

Book Reviews

The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation, edited by Tim Perry, foreword by Tracey Rowland, afterword by Matthew Levering (*Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019*), xix+314 pp.

NO POPE IN HISTORY has interacted as profoundly with Protestant theology as Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI, and probably no other pope has ever been called “a good Lutheran lad.” Previously nicknamed the “German shepherd” or “God’s rottweiler,” Catholic and Protestant theologians have now reached a consensus that Benedict XVI should rather be characterized as “God’s border collie,” meaning “small, tough, faithful to the Shepherd and to the ultimate welfare of the sheep” (5, cf. xvii). This is the conviction of Tim Perry, the editor of *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*, and Tracey Rowland, a Catholic Ratzinger scholar who provided the foreword to this fine volume that gently but firmly takes Ratzinger studies to ecumenical pastures.

On the back cover of the book, prominent Catholic names such as Charles J. Chaput and Scott Hahn rightly praise this collection of sixteen essays by Protestant theologians as being “suffused with fraternal respect” and “a model of authentic dialogue.” In the afterword, Catholic theologian Matthew Levering places the volume in “the very first rank—the top handful—of studies on Ratzinger’s thought,” bearing witness to the intellectual caliber of both Benedict XVI and contemporary Evangelical theologians (282).

The topics covered include truth, faith and reason, theology, Scripture, anthropology, Christology, Mariology, Trinity, ecumenism, priesthood, liturgy, Eucharist, preaching, prayer, and catechesis. Most of the articles of the volume remain on the descriptive level, explaining and appreciating Ratzinger’s insights, taking note of Catholic–Protestant differences, and sometimes trying to overcome them. The reader encounters impressively positive Protestant explanations of the Catholic Marian dogmas (by Perry) and the doctrine of the Eucharist (by Joey Royal). However, only a few of the authors engage in a critical and constructive dialogue with Ratzinger,

attempting to identify inconsistencies in his theology or suggesting new solutions to ecumenical problems. Peter Leithart's essay "One Book, One Body" is the most outstanding exception in this regard.

Leithart takes as his starting point Ratzinger's "one-Bible theology," that is, his vision of the relationship and unity between the Old and the New Testaments. Leithart applies this to Ratzinger's treatment of the Eucharist as meal and sacrifice. According to Leithart, Ratzinger downplays the meal in favor of the sacrifice. In this instance, Ratzinger uncharacteristically "tends toward spiritualization rather than incarnation" (202) and fails to exhaust the ecumenical potential of his scholarly sources (notably the work of Hartmut Gese). As a witty Protestant, Leithart contends: "To prioritize the Eucharist over the meal, to treat the Eucharist as if it is a separable action, is as odd as offering table prayer for a meal that is not eaten" (198).

Ben Myers's lead article, "Truth, not Custom," presents another fairly original idea. Myers identifies the "priority of communal belonging" as the problem of modern Protestant theology, whereas both Luther and Ratzinger are portrayed as rightly prioritizing "truth over communal belonging" (11–12). This way of putting it sounds somewhat strange to Catholic ears, though it certainly gives food for thought. From a Catholic perspective, the axiom is easily applied to non-Catholics, but what about Catholics? After all, Ratzinger lays heavy emphasis on the community of the Church, its faith, and the truth of its faith, to the extent that it seems difficult to pit truth and Church against each other. Would Ratzinger encourage a Catholic convinced of the falsity of some Catholic dogmas to become Protestant, or to humbly submit to the magisterium and remain in the Church?

This problem is connected to the point raised by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, who identifies Benedict XVI's Catholic position as follows: "Scripture, tradition and the Roman magisterium always coincide, because they are guided by the same Spirit" (85). Though not far off the mark, this is in fact incorrect. Carl R. Trueman is more nuanced in recognizing that not all Catholic teaching is infallible and emphasizing the important point that Ratzinger criticized Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* for failing to address "the fallibility of the Church and the need for criticism of tradition" (164). The appealing idea of Scripture as a correcting rule and judge, even of the Church, is raised by several contributors, but so is Ratzinger's equally compelling criticism of the "inner difficulties" of sola Scriptura, such as its tendency to hand "the definition of faith over to whatever happens to be the latest scholarly consensus" (164). While some of the authors wish to portray Ratzinger as a "sola Scriptura Catholic" (Christopher R. J. Holmes

on 106 and Perry on 7), others recognize that sola Scriptura really lies at the heart of the dividing line between Ratzinger and the Reformation (Gregg R. Allison, Vanhoozer, Trueman).

Trueman's essay provides a most brilliant two-sentence summary of the fundamental nature of the Catholic-Protestant divide: "Roman Catholicism is not simply Protestantism with a different set of doctrines. It is a different way of thinking about Christianity, a way that draws a very tight connection between Scripture, tradition, and the doctrine of the church in a manner alien to Protestantism" (153). This is seconded by Gregg Allison, who describes Catholicism and Protestantism as "significantly different theological systems grounded on different axioms (the Roman Catholic nature-grace interdependence and Christ-church interconnection; the Protestant principles of sola Scriptura and justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone), different structures of authority, different ecclesiologies, and more" (63; in the same vein, see also Vanhoozer on 70). Rather than listing two or three doctrines, something like this should become the standard answer to the simplistic but common question: "What is the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism?" The really decisive follow-up question is whether these two ways of thinking can be reconciled or not. The Ratzingerian answer would probably be a biblical one: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Joseph Ratzinger and the Healing of the Reformation-Era Divisions, edited by Emery de Gaál and Matthew Levering (*Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Academic, 2019*), xxvii+371 pp.

WHEN GEORGE SMITH first deciphered the Mesopotamian account of the Flood and realized he was the first person to read it in a couple thousand years, he started running around the room in excitement and taking his clothes off. Without the undressing part, I experienced the same impulse while reading *Joseph Ratzinger and the Healing of the Reformation-Era Divisions*, a collection of seventeen priceless chapters by both Catholic and Protestant scholars, coming out of a conference held in 2017 to celebrate Joseph Ratzinger's ninetieth birthday and to commemorate the five-hundred-year anniversary of the Reformation. This wonderful book takes its place as clearly the leading volume on Ratzinger and Catholic-Protestant ecumenism.

Based on his media image, recently reinforced by the Netflix movie

The Two Popes, one would not think that Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI would prove a relevant figure in overcoming the centuries-old Catholic–Protestant divide. All one remembers about Benedict XVI and ecumenism, based on news coverage, is that he said Protestant churches are not really churches. Fortunately, the scholars contributing to the present volume dig deeper, look behind the scenes, and uncover Ratzinger/Benedict’s “history-changing contributions” (22), such as saving the Catholic–Lutheran Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and making “The Thames flow into the Tiber.” (Talk about an ingenious chapter title!)

In order, the topics covered in this volume include papal primacy, principles of ecumenism, exegesis and liturgy, secularism, Mariology, public theology, Christology, Luther, love, Eucharist, creation, conscience, missiology, justification, Radical Orthodoxy (John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, et al.), and the relationship between Scripture, Tradition, and Church. Space does not permit me to review all of the articles; instead, I will highlight only some points that I found particularly illuminating.

As editor, Matthew Levering opens the introductory chapter with a comparison of Karl Rahner’s and Joseph Ratzinger’s views on attaining Christian unity. Rahner presents what Thomas A. Baima calls “a Pelagian view of ecumenism” (23), a rash manmade institutional unification which might be a marvel of pragmatic skill but could not account for its structures in terms of God’s instituting Word (xix). Ratzinger’s model is more theological and patient: respecting our differences, accepting the good reasons both sides have for them, and thus learning from each other, “will in the end deepen our unity and, in God’s time, will allow for the ‘must’ of division to give way to a doctrinally articulated unity-in-diversity” (xxi).

But what should this unity-in-diversity look like? In his article on the principles of ecumenism, Baima makes a helpful distinction between the Church’s *structure* and its *institution*. For example, in communist Ukraine there was no Catholic ecclesial *institution*, but the sacramental and apostolic *structure* of the Church remained. The two terms are often confused; distinguishing between them helps to clarify that the goal of Christian unity is not necessarily a common *institution*, but it does include a common sacramental *structure*. Baima also notes that Ratzinger rejected “the return model used by the Council of Florence” when he famously said that “Rome must not require more of the East with respect to the doctrine of primacy than had been formulated and was lived in the first millennium” (28). Baima raises the very pertinent question as to how this might “inform dialogue with the communities of the Reformation” (29). Would it not

mean, for example, that Rome should not demand that Protestants accept the dogmatic definitions of 1854, 1870, and 1950 as such, but simply admit that they are not heretical doctrinal developments? (The next question would be whether Catholics could also legitimately think so.)

The question is very much connected to the relationship between Scripture and the Church, treated by Douglas A. Sweeney in his important contribution. While acknowledging rapprochement between Evangelicals who are “sinking deeper roots in Church history, growing more catholic in their handling of the Bible, and working much harder on the doctrine of the Church than they ever have before” (349) and Catholics who, taught by Ratzinger, have moved “past the notion that their doctrine has remained ever the same” (367), Sweeney argues that Ratzinger’s theology of revelation creates new ecumenical obstacles by making it more difficult to speak of the Bible as revelation, to use it to call for reformation in the Catholic Church, and to distinguish the teachings of Scripture from those of Tradition. Yet such a distinction exists and is quite important, for as Evangelicals believe (and Catholics can agree), “the Bible has inherent power to save us from the ravages of sin, death, and Satan outside the Catholic Church,” such as at “Billy Graham crusades, in soup kitchens and jails, in hotel rooms with Bibles, through personal Gospel witness,” and so on (368). That kind of power can hardly be found in a *Pastor Aeternus* or a *Munificentissimus Deus*.

But can there be rapprochement on the vexing issues of the papacy and Mariology? An affirmative answer is suggested by Ratzinger’s “martyrological” theology of the papacy and his Christological Mariology. At the end of his fine paper on the former topic, the Bishop Rudolf Voderholzer of Regensburg asks: “Could Luther in all seriousness have termed the papacy as the ‘antichrist’ when faced not only with our current Pope but also Pope Benedict XVI? . . . Is it even possible to make the papal office more in line with the Gospel or more in line with Christ?” (15). As far as the latter topic is concerned, the book contains a veritable pearl of great price, namely notes from Ratzinger’s “only Mariology course,” obtained from a “student’s unpublished script” (94) and commented upon by editor Emery de Gaál, who suggests as many as ten possible contributions of Ratzinger’s Mariological approach to the healing of Reformation-era divisions. These include paying attention to the hierarchy of truths and canonical exegesis.

Canonical exegesis is a theme that understandably features in more than one chapter. Mariusz Biliniewicz shows how exegesis is connected to liturgical renewal: how one sees the relationship between the Old and New Testaments affects one’s view of the nature of New Covenant worship.

Despite an initial Ratzingerian critique of some Protestant principles of exegesis, Biliniewicz ends with Ratzinger's highly appreciative evaluation of Lutheran liturgy: "It always impresses me that our Protestant brethren, in transforming the medieval liturgical forms, have achieved a real balance between, on the one hand, the relationship of the community to its leader and, on the other, their common relationship to the cross" (73).

Another essay in which canonical exegesis plays an important role is Timothy Larsen's "Joseph Ratzinger on the Nativity of the Lord: Protestants and Catholics Reunite for Christmas," which I have to admit was—to my great surprise—my favorite chapter in the book. It contains multiple super-interesting threads, only some of which can be briefly outlined below. First, with regard to exegesis, Larsen writes that Ratzinger's *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives* "could have been written by an evangelical Protestant such as a Wheaton professor," for it is so completely in accord with "the kind of biblical interpretation that is done . . . at Wheaton" (126). But Larsen goes further and admits that Ratzinger's canonical exegesis taught him the biblical basis for many Christmas traditions that he had "always assumed were exclusively based in culture" (125), such as the ox and the ass at the manger (see Isa 1:3).

Second, Larsen writes about the Christmas truce of 1914, where Protestants and Catholics, Englishmen and Germans, gathered in No Man's Land for an ecumenical worship service in defiance of military orders, singing each other's songs and exchanging gifts. Third, there is the observation that this sort of ecumenical exchange of gifts continues to this day: Catholic hymnals contain Protestant Christmas carols and vice versa. Fourth, there is the ironical reality of an Evangelical focus on the so-called secular "War on Christmas" (e.g. "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas"), for the "original war on Christmas was a Protestant crusade" (128)—in Calvinist Scotland celebrating Christmas was actually punishable, and even Wheaton College used to specifically hold final exams for the fall term through Christmas (in 1864, they were held on December 26), which would prevent students from celebrating at home with family on the day itself. This is a logical consequence of the "regulative principle" interpretation of sola Scriptura (Reformed, not Lutheran), which stipulates that "whatever is not given specific warrant in the New Testament is not allowed to be included in congregational worship and the life of the Church" (128). The theological and ecumenical lesson is that Christmas has in fact relaxed the regulative principle for the vast majority of Protestants: it is a church tradition, "but one that points us toward rather than away from Christ and the Scriptures" (129).

There would be much more to quote from Larsen's most delightful article, but instead of more quotes I will rather conclude with a personal testimony. Looking at the table of contents, I thought this would be the least interesting of all the chapters. How could Christmas, that all-too-familiar annual holiday, have anything to do with the Reformation-era divisions? In the end, this turned out to be precisely the article that set me running around the apartment in excitement. And then I had an idea. I live in the country of Santa Claus (he does not live on the North Pole, but on the Arctic Circle in Finnish Lapland); how about organizing the next ecumenical Ratzinger conference over here and visiting good old St. Nicholas together? Indeed, the conference is now being planned for early June, 2022, and you can find more information on it at ratzingerandreindeer.wordpress.com. N.V

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The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman, edited by Frederick D. Aquino and Benjamin J. King (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018*), xiii + 604 pp.

POPE FRANCIS PROCLAIMED in his homily for the canonization of Saint John Henry Newman (October 13, 2019) that: "Faith calls for journey, a 'going out' from ourselves, and it can work wonders if we abandon our comforting certainties, if we leave our safe harbours and our cosy nests. . . . Faith increases by giving and grows by taking risks" (see Vatican website). Along the same lines, in light of Newman's canonization, Prince Charles of Wales wrote: "We can draw inspiration from [Newman's] writings and his life even as we recognise that, like all human lives, it was inevitably flawed. Newman himself was aware of his failings, such as pride and defensiveness which fell short of his own ideals, but which, ultimately, left him only more grateful for the mercy of God." In beautiful homage to Newman's legacy, Prince Charles continues: "In the image of divine harmony which Newman expressed so eloquently, we can see how, ultimately, as we follow with sincerity and courage the different paths to which conscience calls us, all our divisions can lead to a greater understanding and all our ways can find a common home."¹

¹ vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2019-10/newman-canonization-prince-charles-editorial-britain.html.

While neither Pope Francis nor Prince Charles were speaking of the academic sub-field of Newman studies, their words hold a certain sting for those entrenched both in the study of John Henry Newman in the academy and in more popular arenas. This is because many of the controversies that surfaced during Newman's own lifetime still cause friction amongst those active in the reception of his ideas and the way historians tell and retell the story of his life of faith. However, as Newman scholarship continues to grow and more become acquainted with the writings of the newly minted saint, we will hopefully continue to see research poised to bridge ideological and methodological gaps, rather than seeking to consistently tear down the research of those with whom we disagree ideologically. With its wide-ranging methodological schema and ecumenical cast of contributors, the compilation of essays reviewed here is one of the more recent attempts at bridging the ideological and methodological disconnects in contemporary Newman scholarship.

The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman is organized into four parts. Part 1 looks at the historical and social context of Newman's writings. The five essays making up part 1 investigate the Oxford Movement, the Oratory, Newman's time in Ireland, his relationship with his brothers, and print culture as the context for understanding Newman and Newman scholarship. Part 2 investigates influences on Newman, with five essays discussing the Church Fathers, Joseph Butler, the British Naturalist tradition, Evangelicals, and Richard Whatley as influences on Newman. The third part, which happens to be the most extensive section in the book, is interested in the theological (section a) and the philosophical and literary (section b) themes of Newman's writings. Section (a) includes essays on the Anglican parish sermons, justification, the *sensus fidelium*, doctrinal development, revelation, ecclesiology, and infallibility, with a final essay is on ecumenism, Mariology, and the papacy. Section (b) includes essays explaining Newman's epistemology, political and social thought, philosophy of education, conscience, the *Apologia*, and Newman's literary style. The final part, part 4, addresses the ongoing significance of John Henry Newman's life and writings. The five essays making up the fourth part deal with Catholic theological receptions, Anglican theological receptions, the university, historiography, and Newman's literary legacy.

To help contextualize the contemporary divide in Newman scholarship, one must understand it within the framework of Frank Turner's controversial depiction of Newman in his *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* and the heated back-and-forth between Simon Skinner and Eamon Duffy that ensued as a result of the methodological

and ideological differences in the narration of the reception history of Newman.² Though Turner's volume has often been deemed in Newman literature as too critical of Newman or not properly understanding Newman, a deep historical analysis was achieved in composing the book. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the methodology or even the thesis, Turner's work should be taken seriously in the study of John Henry Newman. However, few have given Turner's work more than a cursory analysis, except when looking to dispute his claims. In many cases, Turner's work is simply ignored and not cited in the footnotes of works on Newman.

An obvious companion to Aquino's and King's earlier edited volume *Receptions of Newman* (2015), which was also published by Oxford University Press, featuring an almost identical cover, and dedicated "to Frank Turner and Basil Mitchell for opening up new historical and philosophical lines of inquiry," *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* is very much interested in investigating these "new historical and philosophical lines of inquiry." Many essays in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* take seriously Turner's research and look to either qualify or temper his research based on new and updated scholarship. This said, the aim of this handbook is not focused primarily on Turner's work. Rather, it introduces in some depth a vast array of the most up-to-date Newman scholarship. The editors make it a point that they are interested in moving past the tired hagiographical/iconoclast slump Newman scholarship had experienced in the 1990s and early 2000s when they write: "In assembling scholars who are neither uncritically dedicated to nor reacting against Newman in doctrinaire fashion, this Handbook seeks to explore him with critical appreciation and to assess the large amount of secondary literature" (2).

The theological and historical techniques in this volume range from historical to philosophical, and always with an eye toward the theological. The variation in methodologies demonstrates the multi-dimensional character of Newman studies. Aquino, a philosopher by trade, and King, a historian, complement one another in terms of methodological leanings. This volume does an excellent job of introducing the most recent Newman scholarship and goes deep enough into the arguments to leave the reader

² See Frank M. Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). The back-and-forth between Simon Skinner and Eamon Duffy was published as a series of corresponding articles in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* as late as ten years after the publication of Turner's book (and after Turner's death in 2010). The initial article in this particular exchange was Simon Skinner, "History versus Hagiography: The Reception of Turner's Newman," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61, no. 4 (2010): 764–781.

itching to research further. Each chapter essay ends with both references and suggested readings, which is quite helpful for those using this as a steppingstone to further research. However, each chapter essay functions as a stand-alone argument with an independent thesis, making this truly a handbook for a broad range of Newman's thought, rather than a homogenized set of essays arguing different angles to similar topics. The diversity of methodologies and depth of research presented in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* have done a great service for the academic study of St. John Henry Newman, and it will be used in Newman scholarship for years to come.

The only weakness of this book is the lack of emphasis on his role as a pastor, or to be more precise, on the role that his pastorate had on his theology, with the exception of Eamon Duffy's chapter, "The Anglican Parish Sermons" (chapter 11). After reading through the essays in the volume, I was left wondering what impact his time at St. Clements or Littlemore, or even his role as pastor in the Birmingham Oratory, may have had on his more academically inclined work, such as his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* or his *Grammar of Assent*. More than anything, though, this lacuna should be viewed positively, as a place for further research.

The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman serves as both an excellent introduction to the depth of Newman scholarship and a demonstration of the shift within it from a more hagiographical read of Newman. It presents a more systematic and historical approach to his writings, using Newman's own writings as sources while also situating them in the historical context in which he lived and wrote. This book looks critically at both Newman's ideas and the historical and intellectual context that produced the Newman who was (and still is) so influential today.

This book comes highly recommended for anyone even remotely interested in Newman and Newman-related scholarship. Persons of any methodological persuasion will find this book beneficial, and it serves as an excellent companion for those enmeshed in Newman scholarship particularly, but also those interested in Victorian studies more broadly. The further reading and bibliographic information at the end of each chapter is also quite useful. All in all, this book will continue to be one of the go-to handbooks for the study of John Henry Newman for many years to come.

N.V.

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A Greek Thomist: Providence in Gennadios Scholarios by Matthew C. Briel (*Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020*), xv + 270 pp.

A GREEK THOMIST is the revised version of Matthew C. Briel's doctoral dissertation written at Fordham University under the direction of George Demacopoulos. In its adapted and published form, this monograph is an important contribution to a dramatically under-researched area of Church history and historical theology: (1) the complex transition period before and right after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and (2) the reception and integration into Orthodox theology of key elements Thomas Aquinas's thought by the leading Byzantine Orthodox intellectual of his day—Gennadios Scholarios. The volume is heavily researched and very well documented; the bibliography alone comprises forty-nine pages and the endnotes another sixty pages. The book includes translations by the author of major parts of Scholarios's *First Tract on Providence* and an appendix listing fifteenth-century Greek texts on providence by Scholarios and his contemporaneous interlocutors. *A Greek Thomist* opens a welcome and most instructive window on a lost world unknown to most Catholics in the West.

The central figure of the monograph is Gennadios Scholarios, who was born in Constantinople around 1400, where he received an excellent philosophical and theological education (and possibly was a student of the philosopher Gemistos Plethon, an extraordinary polymath, celebrated Platonist, and the leading secular intellectual of his day). Scholarios, then a layman, ran a school of philosophy in Constantinople and eventually was asked (as was Plethon) to be part of the delegation of about seven hundred persons, including the emperor John VIII Palaeologos and the Patriarch of Constantinople Joseph II, to the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1445) that concluded with the decree of union, *Laetentur Caeli*, signed on July 6, 1439. After their return to Constantinople, many of the Greeks repudiated the union; among them was Scholarios, who while in Italy had strongly supported it. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Mehmed II, in an attempt to use the Orthodox Church to stabilize his empire, appointed Scholarios patriarch of Constantinople and granted him ecclesiastical as well as civil authority. In 1454 he was consecrated by the metropolitan of Heraclea Perinthus. Because Scholarios was a lay scholar when appointed patriarch, he was consecutively ordained, first as a deacon, then as a priest, then finally as a bishop, before being appointed patriarch. After three years, Scholarios resigned and retired to the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner, fifty miles northeast of Thessaloniki, where he died in 1472. Having

been throughout his intellectual career a strong advocate of Aristotelian philosophy (in opposition to the Plethon's programmatic resuscitation of Platonism), Scholarios—as Briel shows persuasively—begins to draw upon Aquinas's works in a deep and sustained way (by translation and commentary) after his return from Florence during his opposition to the union and right up to his death in 1472—a reception of Thomas Aquinas's thought that culminates in the composition of his five tracts on divine providence.

Yet why would anyone who is not an expert in Eastern Orthodox theology, in the late Byzantine Empire and its final fall in 1453, or someone with the recondite interest in one of the more arcane fields of intellectual history—the reception of Thomas Aquinas's thought by medieval Orthodox theologians in the Byzantine Empire—want to read a volume like this one? Has not Marcus Plested in his very fine book *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford University Press, 2012) said everything one might want to know about the latter? What else could a work like this teach a theologically interested audience in the early twenty-first century, mostly not made up of Byzantinists? Any reader of Briel's book will find out quickly not only that the book is eminently readable but also that it is surprisingly relevant for Catholic theology in the Latin West, and this for at least three reasons: (1) Briel opens a fascinating window into the theological discourse on divine providence from a time-period that could only have been understood by all contemporaries as pervasively and persistently catastrophic—the theological questions raised and the answers given ring authentic in a contemporaneous context that has its own dimensions of dramatic decline and catastrophe, a context in which many wonder about God's existence, presence, and providence. (2) Briel's study illustrates that understanding the development of Catholic theology in the emerging Renaissance and on the eve of the Protestant Reformation is greatly aided by grasping the intellectual and theological influence of the constantly present “other” to the Latin West, the rich and sophisticated Byzantine theological and intellectual life. (3) In the background of Briel's study stands the clearly articulated and frequently repeated claim that Scholarios's reception of Aquinas's thought and successful integration into a Palamite framework made possible a version of a, so to speak, “orthodoxly” refined and perfected Thomism that—had it been re-received in the West—might have helped avoid later debilitating dead-ends, as (in)famously, the *De auxiliis controversy* in the late sixteenth and very early seventeenth centuries between Dominicans and Jesuits.

A Greek Thomist comprises seven chapters divided into three parts. In the first two chapters, Briel paints a vivid picture of the last century

of the ever-shrinking Byzantine Empire—a century in which frequent devastating earthquakes occurred, in which the plague struck severely and recurrently, drastically diminishing the population, in which the Ottoman conquests occurred more and more frequently, and in which—last but not least—a civil war weakened Constantinople from the inside during the time of its greatest need for political stability and strength. Affliction is at the heart of many people's lives and the source of the question where God is in the middle of these catastrophes. Apocalypticism—Scholarios together with many other Byzantine Christians expected the world to end in 1492—and a resurgence of classical Greek *tyche* as well as an encounter with Muslim *qismet* were key elements of a shared intellectual context in which the question was pressed whether God is free and all-powerful (or possibly bound and limited by the laws of nature and history that God had set up himself) and whether human beings are free (or whether their acts are fated). Scholarios develops an answer in which he argues—largely on the basis of Aquinas's work—that both are the case: God is sovereignly free and the human being is free as well. Yet how is God's providence actually to be conceived of in light of these two suppositions?

In order to contextualize Scholarios's theology of divine providence theologically, in the second part, Briel adumbrates first the Greek Patristic, then the Byzantine theologians, and finally Aquinas as the theological resources Scholarios drew upon. Briel advances a nuanced discussion of Origen's account of divine providence and human freedom, especially in Origen's Romans commentary and in the anthology of his writings that was preserved under the title *Philokalia*, Maximus the Confessor's theology of providence, and finally, the account John of Damascus gives in his *On the Orthodox Faith*. A fascinating discussion throughout this part is the question of the limit of life and the hour of death; Briel displays a wide command of sources and voices of Orthodox theology over the course of eight hundred years. Compared with this rich and nuanced discussion the very brief chapter on Aquinas's theology of providence does unfortunately not quite rise to the same level of nuance and penetration.

In the last culminating part of his study, Briel lays out the development of Scholarios's thought on providence from 1432 until his death in 1472. It is in this part that Scholarios's central antagonist (and likely former teacher), Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452), makes his appearance. Plethon was one of the most renowned philosophers of the late Byzantine period and was the main motor of the revival of Platonism in the Italy of the fifteenth century (due to his presence in Florence during the union council). Raised in a family of well-educated Christians, Plethon turned

away from the faith and became what one might call somewhat anachronistically a secular philosopher, first in Constantinople and later in Mystras, the Byzantine capital and cultural center on the Peloponnese. As became clear only after his death, Plethon was, as Scholarios had long suspected and learned by way of reading the *Nomoi*, a polytheist, who endorsed a return to the religion of the Hellenic gods. During his lifetime, however, Plethon was known for arguing that Platonism was more conducive to the Christian faith than Aristotelianism—he lectured on the topic of the differences between Platonism and Aristotelianism, favoring Platonism, with great effect in Florence.

In response to Plethon's teaching in his *De differentiis*, Scholarios offered a defense of Aristotle, to which Plethon responded again. Scholarios also responded critically to Plethon's treatise on fate and, based on this initial response, began to develop his increasingly nuanced theology of divine providence. Briel argues convincingly throughout his third part that, in both responses to Plethon, it was actually Thomas's perfected version of Aristotle and key moves of Thomas's theology of providence that formed the heart of Scholarios's rebuttals. The strength of Scholarios's response to Plethon comes from an Aristotle perfected by Aquinas's interpretation and improvement.

The acme of the book is a close reading with translation and a historical and theological interpretation of Scholarios's *First Tract on Providence* (the first of five tracts). It is fascinating and instructive to observe the selective integration of Thomas's thought into Scholarios's Orthodox theological framework (shaped by Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus). Scholarios does draw upon the extant Greek translations of the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae* as well as upon his own translations/commentaries of the *De ente et essentia* and of Thomas's commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De anima*. Scholarios might also have translated Thomas's commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior analytics*, now lost. Where matters remain somewhat fuzzy in Briel's otherwise lucid interpretation (most likely due to Scholarios's own unclarity) is the precise nature of the metaphysical integration of Thomas's account of divine simplicity within the Palamite real distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies. That at least a non-contradiction between these two is conceivable, if not even a positive metaphysical integration, other scholars have also tried to argue in recent years, yet it remains unclear how Scholarios actually does achieve this integration in a way that would satisfy both the Thomist and the Palamite.

When one has completed Briel's monograph, one has a sense that

Scholarios is advancing a substantive account of divine providence very much *ad mentem S. Thomae* yet subtly qualified by a wider Orthodox theological framework, and thereby an implicit answer to all those who would be attracted to or troubled by Plethon's teaching on fate. Based on Aquinas, Scholarios advances an account of *liberum arbitrium* to which no Origenist can object and an account of transcendent divine causality to which no fatalist can object. What is excluded by Scholarios, a fact strongly emphasized by Briel, is the discussion of predestination (in the way Briel takes it to follow from Augustine's late writings on grace).

Briel relies astutely on Newman and MacIntyre for a sophisticated concept on discursive traditions and the development of Tradition, and indeed, of doctrine. These resources allow him to unfold the complex narrative of the integration of Aquinas's Aristotle and key concepts of Aquinas's own metaphysics (the real distinction between *esse* and *essentia* and the related concepts of divine simplicity and transcendent causality) into a Palamite theological framework. Yet this sophisticated hermeneutic is not applied with equal nuance to the Western tradition, whether in regard to the complex Augustinian tradition in its own right or to the Thomist tradition in its various sub-strands. Here the book leaves a lot to desire, be it in regard to Augustine (who appears primarily as a negative foil conveying largely the reception of Augustine as found in Calvinism and Jansenism), or in regard to the profound and complex theological discourse and development around "nature and grace" (the brief and uncommented references to *natura pura* do not inspire confidence, nor the references to "irresistible grace"—a concept of Protestant Reformed theology—that "forces" human freedom, a notion foreign to any of the participants in the *De auxiliis* controversy). Briel seems to imply that in the account of divine causality of divine predetermination of the human act—the technical term among Thomists for that is "praemotio physica"—advanced by one party in the debate is a causality competitive to human freedom. Briel's claim at the end of his book that "it was a presupposition of both the Jesuits and the Dominicans that grace was irresistible" (130) does not do justice to the either position, to say the least. Even the most basic recent literature on these, admittedly complex, topics would have saved the work from a number of avoidable infelicities. It seems that to communicate one complex theological tradition successfully to another and to suggest what are taken to be superior aspects of the former to be considered and possibly adopted by the latter, presupposes a presentation of the latter that matches the presentation of the former in precision and nuance. In a tightly organized monograph, matters of great complexity that are not at the center

of the discussion might unavoidably be painted with all too broad a brush. These reservations are therefore meant to encourage the kind of follow-up work that might balance out and clarify these matters in order ultimately to facilitate what seems to be the deeper intention of the author—the re-reception of an “orthodoxy” refined and perfected Thomism into the Western theological tradition.

Notwithstanding these reservations, *A Greek Thomist* is a noteworthy contribution to understanding Byzantine theology around the fall of Byzantium in 1453, and more specifically a remarkable contribution to a fuller understanding of the leading Byzantine theologian of the period, Gennadios Scholarios, and as such an important contribution to the complex reception of Thomas Aquinas’s thought by later generations of theologians, West and East, and finally a welcome exercise in educating Western theologians, Catholic and Protestant, in the history, theology, and intellectual life of Eastern Orthodoxy in general, and of the last century of the Byzantine Empire specifically—something about which Christians in the West remain notoriously undereducated and misinformed. All of this united in an overall well-researched and compellingly written volume, is a commendable scholarly achievement. N.V

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To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God by Jacob Wood (*Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2019*), xvi + 472 pp.

RARELY IS IT THE CASE that a contribution to the nature–grace debate receives near-universal approval. John Milbank’s *The Suspended Middle* (Eerdmans, 2005) met approbation from many supporters of Henri de Lubac, and many neo-Thomistic readers reacted similarly to Lawrence Feingold’s *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Sapientia Press, 2010 [2nd ed.]). Jacob Wood has succeeded in garnering approval from both camps. More impressive than this peacemaking is the depth of thought and scholarship on display. It is unequivocally the most significant contribution to the nature–grace debate since those works, and lays much of the foundation for a rapprochement between the two sides of the debate.

Wood's contribution here is so significant precisely because of the methodology he employs. At its heart *To Stir a Restless Heart* is an examination of the development of two aspects of Thomistic thought: the relation between reason and the will and the relation between matter and form. After an introduction to Augustine's theology of the desire of God and the contours of the debate over de Lubac, the first chapter lays out the debates taking place in Paris that predated Thomas's academic work. Wood lays out Peter Lombard's Augustinian theology of creation and Philip the Chancellor's attempt to integrate Aristotelian natural philosophy with the received Augustinian theology. He then presents receptions of Avicenna and Averroes, followed by Bonaventure's attempt to integrate the two Aristotelian traditions. Most fundamental to this section of the book is the relation between matter and form. For Avicenna, the soul desires an end just as a body desires to be at rest in a place, and so moves in that direction; there is "a positive motion toward God" belonging to human nature (132). In William of Auvergne's hands, Avicenna's approach lends itself to affirming "a natural inclination that can only be satisfied by the vision of God" (86). In contrast, those reading Averroes would have concluded that what matter (and human nature) naturally desire must be attainable by nature, and so had trouble articulating the openness of human nature to God (135).

The next four chapters present St. Thomas's developing thought on these questions, beginning with his studies as a bachelor of the *Sentences* in Paris at 1252. As a consequence of matter's purely passive character, it has a passive appetite that "merely designates the potential to receive" substantial forms (147). As matter possesses a capacity to receive forms from an outside power, such as God, human nature has a capacity to receive grace, such that "what Albert called a potency for obedience is for Thomas contained among the properties of our material potency, broadly conceived" (149). When it comes to the natural desire for God, Aquinas concludes in his commentary on the *Sentences* that "human nature can by all means be said to have a natural *appetite* for the vision of God, because it is passively capable of receiving the vision of God, but it cannot be said to have a natural *desire* to see God . . . because that would require that the vision of God fall within the range of activity" open to the active powers of human nature (177–78). This natural appetite cannot prove that human beings are called by God to supernatural beatitude, but it can prove that such beatitude is possible, and furthermore that it alone would maximally fulfill human nature. Aquinas's theology of the relation between natural and free will, reason and nature, the Fall, and limbo also ties into the

issues at hand. Limbo in particular throws the difference between desire and appetite into relief; the unbaptized babies “reach an end, because they reach the terminal development of their natural *desire*, but they do not reach their *ultimate* end, because they do not reach the terminal development of their natural appetite” (201).

Aquinas develops his distinction between natural desire and natural appetite in the *Summa contra gentiles*. The natural appetite for the vision of God is rooted in the intellect’s capacity to know, and “the resulting desire seeks the perfection of its corresponding appetite ‘insofar as is possible’” (244). The active natural desire proves that the vision of God is possible. Human nature is capable of receiving such a vision without ceasing to be human, and furthermore this end is “the only possible final end for human nature” (230). However, the natural desire does not prove that any human being has ever received the *visio Dei*. It also allows Thomas to affirm the gratuity of grace without having to resort to a proto-voluntarist position.

In the next chapter Wood articulates Thomas’s writing on the agent and possible intellects, the relation of reason and the will, and his reactions to Bonaventure’s philosophy of incomplete forms during Thomas’s time in Rome, ending in 1268. Aquinas’s account of grace in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae* is also treated: “Grace is not above the passive principle in nature. If it were, grace would be *contra naturam*, not *supra naturam*”; rather, it “actualizes a creature’s passive potential for *accidental* perfection” (285). Wood notes that Thomas makes *theological* conclusions in the *prima pars*; he proves not only that human nature *could* receive such a vision, but in the case of the Christ and the saints it *has*.

Wood concludes his discussion of Thomas by examining Thomas’s most mature position. Wood lays out one crucial addendum to Aquinas’s central argument that human nature, like matter, is open to God analogously to matter’s openness to form. The human being is *per se* open to the vision of God, not merely *per accidens* in the way that matter is able to be changed from one form into another. The human being is able to accomplish this “*per se* material potency” only through God, in contrast with his other *per se* potencies, which he can accomplish under his own steam, but this does not make the change any less “natural” in the sense of being a perfection of his form and not something that makes him a different type of thing with a new substantial form (303). The necessity or lack thereof of movements of the will and the relation between intellect and the will are treated again, with particular attention paid to Aquinas’s most mature position on the case of Adam and Eve. This reworking leads to a reworking between the *prima pars* and the *prima secundae* on the question of the natural desire for

God: as the will directs the intellect to think, so too is “the natural desire of the will prior to the natural desire of the intellect” (354).

In the last chapter Wood articulates the contemporary significance of Thomas’s thought. Contradicting Thomas, Giles of Rome and the Aegidian tradition held that “there must be in matter some positive principle toward form in order for form to be received in matter naturally” (362). The problem with this position is that, whereas for Thomas “one and the same privation accounts for both a creature’s openness to natural change as well as its openness to grace,” Giles must posit “obediential properties” to account for humanity’s openness to God (364). Wood characterizes Giles’s position as a return to an Avicennian account of “an active, determinate, natural desire, which has the vision of God as its specific end,” (366) and so can admit of no limited, imperfect happiness; only the vision of God qualifies as happiness in any real sense. Original justice is thus a debt owed to humanity; a debt of fittingness and not an absolute debt, but a debt nonetheless. After briefly discussing other major Scholastic thinkers, Wood situates de Lubac in this Aegidian tradition. More specifically, the mature de Lubac pulls his distinction between the creation of a rational nature, the ordination by God of that nature to an end (which is not in itself “a positive ordering to the beatific vision” [422]), and the creation of individual person from Fulgence Lafosse (412). It follows that God could create a rational being without giving it the end of the vision of God or create a rational being with the desire for the vision of God without granting that desire. In this way de Lubac concedes the possibility of a pure nature not ordained to a supernatural end while denying it any theological relevance; a pure nature would have an end different from that of human nature, and so be subject to a different natural law.

On the basis of what he has laid out here, Wood charts out a way forward for the nature–grace debate. As matter is open to receiving forms and so has a passive appetite for its perfection, so too human nature is open to grace and has a passive appetite for the vision of God. Wood roots the human openness for grace in the fact that “the natural desire seeks the complete fulfillment of the natural appetite of the soul, and . . . the natural desire comes to rest in either a natural or supernatural end depending on whether God chooses to communicate grace to the soul or not” (432). With de Lubac, Aquinas has no need for explaining the *capax Dei* through obediential potency and affirms a natural desire for a supernatural end. With the commentarial tradition, Aquinas teaches that human nature possesses a natural end and is passive with regard to grace (430).

Wood’s work is painstaking and detailed. It demands attention and is

at times a difficult read. This difficulty is primarily due more to the intricacies of St. Thomas's thought than to any infelicities in phrasing. Such is especially the case with the first few chapters. At times the reader may also feel bogged down while Wood lays the foundations of his final argument. The discussion of Aquinas's development on the relation of reason and the will comes to mind here. It has immense relevance to Thomas's explanation of original sin, and is well worth reading as a contribution to the scholarship on that subject. A similar comment applies to Wood's discussion of the relation of matter to form. It is exhaustive and profound, but it is not until the end of the work that its full import is realized. In both cases these details fill out Thomas's world more than they contribute directly to the eventual thesis of the book, although they are well worth reading and gave this reviewer a much better grasp of Thomas's theology in particular and medieval theology in general. The book is also challenging at times, a characteristic of texts written for what I take to be Wood's audience: graduate students and academic theologians. Perhaps Wood could have written a shorter book and still cogently made his case, but the great breadth and depth with which he approached the issues at hand was time well spent. The reader gets a much fuller picture of the medieval context, making the text useful for a wider range of theologians.

To Stir a Restless Heart deserves a wide readership within this audience. Thomists will find the first four chapters useful, and students of twentieth-century theology will find his interpretation of de Lubac significant. Specialists in theological anthropology in particular will engage Wood's scholarship for years to come. Time will tell the breadth of acceptance his position gains, but in any case, he has moved the discussion forward immensely. If the nature-grace debate (and theological debate in general) "possesses within itself a teleological orientation toward the proclamation of the truths which it considers in the Church's *praedicatio*" (428), then *To Stir a Restless Heart* belongs in the library of every seminary and university with a theology program. N.V

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The Experiment of Faith: Pope Benedict XVI on Living the Theological Virtues in a Secular Age by Matthew J. Ramage (*Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020*), x + 283 pp.

IN A REFRESHING DEPARTURE from the attempts of apologists to “prove” the Catholic faith from supposedly neutral premises, Matthew Ramage instead advocates Pope Benedict XVI’s course for evangelization, a *via media* between triumphalism and relativism. Following Benedict, Ramage argues that the most convincing *apologia* for the Christian faith is to see it from “the inside,” that is, to live it out in practice. Only by running the “experiment of faith” can one note its inner beauty and its answers to the questions of the human heart. A guiding analogy for Ramage is one that Benedict made while delivering a homily in St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York: from the outside, a Gothic cathedral appears dark and cold, its windows dim and lifeless; yet, from the inside of the cathedral, “these same windows suddenly come alive with resplendent light passing through their stained glass” (264). Similarly, Ratzinger notes, “it is only from the inside, from the experience of faith and ecclesial life, that we see the Church as she truly is: flooded with grace, resplendent in beauty, adorned by the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit” (264). Thus, rather than fight in the trenches of difficult moral doctrines to win over non-believers, Ramage reorients the standard approach to apologetics by inviting believers and non-believers alike to discover the Catholic faith’s truth and goodness, not from pages of syllogisms, but from the beauty visible to one who “get his hands dirty” and acts as if one believed, as C. S. Lewis might say, until one does. While never sacrificing content for clarity, Ramage’s *Experiment of Faith* shares with the writings of its model, Pope Benedict XVI, the quality of being simultaneously profound as well as eminently readable.

At the outset of his book, Ramage identifies Friedrich Nietzsche as his “ideal periodical interlocutor” for Ratzinger (9). As Ramage points out, the Pontiff frequently cites Nietzsche’s anti-Christian position in order to contrast the proclamation of the Gospel with its most cogent critic. For Nietzsche, the truth of Christian doctrine is a matter of secondary importance; rather, his fundamental charge against Christianity is that it is life-denying and nihilistic in concrete existence insofar as it condemns the exercise of vital human forces such as libido and power. Ramage, following Ratzinger, believes that the best response to Nietzsche—as well as to the numerous anonymous Nietzscheans of today—is found, not in objective intellectual arguments, but in the “laboratory of life,” in which Christianity,

as actually practiced and lived out by ordinary saints, manifests the fullest expression of beauty, truth, and goodness (19).

In the first part of his book, Ramage takes seriously Nietzsche's critique (it is a merit of Ramage as a scholar that he never builds straw men or carelessly dismisses opposition) and responds with a depiction of the Christian view of human life, which is oriented toward holiness through the practice of obedience to the moral law. By masterfully synthesizing insights from Scripture, Church Fathers, and Aquinas, Ramage presents an alternative narrative to Nietzsche's, one in which holiness is indistinguishable from charity or love and in which God elevates humans through this same love into a share in the divine nature. Were Ramage to conclude his response at the theoretical level, however, he would have failed to address the heart of Nietzsche's censure, which passes beyond the logical and touches the existential; for this reason, Ramage not only examines holiness, morality, and prayer abstractly but also weaves in concrete suggestions for those who desire to see the reality from within (for instance, Ramage's introduction to *Lectio Divina* fits in quite naturally with the forgoing discussion and yet is immensely helpful for those wishing to pray either for the first time or for the thousandth). In this way, the reader herself becomes part of the response to Nietzsche by undergoing the experiment of faith and all the divine realities contained within.

In part 2, Ramage employs the theological virtues—faith, hope, and love—as “lenses for the exploration of the real-life questions” faced by those practicing Christianity in a predominantly secular culture in which non-belief is a live and even common option (8). At the same time, however, the theological virtues—each receiving two chapters of treatment—are also the lens by which Ramage introduces the reader to the theology of Ratzinger/Benedict as a whole, an apt approach since Benedict penned four encyclicals relating to faith, hope, and love (*Lumen Fidei* being largely indebted to Benedict although published by Pope Francis). The treatment of various theological themes in Benedict's writings, such as eschatology and integral ecology, never come across as digressions, as these realities are tied to theological virtues necessary for anyone embarking on the experiment of faith.

Part 3 notes parallels between Benedict's insights and those of other thinkers who “do not cite Benedict or otherwise demonstrate familiarity with his thought” (197). Ramage first introduces the insights of three exegetes—Dru Johnson, Peter Enns, and Matthew Bates—who each in a different way highlight Benedict's conviction that, in Scripture, “faith” (Hebrew *’āman*; Greek *pistis*) does not denote a mere intellectual assent,

nor an infallible emotion *contra* Nietzsche, but rather a personal act of entrusting one's whole self to God (198). According to Ratzinger, and in line with the views of these exegetes, faith is less about possessing the truth with certainty and comprehension and more about allowing the Truth, who "is a person" to possess us and dictate the direction of our lives (65). In an additional survey of contemporary scholars, Ramage turns to the work of three philosophers—James Smith, John Cottingham, and Myron Penner—who all express insights on Christian faith in the modern, secular age that are consonant with Benedict's thought. Throughout the consideration of these authors, the enduring relevance of insights from Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre comes to the fore and one wishes Ramage had explicitly devoted sections to these two philosophers rather than to their interpreters (Smith's book *How Not to Be Secular*, while extraordinarily clear and helpful, is nonetheless a digest of Taylor's *A Secular Age*).

The concluding section begins with a reminder that the most effective path for apologetics and evangelization, according to Ramage and Benedict, is "the *via pulchritudinis*, the way of beauty" (239). Ramage writes: "In short, for Benedict the truth and goodness of the Christian faith is seen most clearly under the aspect of its beauty" (240). Such beauty is most clearly evident in "the well-lived life of non-canonized saints—the 'simple' or 'ordinary' people we know—who for Benedict and for most of us are the truest sign of where the truth of the faith lies" (248). As a concrete instance of the life of faith, Ramage invites the reader to consider his personal reasons for belief as well as the challenges and sufferings of his life, both spiritual and physical, that have acquired a new meaning through following Christ. While most chapters of this book conclude with practical, personal remarks from the author, this culminating chapter anchors the more abstract truths of the book in the unique, concrete existence of its author, who, like most of us Christians, experiences the joy and frustrations, the obstacles and the hope, of discipleship. While Ramage makes no claim to be an example of the *via pulchritudinis*, his own accounts of deep tribulation and spiritual comfort are tangible enough to instantiate doctrinal points such as redemptive suffering and the hope in the resurrection.

In *The Experiment of Faith*, Ramage has assembled an accessible and penetrating glance into the heart of Christian life as it is both professed and practiced. For brevity's sake, I was unable to note the many masterful, yet concise, treatments of doctrines such as divinization, the general resurrection, and the sacrament of marriage, and even an outstanding articulation of the continuity between Benedict's thought and Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*. None of these excursions are untethered from the thesis of the book,

which is also the heart of its success: Christianity makes the most sense not when it is pondered as an abstract idea in isolation from praxis, but when it is worn, and even worn-in, as the garment of Christ. One question that I would like to pose concerns Ramage's frequent claim that the Catholic faith's truth and goodness "cannot be seen from the outside, . . . but only in the context of lived belief," that is, from within the practice of the faith (77, 265). Throughout my reading of the book, I hesitated on this point, and wondered: Surely there must be some good perceived by the subject for her to even consider running the experiment of faith in the first place? In other words, what draws people to enter within the apparently dark and perhaps frightening Gothic cathedral (to recall Ratzinger's metaphor) of the Catholic faith if not for some perceived goodness or beauty? Although Ramage does not explicitly answer this question, I found a solution in his conviction that anyone can perceive the beauty of the lives of saints: "The greatest *apologia* for the Church is the beauty and saints she has produced" (118). It is primarily by witnessing the joy and beauty exuded by those faithfully following Christ that non-believers find reason to undergo the intimidating prospect of "the experiment of the cross," wherein "we bow down in service and self-gift" and thereby "open up doors of perception that are otherwise unavailable" (142). *The Experiment of Faith* is an indispensable contribution to contemporary apologetics and will hopefully inspire many more of its kinds. This book belongs both in the hands of open-minded unbelievers and in those of Christians who seek to harmonize the Catholic faith as understood and as lived. N.V

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The Cleansing of the Heart: The Sacraments as Instrumental Causes in the Thomistic Tradition by Reginald M. Lynch, O.P. (*Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017*), xvi + 225 pp.

THE COMBINATION OF COLORS, oils, and brush strokes that constitute a piece of art are more than mere colors on a canvas; rather, instruments are used by the artist to represent and effect, through the very signification of the art, that which exceeds the capability of the instrument as such.

Thus, Monet's *Vetheuil in the Fog* (1879), found on the dust jacket of the present work, is capable of communicating to its viewer the ever-changing, ephemeral nature of reality. Even more remarkably, the central image of Monet's *Vetheuil*, an ethereal church, directs its viewer toward the transcendent, precisely in and through ordinary, immanent, and fleeting means. This disproportion between the form of the instrument (e.g., the paintbrush, the oils, the canvas, etc.) and its effect (the *Vetheuil* and its impression on the viewer) through the intention of the principal agent (Monet) is a helpful analogue in considering how God operates in the realm of grace. As Saint Augustine put it, God, through the water of baptism, touches the body and cleanses the heart ("corpus tangat et cor abluat") (17–18). It is difficult to read Augustine without seeing the very water of baptism as being in a very real way a causal instrument in the hands of the divine artist.

Father Reginald Lynch's *The Cleansing of the Heart* can be read as a historical overview of the development of this Augustinian intuition which "occupied the best minds of the scholastic period" (18). Lynch begins with a treatment of sacramental causality in twelfth- and thirteenth-century medieval Scholasticism (ch. 1) and culminates with Saint Thomas's understanding of the sacraments as instrumental causes. Lynch shows how Saint Thomas's thinking developed from the commonly held view of the sacraments as dispositive causes of grace in his commentary on the *Sentences* (ch. 2) to a more robust notion of instrumental causality in the *Summa theologiae* (ch. 3) and concludes with a consideration of the subsequent reception of Thomas's teaching in early modern approaches to sacramental causality (ch. 4), focusing specifically on the Thomist response (in the person of Domingo Báñez) to Melchior Cano's notion of the sacraments as moral causes. In reviewing the development and synthesis of Saint Thomas's teaching, Lynch shows how the Thomist understanding of the sacraments forms a sapiential synthesis of the most vital aspects of theology (anthropology, Christology, grace, merit), all of which converge on the question of sacramental instrumental causality, which stands "at the heart of the Christian mystery" (205).

As is to be expected with any account of the Scholastic development of sacramental theology, one must navigate a number of crucial distinctions. By way of an overview, I offer a brief account of three distinctions that figure largely in Lynch's account of Saint Thomas's teaching. Lynch highlights the character of the sacraments as perfective rather than dispositive, intrinsic rather than extrinsic, and physical instead of moral causes of grace.

First, the sacraments are *perfective* instrumental causes rather than *dispositive*. Lynch shows how Saint Thomas's early teaching of the sacraments as dispositive causes in the *Scriptum* (shared together with his Scholastic contemporaries) is eventually abandoned for the sake of a more robust notion of instrumental causality. According to the early view, the sacraments merely dispose the recipient for grace without actually perfecting the subject in grace. As created instruments, the sacraments are disproportionate to the end intended by the principal agent. After all, how can created water communicate divinizing grace? In the *Summa theologiae*, however, Saint Thomas sees the sacraments as *perfective* causes of grace, or "instrumental causes of grace *simpliciter*" (120). This is to say that the sacraments directly bring about the grace they signify. Behind this development, Lynch identifies a shift in Saint Thomas's understanding of grace (as well as a vital development in his Christology which we will touch on below). Beginning with the *De veritate*, Saint Thomas consciously abandons a contemporary framework which treats grace as a parallel to creation—that is, as a re-creation—and instead focuses on grace as a *concreated* form in the soul. This is important because the parallel with creation implies that grace can only be communicated immediately (just as creation *ex nihilo* or the infusion of the human soul at conception must be immediate); by focusing instead on grace as an accidental concreated form, Saint Thomas conceives of grace as an actualization of a potency that is connatural to human nature. Later Thomist commentators will refer to this as the creature's "obediential potency"—it is a potency that really exists in the created nature but can be reduced to act only by God, the principal agent (it is therefore not to be confused with miracles, which have no corresponding creaturely potency). With grace, "God's creative act does not bring something to be from nothing but works within the accidental potencies of an already existing nature" (116). Thus, the communication of grace, unlike the act of creation, allows for *perfective* rather than merely *dispositive* instrumental causality.

Secondly, and related, the sacraments are *intrinsic* rather than *extrinsic* causes of grace. Since grace corresponds to a real potency in the creature, Lynch argues for a similar obedience and connaturality in the sacraments themselves, enabling them to be intrinsic causes of grace (139). "The sacraments are true causes in the proper sense; they produce real effects under the direction of God" (29). This is distinguished from an extrinsic view that sees the sacraments as merely a condition (*sine qua non*) or occasion for God's direct communication of grace (e.g., *via* a divine pact). Besides rendering the sacraments of the New Covenant indistinguishable from

that of the Old, the extrinsicist view cannot account for the causality of the sacraments except equivocally.

Thirdly, the sacraments are *physical* rather than a *moral* causes. The fact that the sacraments are not merely the occasion or even *sine qua non* causes of grace further entails that they are not simply moral causes of grace. Melchior Cano (†1560) is the first to appeal to grace explicitly in terms of moral as opposed to physical causality. According to Cano, the sacraments are causes not because they directly bring about grace in the recipient, but insofar as they persuade (175) the human free will (171). Cano therefore returns to a construal of the sacraments as dispositive and extrinsic “causes.” Cano’s competitive schematization of divine and human action prevents him from seeing how grace can act on the human will in a physical manner without compromising human freedom. Unsurprisingly, Cano’s sacramental theory has important ramifications for the doctrine of grace (see section “*De auxiliis* and modern theology,” 195–200). In contrast, Thomas views the sacraments as real instrumental causes by which God draws the believer into the life of grace.

Significantly, the maturation of Thomas’s thought is part and parcel with a recognition of the “christic dimension” of the sacraments. One of the strengths of Lynch’s work is highlighting Saint Thomas’s Christological developments in connection to his teaching on sacramental causality. It is precisely because of Saint Thomas’s conviction of the role of Christ’s humanity as the instrument of redemption (more specifically as conjoined and animated instrument of the divinity) that the sacraments are able to have the sort of causal power that they have. Indeed, the sacraments are “extensions of the instrumental dimension of the hypostatic union, extending the obediential elevation of nature that was first made present in the Incarnation to all the baptized” (139). The emphasis on sacramental causality’s link to the Incarnation is a reminder to readers that Saint Thomas’s doctrine of sacramental causality (along with the prior and subsequent Scholastic treatments of the matter) does not arise from a penchant for “vain speculation,” but stems directly from a meditation on the concrete redemption effected by the Word Incarnate. By viewing the sacraments as perfective, intrinsic, and physical instrumental causes, it becomes possible to recognize in the sacraments “a form of divine artistry, interacting with created reality through the medium of created tools” (103–4). Thus, in a more profound manner than a human Monet, God appears “as an artist working with his tools, gathering all created finalities towards an end that he has foreseen in wisdom” (78).

Lynch’s work is a welcome addition to the growing literature on

sacramental causality from Dominican theologians. Specifically, his monograph can be seen as building on the work of his confrere, Bernhard Blankenhorn,¹ by showing how the Thomist commentatorial tradition received and developed the Common Doctors' thought. N.V

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Aquinas's Eschatological Ethics and the Virtue of Temperance by Matthew Levering (*Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019*), xi + 432 pp.

IN THE RESURGENCE OF INTEREST in virtue ethics in recent decades, temperance has received relatively little treatment compared to the other three cardinal virtues—leaving aside of course the copious attention that John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* has received. The reason for this neglect is no doubt the difficulty that attends the living out of temperance, which, as St. Thomas writes, “is properly about pleasures of meat and drink and sexual pleasures” (*Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 141, a. 4). Temperance however is not restricted simply to matters concerning food and sex. Any virtue, Thomas tells us, “that is effective of moderation in some matter or other, and restrains the appetite in its impulse towards something, may be reckoned a part of temperance” (*ST* II-II, q. 143, a. 1). Temperance thus includes not only the virtues that engage our embodied condition but also the virtues of humility, clemency, meekness, and studiousness.

Matthew Levering clearly states the thrust of his book at the very outset: in it he shows that “chastity and the other parts of Christian temperance are inseparable from the moral life of the inaugurated kingdom, as set forth in the New Testament and as elucidated systematically in Aquinas's theology” (1). The author achieves this end by examining the “parts” of temperance as set forth by Thomas in the light of three dimensions of the inaugurated kingdom: “The eschatological renewal of the temple, the eschatological restoration of the people of God, and the eschatological forgiveness of sins

¹ See esp. Bernard Blankenhorn, “The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 4, no. 2 (2006): 255–94.

and the outpouring of the Spirit" (7). Thus, the integral parts of temperance—"The integral parts of a virtue are the conditions the concurrence of which are necessary for virtue" (*ST* II-II, q. 143, a. 1)—namely shame and *honestas*, are linked with the eschatological renewal of the temple. Shame, while it does not enjoy the perfection of virtue, nevertheless impels a man to flee the disgrace and ugliness of intemperance. *Honestas*, on the other hand, refers to moral excellence, and anyone who possesses this virtue also manifests spiritual beauty. When through lack of shame a man allows his sensual desires rather than rightly ordered reason to rule his life, he inevitably descends into idolatry, worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. He thereby becomes morally ugly. The repentant man, in contrast, appreciates that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. The practice of temperance renders his body honorable and spiritually beautiful. By the grace of the Holy Spirit he participates in "the perfect worship of the true temple, who is Christ himself" (48).

The subjective parts of temperance—that is to say, its species that are differentiated "according to the difference of matter or object" (48)—include abstinence, fasting, sobriety, and chastity. Levering argues that Thomas's treatment of these virtues "illuminates the eschatological restoration of God's people accomplished in Christ" (52). Indeed, eating and drinking rightly is a fundamental trait of this eschatologically restored people. As Thomas writes, the use of and abstinence from food "belong to the kingdom of God, in so far as they are done reasonably through faith and love of God" (*ST* II-II, q. 146, a. 1, ad 1). Abstinence, when undertaken in accord with right reason, aims at God's glory and fosters a concern for our neighbors' needs. Fasting, for its part, in addition to restraining the lusts of the flesh and satisfying for sins, also facilitates the contemplation of heavenly things. Consumption of alcohol obviously has the capacity to undermine this contemplation, since it constitutes "a special kind of hindrance to the use of reason" (*ST* II-II, q. 149, a. 2). As Levering notes, "when we are drunk, we cannot govern ourselves toward charitable service of God and neighbor, and indeed drunk persons often inflict harm upon other people, including family members" (75). Sobriety, in contrast, along with abstinence and fasting, helps to form "an eschatological people configured to Christ's cruciform love" (77). Chastity, for its part, is also crucial in this regard. As the virtue by which "reason chastises concupiscence" (*ST* II-II, q. 151, a. 1), it facilitates the establishment of God's wise order in the world, since it overcomes "the vices of fallen sexual desire that have long undermined family life" (p. 85). In the case of virgins, the eschatological beatitude to which God's restored people is ordered is anticipated by

abstention from marriage and sexual intercourse so that they can devote themselves to “the contemplation of Divine things, for the beauty and welfare of the human race” (*ST* II-II, q. 152, a. 2, ad 1). While married Christians constitute an eschatological sign of the indissoluble union of Christ and his Church, consecrated virgins “specially anticipate the focus on ‘the affairs of the Lord’ (1 Cor 7:32) that will constitute the beatitude of the kingdom” (95).

Clemency, meekness, humility, and studiousness pertain to the potential parts of temperance inasmuch as they moderate our desire for non-bodily human goods. Clemency and meekness, examples of which abound in Scripture, apply to the passion of anger. They differ from each other in that clemency moderates the external punishment that a man seeks to inflict whereas meekness moderates anger itself. As Levering observes, “to belong to the inaugurated kingdom, we must be meek like Jesus and ‘slow to anger’” (118), while in Thomas’s words, “love makes one quick to mitigate punishment” (*ST* II-II, q. 157, a. 1, ad 2). While anger gives rise to quarreling, swelling of the mind, contumely, clamor, indignation, and blasphemy, clemency and meekness make manifest “in the community of believers and to the whole world, the eschatological forgiveness of sins and the outpouring of the Spirit” (123). Humility overcomes pride, which rebels against being “subject to God and His rule” (*ST* II-II, q. 162, a. 6). Central to the virtue of humility is acceptance of our creaturehood. Levering shows how for Thomas “the eschatological forgiveness of sins and outpouring of the Spirit are concretely manifested in the humble human creature, freed from the original sin of idolatrous pride” (133). *Studiositas* moderates the human desire to know so that the mind seeks knowledge about the right things and in the right way. Directing the mind away from its fallen tendency to things that stimulate the flesh, studiousness helps to focus it on God in Christ. Drawing upon the work of Paul Griffiths, Levering highlights the important role that liturgy plays in this regard.

As we have come to expect from the author, this book engages contemporary biblical scholarship in a way that both shows forth the biblical inspiration of Thomas’s treatment of temperance and also illumines that treatment. The cardinal virtues are of course associated with ancient Greek philosophy. It is for this reason that some theologians have neglected them. As Levering masterfully shows, however, their treatment by Thomas constitutes a veritable synthesis of faith and reason. Just as in the Sermon on the Mount the worlds of Second Temple Judaism and the Graeco-Roman virtue tradition meet, so too in Thomas do they intersect “through the combination of the New Testament and the writings of the

pagan philosophers" (23). This meeting of faith and reason continues in Levering's study in which the range of engagement with biblical, theological, and philosophical scholarship is breathtaking. A brief review cannot, unfortunately, do justice to this engagement.

An important aspect of this book is its ecumenical character. A large proportion of the Scripture scholars and theologians with whom Levering engages are non-Catholics. N. T. Wright and John Webster are just two examples. The notions of "the eschatological renewal of the temple, the eschatological restoration of the people of God, and the eschatological forgiveness of sins and the outpouring of the Spirit" are to be found in Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, while that of human creatureliness figure in the thought of Webster. The astute reader will nevertheless understand that the truths enunciated by them have already been stated by Thomas long before them in some kind of way. Levering's ecumenical spirit is all-encompassing: all authors whom he cites, even when he expresses his disagreement with them, are treated with respect and their views faithfully communicated.

Growth in temperance constitutes the first baby steps in the moral/spiritual life. Thomas, writing about the first of the three degrees of charity, says: "It is incumbent on man to occupy himself chiefly with avoiding sin and resisting his concupiscences, which move him in opposition to charity: this concerns beginners, in whom charity has to be fed or fostered lest it be destroyed" (*ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 9). The current crisis within the Church, not to speak about Western civilization, is due in no small part to the denigration of this basic virtue. We are indebted to Levering for highlighting its centrality to life as transformed by the grace of Christ. N·V

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