltsch and Rudolf Bultmann. May God preserve the Church from such an outcome! And may such works as Echeverria's *Revelation, History, and Truth* point Catholic teachers toward a balanced understanding of how divergent and changing expressions of Catholic truth cohere with a foundational deposit of faith and unchanging Catholic dogma.

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The Indissolubility of Marriage: *Amoris Laetitia* in Context by Matthew Levering (*San Francisco: Ignatius, 2019*), 223 pp.

MY FIRST OBSERVATION on obtaining this book was that Professor Levering appears from the footnotes and bibliography to have read every academic article that has been written on the subject of *Amoris Laetitia*. The book considers the issue of the indissolubility of marriage from every imaginable perspective. Its form is broken into four chapters: "Eastern Orthodox, Patristic, Protestant, and Historical-Critical Perspectives on Marital Indissolubility"; "Marital Indissolubility from Trent through to Pope Benedict XVI"; "Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia* and Marital Indissolubility"; and "Theological *Ressourcement*: Aquinas on Marital Indissolubility."

The macro-level conclusion is that *Amoris Laetitia* does not change the Church's doctrine of marital indissolubility and, indeed, that Jesus "strongly affirms marital indissolubility, more clearly than he does almost any other Catholic teaching" (15). It is also shown that the Church Fathers of the first three centuries supported the idea and that the majority of the Church Fathers in the following centuries also affirmed the idea. Moreover, Levering observes that even those interpreters whose views have been explicitly commended by Pope Francis have all agreed that the Church's traditional teaching on marital indissolubility has not changed. From this fact Levering concludes that discussions around the topic of *Amoris Laetitia* should focus upon this shared ground of agreement.

Levering does however acknowledge that part of the problem surrounding interpretations of *Amoris Laetitia* is the absence of shared agreement among theologians on the principles of fundamental theology. Some theologians do not accept that revelation includes a specific truth content. For some revelation is nothing more than the awakening of the human spirit to divine love. As Arnauld Join-Lambert claims, different cultural contexts make different interpretations of revelation possible. If this is so, then the theological tradition which recognizes a common set of doctrines, truth claims, and moral principles as one of the so-called “marks” of the Church is obsolete. And if doctrinal unity is no longer necessary, then this has flow-on effects for how we understand the Petrine Office, and in particular the power of the “keys.” The Petrine Office loses its unifying charism. Moreover, if the power of the keys is limitless, which is another way of saying that the exercise of the power of the keys is not circumscribed by the deposit of the faith, by Scripture or by Tradition, classically understood, but is a kind of prerogative of the pontiff, analogous to a U.S. presidential pardon, then this represents a seismic shift in the field of ecclesiology. Although it is not often presented in this way, divisions over the interpretations of *Amoris Laetitia* are rooted in different approaches to fundamental theology. We have arrived at a moment in ecclesial history where the fact that something is a mortal sin in one archdiocese and a mere pastoral concern in another is seen by some theologians to be *prima facie* evidence of a *de facto* schism in the Church, and thus a cause for alarm, while for others this is not a problem at all but simply a manifestation of the Church’s cultural diversity.

Perhaps it is precisely because there is so much disunity at the level of fundamental theology that the drafters of *Amoris Laetitia* decided to deal with the most contentious issues in the footnotes. The footnotes in Levering’s work were also of greater than usual interest, and in particular footnote 67 on page 49 seemed to me to address the nub of the pastoral problem in the minds of many Catholics. To paraphrase the footnote, the question is: “does someone whose wife left him and his four children for a lesbian have to remain single for the rest of his life?” My own response to this question—much like Levering’s response (113)—is to endorse the position of Nicholas J. Healy Jr. discussed in footnote 6 on page 93, to the effect that a more promising alternative to Cardinal Kasper’s “follow the Eastern Orthodox” position is to expand the annulment process.

Levering also acknowledges that some theologians, following Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., are of the view that once a marriage breaks down it has “dissolved”; the bond has broken. For those in the tradition of Schillebeeckx, all doctrine is radically contextualized and “therefore identifies

the present cultural moment as the sole context in which any concrete propositional teaching can be deemed authentic" (123). If this principle is adopted as a foundation stone of fundamental theology then the notion of doctrinal unity or unity on matters of faith and morals is definitely obsolete because the cultural contexts will vary from one part of the world to another. In parts of Africa, for example, the practice of polygamy is part of the cultural context. Footnote 31 on page 168 fires a missile into Schillebeeckxian contextualism. Here Levering quotes Stephan Kampowski to the effect that "Christ can be the redeemer of mankind only if there actually *is* a humankind," that is to say, only if there is a human nature to be redeemed. Kampowski also observes that proponents of cultural contextualization always seem to want to play this card in relation to the sixth commandment. They do not seem to use it to endorse the practices of ritual murder among the Aztecs or the infanticide of the Spartans. This footnote was, however, written before the recent Synod on the Amazon, when cultural contextualization arguments were put forward to defend such practices as deliberately not baptising the indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin and otherwise affirming practices that seem to some to be in violation of the first commandment. As a matter of logic, if contextualism is a valid approach to fundamental theology then there would seem to be no reason to limit it to sexual practices, but also to expand the principle to apply to attitudes regarding property rights, social responsibilities to relatives, and even to conceptions of what idolatry might mean.

Levering has done the world of Catholic theology a great service by painstakingly trawling through the patristics, combing the works of St. Thomas, scanning the magisterial documents from Trent to our own times, sifting through the statements of the two great scholar popes, St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and actually reading the unusually long documents of the current pontificate and the off-the-cuff statements of Pope Francis and his favorite theologians—people like Archbishop Victor Fernandez, and, of course, Cardinal Kasper. In bringing together all of these sources Levering has defended the case that, apart from Schillebeeckx and some of his followers, popes, councils, and theologians have been in agreement from biblical times to the present on the point that a validly contracted marriage is indissoluble. This is the empirical data to be concluded from his research, while his own take on the data is that it should form the foundation of all theological reflections on *Amoris Laetitia*. His underlying point is that the data should prompt urgent re-thinking of the pastoral practices favored by some of the more liberal interpretations—that some of the pastoral practices and the theology associated with them have the inevitable (and, for some, intentional) result of undermining the doctrine

that a validly contracted sacramental marriage is indissoluble.

A secondary conclusion however, which is glaringly obvious from both the footnotes and the material covered in the body of the text, is that *Amoris Laetitia* is controversial because many leading theologians today are far from being in agreement with the magisterial tradition and the doctors of the Church about matters of fundamental theology. This of course includes the relationship between doctrine and pastoral practice, the powers of the Petrine Office, principles governing scriptural hermeneutics, the standing of pre-Christian sexual practices in cultures that have only recently encountered Christianity, and the relationship between moral theology and sacramental theology to name but a sample of the contemporary neuralgic flash points. As Levering perceives, what is really at stake is whether any doctrine can be held definitely by the Church. The path down which many theologians are going is one already traced out by the Protestant Reformers, but the current “reformers” lack their predecessor’s trust in the truth of Scripture, with the result that the danger of what St. John Henry Newman called “liberalism in religion” is real. N.V.

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The Holy Family: Model Not Exception by Mary Shivanandan (*Glen Echo, MD: KM Associates, 2018*), xxix + 292 pp.

IN 1981, Monsignor (later Cardinal) Carol Caffara († 2017) wrote a letter to Sister Lucia, the last living Fatima visionary, to ask for her prayers as he undertook the founding of the John Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family in Rome. He had no expectation of a reply. And so, he was surprised when, just a few days later, he received a response directly from Sister Lucia herself. In it she assured him of her prayers and expressed deep gratitude for his work. This was already more than he had asked for. But the letter went on. For Sister Lucia took the occasion as the moment to reveal the final aspect of the message of Fatima and quoted the now widely known and clearly prophetic words of Our Lady: “The final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be about marriage and the family.”

That Sister Lucia chose such an avenue to reveal Our Lady’s final message is noteworthy on its face. It is almost eerie to consider what has

happened since. And there is no small measure of irony in the fact that Cardinal Caffara, the first president of the John Paul II Institute in Rome and a well-known defender of marriage and the family, is likely watching in dismay as both the name and the founding vision at the heart of the Institute seem to be changing, perhaps irrevocably, to correspond with the signs of the times.

Clearly the battle for marriage and family is underway. Indeed, it has raged all around us for many years now. It can be difficult to remain steadfast in our confidence in the future. But we know we have every reason to remain so. For Sister Lucia recounts that Our Lady added these words of hope: "Don't be afraid; . . . Anyone who works for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be fought and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue."¹ However, Our Lady has already crushed its head.

We can be confident that our work to defend the sanctity of marriage and the family will bear fruit. And in her new book, *The Holy Family: Model not Exception*, Mary Shivanandan, an early graduate of the John Paul II Institute and professor for many years at its U.S. offshoot in Washington, DC, takes up the challenge. Here Shivanandan, now retired, offers us new insights into the best weapon we have. We can start, she argues, by recognizing that the sanctity on display in the Holy Family is not an exception, not some otherworldly reality or something meant only for a chosen few. Just as each of us is called to be a saint, so every family is called to reflect the communion of persons it is meant to reflect. As John Paul II says in his encyclical on the family, *Familiaris Consortio*, families must become what, in reality, they "already are." And this, argues Shivanandan, is a human reflection of the constant exchange of love and self-gift present in the inner life of the triune God. The Holy Family is a model for *all* families to follow, both shield and armor in our responsibility to bear witness to the culture of life and in our efforts to establish it. Each human family bears within itself the potential to become a conduit of grace and an ambassador of the new evangelization.

I first encountered the work of Shivanandan in her book *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, published in 1999. The work revealed an expert grasp of the meaning and significance of John Paul's theology of the body at a time when most people were just beginning to realize it. And John Paul's landmark teaching certainly remains the undercurrent of this most recent

¹ For more on this letter and Cardinal Caffara's comments on it, see Catholic News Agency, "Fatima Visionary Predicted 'Final Battle' Would Be Over Marriage, Family," July 8, 2016, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/fatima-visionary-predicted-final-battle-would-be-over-marriage-family-17760>.

volume. But here we find a dedicated and knowledgeable scholar bringing the work of a lifetime to bear on perhaps *the* challenge of our age. Shivanandan's purpose is to shed light on what we have so far failed to understand about the deeper meaning of the Holy Family.

The book is both historical and theological in its analysis. Shivanandan gives us a careful and thorough account of the historical development of the Catholic understanding of the family as the "domestic church," a descriptor first referenced by St. Augustine but one that required centuries to take formal shape. This scholarship is valuable in and of itself and surely will be plumbed for its rich historical citations from the Church Fathers, writings from the Middle Ages, the twentieth century, and the present time. But she also provides an analysis of the family as a reflection of the self-revelation of God as a Trinitarian communion of persons, highlighting the important contribution made by personalism to our understanding of this analogy. The notion of "person" had been developed well by Aquinas and others as a means of explicating the mystery of the Trinity. But Shivanandan argues that it really was not until the twentieth century that a new appreciation of the dignity of the person shed light on the family as a communion of persons. With this development, a new vista of research into the salvific meaning of the family was opened, terrain the author sets off to explore more fully throughout the book.

Within the context of the call to self-gift, Shivanandan provides important insights into the deeper meaning of spousal relations, of paternity and maternity, and of childhood, both divine and human. Presence to one another is the key to the enactment of the gift of self, she argues. Indeed what "makes the Holy Family a model par excellence for all Christian families" is "above all the faith of Mary and Joseph, both challenged and permeated by the presence of Christ" (95).

Here I would offer what I think is perhaps the most significant contribution of the book: an insightful exploration and explication of the significance of the role St. Joseph played and continues to play in salvation history. In exploring the communion of persons as a reflection of the Trinitarian vision of the family, Shivanandan shows that, without a proper understanding of Joseph, our understanding of the Holy Family—and by implication our own—is greatly impoverished. Shivanandan traces the gradual emergence of a fuller account of St. Joseph, describing the fluctuations in the Church's own thinking on his identity. This on-again, off-again history led, in the end, to the development of her teaching on him. Understandably, the Christological controversies in the early Church resulted in a singular emphasis on the person of Mary. But this began to shift in the Middle Ages when St. Thomas and others began to give more

attention to the person of Joseph and his attributes as father of Jesus. Devotion to him arose at the same time. The author lays out the trajectory of thought as St. Joseph's importance faded again in the chaotic years after the Reformation and subsequently during the Enlightenment and its culmination in the French Revolution. We learn of his reemergence during the nineteenth century as Pope Pius IX declared him the patron saint and protector of the Church. But what surprises is the fact that it was not until 1989—and St. John Paul's apostolic exhortation on St. Joseph, *Redemptoris Custos*—that the significance of his role in the communion of persons began to take shape.

Shivanandan demonstrates that our understanding of the Holy Family requires an appreciation of the full truth about Joseph as husband of Mary, as father of Jesus, and as protector of the Church. This fuller account begins with his role as Mary's true husband. Though the procreative dimension is not a part of their union on the earthly plane, he still makes of himself a gift to her: through the exchange of the sacred chastity in which they both share. For it is consent, not physical consummation, that renders the sacrament valid.

Second, we must grasp the meaning of the declaration that St. Joseph is patron saint and protector of the Church. It is not merely a label, a reverential mark of devotion to Jesus's earthly father; it is a real sign of something deeply meaningful. It points to and is a reflection of the fact that he served as protector of the Church's very inception in the womb of the Virgin Mother, and then as the child grew and matured. Being the protector of the Church was Joseph's fatherly mission, one that transcends merely earthly realities.

But it is Shivanandan's demonstration of the truth about Joseph's fatherhood that completes the picture. She points out that Joseph has been called many things: a putative father, a foster father, or an adoptive father. But she argues that Joseph is not only Jesus's earthly father, nor is he father to the divine Son in name only. St. Joseph must be seen as the "essential link between the majestic fatherhood of God and human fatherhood" (106). He is, in a sense, the earthly representative of fatherhood. Without Joseph, the Trinitarian reality at the heart of the communion of persons that constitute the Holy Family would be incomplete.

Shivanandan has provided us all with a rich resource for future research and an insight into the Holy Family that should give us a clear direction and hope. In an age when fatherhood—and fathers themselves—are variously maligned, marginalized, or ridiculed, we would do well to reconsider the model Joseph is for the men of our time. His significance for their lives as well as the life and future of the family goes well beyond earthly

concerns. For, without fathers, clearly, families would find it impossible to “become what they are.” And it may be that the future of humanity depends upon us fulfilling that call. 

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