

Book Reviews

Did Aquinas Justify the Transition from “Is” to “Ought”? by Piotr Lichacz (Warsaw: Instytut Tomistyczny, 2010), 332 pp.

IT IS UNDENIABLE that David Hume and G. E. Moore have had a revolutionary influence on the thought of the moral philosophers who have come after them. The Catholic tradition has not been immune to this influence. If Hume really proved that an “ought” cannot be inferred from an “is,” and if Moore really proved that the good cannot be analyzed in terms of natural properties, then it would be incumbent upon any responsible philosopher or theologian wanting to remain relevant to look for the source of moral norms somewhere apart from the world of natures and the “given.” But the Catholic moralist encounters what seems to be quite an obstacle in such a project: St. Thomas Aquinas (whom no Catholic moralist can ignore) does not appear to address explicitly the logical fallacy of inferring an “ought” from an “is,” and the Thomistic moral tradition, at least until the middle of the twentieth century, appears to derive the precepts of the natural law precisely from nature and its finalities.

Faced with these facts, the Catholic moralist who esteems St. Thomas has only two choices. One is the option of those who are convinced that Hume and Moore are right: that the naturalistic fallacy is indeed real, its mere identification being enough to reduce a natural law theory containing it to absurdity; but fortunately (some would claim) the naturalistic fallacy is found only in abusive manualist interpretations of St. Thomas, who in reality vindicates the radical autonomy of practical reason. This is the approach of the New Natural Law theory—represented by Grisez, Finnis, Boyle, the two Tollefsens, and Robert P. George—as well as that of Father Martin Rhonheimer. In a manner reminiscent of the Transcendental Thomists, who claimed that Aquinas shared the insights of Kant before Kant’s time, these thinkers hold that St. Thomas took Hume’s law for granted long before Hume—and if this is not so evident in Aquinas, it is only because we miss the point of certain key texts (e. g., *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 94, a. 2), interpreting them in rather gross, physicalist categories. The other

option is the one taken by those who judge that St. Thomas did indeed infer moral norms from what is intelligible about that which is, and had no qualms about doing so, for not only did St. Thomas not agree with the answers of Hume and Moore; his is a philosophical framework in which the question does not even occur. There is no need to fear “naturalism in ethics,” for there is nothing fallacious about it.

This latter position is that of the Polish Thomist and sometime lecturer in Krakow, Piotr Lichacz. As he points out in this book, if this position is correct, it means that the philosophical presuppositions and methods of St. Thomas on the one hand, and those of Hume, Moore, and even the New Natural Law Theorists on the other, must be very different, incompatible even. To blame St. Thomas for failing to see what is today considered a basic logical fallacy and thereby expel his ethics from contemporary dialogue is to be “precipitate” (11); but to hail him as having seen it and made its denial a foundation of his natural law theory is surely to be “anachronistically creative in the interpretation of his texts” (309). Even a superficial knowledge of the history of philosophy should tell us that St. Thomas has at the very least a different epistemology and ontology from those of Hume and Moore, and if we are going to make judgments about his views regarding logical inferences of ethical norms from natural givens, we had better first check to see if his logic and philosophy of nature are different from those generally taken for granted in modern thought. And after we inevitably find that they are, we had better get to know those of St. Thomas well. Only thus can we make valid comparisons and judgments. This is what Lichacz sets out to accomplish in this book, a slight re-working of his doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Fribourg and awarded the 2009 Thomas Aquinas Dissertation Prize by the Aquinas Center for Theological Renewal of Ave Maria University.

In the midst of an introduction that presents the problem as just described and an excellent historical preamble that lucidly summarizes the contentions of Hume and Moore, Lichacz describes the general “Is/Ought” thesis as the positing of an “inferential gap” between descriptive statements (marked by the notion of “is”) and prescriptive statements (marked by the notion of “ought” or, in Moore’s case, “good”). Lichacz then divides the “Is/Ought” thesis into three sub-theses that will serve as points of reference at key junctures throughout the book (15, 298). The first sub-thesis is “the internalist assumption,” that is, the supposition in Hume that accompanies the inferential gap and tries to supply for the apparent loss of moral basis by making morals a matter of natural human sentiments of sympathy that generate feelings of approval and disapproval for certain actions (35). The

other two sub-theses are divisions of the general inferential gap itself that are based on the argumentation of G. E. Moore. The *logical* sub-thesis is that no moral conclusion can be deduced from propositions whose terms are exclusively non-moral. The *semantic* sub-thesis says that no analytic statement can bridge this gap either; that is, there are no analytic statements that establish an implication from the non-moral to the moral (43). The end result is that there can be non-moral discourse with non-moral terms, and there can be moral discourse with moral terms, but never the twain shall meet: a complete autonomy of ethics, but one that has been established by a logic that, at the very least, requires examination. It becomes clear that whoever would make proclamations on the transition from “is” to “ought” needs to approach logic before ethics.

Lichacz therefore dedicates the first half of the main body of his book to logic. In chapter 1, he takes up Aristotle and Aquinas’s general approach to cognition. Lichacz counters the vulgar notions that St. Thomas and Aristotle offer an essentialist and/or deductivist approach to philosophy that is little more than checking for coherence between static, established concepts. He shows that, on the contrary, the Aristotelian-Thomistic method is firmly grounded in induction and constant recourse to sense knowledge. The *via iudicii*, marked by demonstration causing certitude, is preceded and accompanied by the *via inventionis*, marked by induction and dialectic. Lichacz also includes in this chapter the exhaustive division of the intellectual virtues: wisdom, understanding, science, prudence, the seven liberal arts, and the many servile arts, specified by their end-product. Lichacz notes for every art there is a corresponding science that considers what is of necessity in that art. In preparation for the following chapter, he applies this insight to identify logic—though it is one of the liberal arts—as also a science. This same principle about arts and their corresponding science should be kept in mind when considering questions that have to do with the relations of disciplines to each other: for every order produced by reason, there is a corresponding (and by nature prior) order discovered by reason. Already there are implications for ethics as an art. The order we put into human action has to be preceded by an order discovered in human action.

In chapter 2, Lichacz presents the classic Thomistic division of the parts of logic, found in the introduction to the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*. In the process, he also makes the important distinction between *logica docens*, which is the science, from *logica utens*, which is the art (84–85). For St. Thomas, logic truly is a tool, meant to be used in order to guide the acts of reason in their discovery and judgment of things as they are. Logic is *not* a mere discipline of pure rational formality for its own sake, like the

predicate and propositional calculus of modern logic. *Logica utens* in natural science, for example, is employed in arguments with terms that are not mere p's and q's, replaceable with what-have-you, but terms that signify real mobile beings with natures (104, 143). Nevertheless, *logica utens* does depend on *logica docens*, and so this chapter also discusses the subject-domain of logic the science. Here Lichacz takes the opportunity to present the entire division of being (*ens*), from real being, distinguished into the ten categories (substance, quantity, quality, relation, etc.), to beings of reason, ultimately ending in a consideration of the two kinds of relations of reason: those that are based on things as they actually exist *in rerum naturae*, and those that are based on things as they are known (98–99). The latter are known as second intentions, and although it is they that are the subject of logic (and hence the goal of the division), the reader should note carefully the other relations of reason that are not logical (based on things as they are), as Lichacz makes use of this tool often later on in the book (234, 238–39, 276).

In chapters 3 and 4, Lichacz undertakes an examination of the second intentions themselves. These second intentions are of three kinds, corresponding to the three acts of the mind, of which they are the products: universality, attribution, and consequence. Chapter 3 principally covers St. Thomas's commentary on the *Peri Hermeneias*, chapter 4, the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*. There are three particular themes discussed in these chapters that set St. Thomas apart from much of modern philosophy. The first is the infallibility of the first act of the mind, which, Lichacz explains well, is a necessity from *formal* causality (not from efficient causality): the understanding of simple indivisibles is not understanding at all if it is false (116–18). The second is the inherence theory of predication (126–29), which is in opposition to the identity theory that would make tautologies out of analytic statements (it is here that the semantic sub-thesis is dealt a blow). The third is the notion of demonstration through the four causes, and especially final cause, which is not only the most explanatory of the causes, as the cause of their causality, but also provides the only mode of necessity (*ex suppositione finis*, also called "hypothetical necessity") that we must often rely on for explanation in natural science, which deals with contingent, defectible efficient causes (158, 163, 224–25). Lichacz then concludes the first part with a very enlightening discussion of the interdependence of the sciences and the notion of science as a habit perfective of the intellect, rather than merely a fenced-off discipline. It is only by viewing science in the latter way that one would refuse to borrow principles from another science (for example, ethics borrowing from natural science); but if one views science as certain knowledge bringing the intellect to rest, then whoever would

know a subalternate science perfectly will be impelled to examine the subalternating science to some degree, to explain the *propter quid* of the principles he has borrowed (164–66).

In part two, Lichacz turns to speculative science. Chapter 5 begins with the division of the sciences, primarily from St. Thomas's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*. Lichacz confidently presents the view that metaphysics requires the convenient judgment of existence of substances separated from matter (often associated with the "River Forest School" of Thomism). The relevance of this view pertains to our question insofar as Lichacz points out that the "is" from which we will infer the "oughts" of morals is an anthropological "is," and thus it is not properly the "is" of metaphysics. The study of man is a species of the study of nature, of mobile being. This is significant, especially given the energy spent by several authors today in either asserting or denying the necessity of *metaphysics* for morals (227). As Lichacz points out later, metaphysics certainly has its contribution (294–96), and the metaphysician will provide greater certainty (253, 296), but the "is" from which we infer the "ought" is really an "is" found in natural science, which is also why St. Thomas places morals after natural science and before metaphysics in the order of learning (67–68, 294).

In chapters 6 and 7, therefore, Lichacz focuses on natural science. In chapter 6, he basically presents the doctrine of books I and II of the *Physics* regarding the principles of motion (matter, form, and privation) and the principles of natural science (the four causes). It is in this chapter that Lichacz gives the first hints at the analyzability of goodness. He comes at this twice: once in commenting upon Aristotle's statement (and St. Thomas's discussion) of form as something "*divinum, optimum, et appetibile*" (desirable, namely, to the matter which tends to it, 205–8) and again in the discussion of the final cause as that which explains the introduction of the form by the efficient cause. There is a rather contorted discussion (218–19) that tries to connect these two *loci* of desirability and goodness, but the lack of clarity there may simply be due to the author having to express himself in a language not his own. At any rate, the point is clear: the good has to do with appetibility. But, as Lichacz points out, the appetibility is the effect (not the explaining cause) of the good. There is something about the thing that is called "good" that makes it desirable to another. Lichacz will revisit what this precisely means in chapter 8.

Chapter 7 focuses on three last themes in the philosophy of nature that are relevant to the inquiry. The first is the definition of motion itself and its analysis, particularly the notions of act and potency (in sum, the doctrine of *Physics* Bk. III). This discussion drives home that when we discourse on man, we are discoursing on a mobile being, and this necessarily entails a

recognition of potency aimed at actualization. Otherwise, it is not really the man of nature that we are talking about. The second theme is the importance of the proof of the existence of the Unmoved Mover that operates through intellect. Nature is not explained without a separate intellect; hence, neither will anthropology or ethics be explained without reference to this divine intellect (contrary to the claims of the New Natural Law theorists). The last theme is the role of the cogitative sense as answering the internalist assumption: already, even before moral science, we have a faculty in common with other animals that bids us pursue our good and avoid what harms, but only according to what we are (i.e., a man, a sheep, and a wolf are not driven to or repelled by the same objects). Furthermore, it is in virtue of this faculty that we humans apply our moral reasoning, universal as it is, to the concrete particulars before us. Thus, the cogitative sense works with a presumption of both our distinct nature and our speculative knowledge, not autonomously from them, as Hume would have it.

Finally, in chapter 8, Lichacz resumes the discussion of the analyzability of goodness begun in chapter 6. This is the final response to the claims of G. E. Moore. When the good is understood as “that which is appetible,” it is indeed analyzable, for the science of nature teaches us that everything in potency desires/seek after its perfection. The good is being as *perfectivum* of another. But as such, a thing’s good depends on its nature, for the ultimate perfection (*perfectio secunda*) of a thing can be understood only in reference to its substance (*perfectio prima*). The case is no different for the good that we call moral, for this denomination simply refers to that species of goodness that befits actions proceeding from deliberate reason and will (283–84). These actions themselves have their perfection in their order to the ultimate operation of the human being, a perfection toward which they are already disposed by the semi-perfection of habits. And by a consideration of habits and ultimate operation, one can analyze the proper good for man and, by extension, elaborate a science that includes rational discourse on “oughts.”

The book as a whole provides the raw materials for an ethic based on natural science, but a head-on refutation of Hume and Moore is only summarily presented in the conclusion. Lichacz does mention, for instance, that an “ought” simply is a kind of “is,” contra Hume, but this all-important connection is introduced only at the end of the book and with a rather weak argument behind it. Lichacz claims that since “moral” is a determination (he says “an accident”) of action, and action in turn is an accident inhering in a substance (285, 294), therefore the moral “ought” is a species of “is” (308). However, although it is true that perfect knowledge of an accident entails knowledge of the proper subject of that acci-

dent, that does not mean that whatever is true of the subject is true of the accident. An “ought” is a kind of “is,” but the real reason for this is that an “ought” arises from the consideration of the relation between the “is-in-act” and the “is-in-potency” (which is the first division of real being *per se*). To the action that would reduce the “is-in-potency” to the “is-in-act,” there is added the mode of hypothetical necessity (*necesse* is a modification of *esse*), which is the only kind of necessity that can come upon a free agent from outside (see St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 82, a. 1). Thus, for example, to say that “it is necessary to exercise” or that one “ought to exercise” is to say that, *if* one is to obtain the perfection of health (to which one “is in potency”), exercise is “to-be-done” by him or her. The Latin passive periphrastic, used often in general legal/moral principles, makes this easy to see: *malum vitandum est*, and *bonum prosequendum est*. In short, Hume’s law is a non-question in an Aristotelian metaphysics that claims that *every* predication (even “oughts”) is an assertion of being in some way (*Meta.*, Bk. V, ch. 7), even being in potency. It is not evident to me that Lichacz understands this. In one place, he seems to argue in the opposite direction, trying to prove that the “is” of man is already a moral “is” (285). But this meaning of the term “moral” is not to the point, since in this context it indicates the power of free choice, and not “oughtness.”

Of course, there still remains the question of how to determine this “*bonum*” that is “to-be-pursued.” On this point, Lichacz does well in showing, contra Moore, that the good is analyzable *only* through a consideration of natural properties, for it consists in actualizations that perfect the nature in its motion toward its end. The real problem is to prove that our knowledge of natures includes true understanding of what they are and true judgments about their perfectibility and finality, and that is why a robust epistemology and logic are necessary (particularly as regards the first two acts of the mind). It is clear, then, how much all of the propaedeutic work done by Lichacz is necessary for a full understanding of the connection between speculative science and ethics. All the elements are present. But the book never quite gathers up the loose ends successfully.

Did Aquinas Justify the Transition from “Is” to “Ought”? is not so much the presentation of a linear argument terminating in the refutation of the three sub-theses, but a grand tour through all the knowledge that should be possessed in order to undertake the study of ethics, with strikes made at the three theses along the way. It is a little surprising how infrequently and rather laterally the three sub-theses are both introduced and addressed throughout by the author, in spite of his promise to clearly identify them and deal with them (15). Nevertheless, what is clear by the end of the book is that Hume and Moore inhabit a philosophical planet

very different from that of St. Thomas, and the reader is at least left with the impression that the chasm between descriptive statements and prescriptive statements is an artificial postulate, characteristic of an era that prefers to fragment knowledge. In this way, the original three subtheses, though not prominently rebutted, are entirely emptied of their power to cause trepidation for the moral philosopher who is armed with an integrated view of science that sets each discipline in its proper place and allows for communication between them. N-V

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We Have Seen His Glory: A Vision of Kingdom Worship by Ben Witherington, III (*Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.*, 2010) x + 166 pp.

BEN WITHERINGTON is urgently concerned about the way Protestant worship services are conducted these days. In this book he presents his ideas about what worship should look like for those who believe that God's Kingdom is coming. Asserting that New Testament scholars spend little time talking about worship, Witherington says that it's time to "play it forward" in worship services, that is, to focus on the finish line, the Kingdom Come, the eschaton, rather than dwelling too much on "what has already gone before in the past" (ix). Witherington attempts to reflect theologically on the New Testament in order to arrive at some ideas about what should be the characteristics of contemporary Christian worship. He finds no basis in the New Testament for the rituals that lie at the heart of the Catholic (and even certain mainline Protestant) *cultus*. Witherington nearly ignores the apostolic and patristic understanding of worship that expressly and necessarily inform the content and structure of Christian worship. No divinely revealed sacramental worship for Witherington. Instead he relies almost exclusively on his interpretation of specially chosen New Testament texts. Nevertheless, some of the principles he enumerates are useful in modern-day critiques and discussions about any form of Christian (and Catholic) worship.

A pithy summarizing of Witherington's most basic premise is that worship is supposed to be about God, not the people who worship. Such a statement may seem self-evident, but, as many Catholics can testify, often enough worship services (and Masses) seem focused more on style and personalities in order to make us "feel good" than on God. One of the comforts of this book is that a leading Methodist professor of Scripture brings the problem of feel-good liturgy into the discussion. Even though the citations of Scripture and the commentaries seem more like

a hodgepodge than a systematic and rigorous appraisal of the evidence, Witherington still manages to make the point that worship needs to get back to being focused on God and surrendering to him. Witherington provides discussion questions at the end of each chapter, apparently hoping to provoke conversation about this important matter.

Chapter one opens with the gospel story of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus meets at Jacob's well (John 4). Witherington notes that the Samaritans were not interested in Temple-focused worship as found in Jerusalem. Rather they based their worship practices on the Pentateuch (2), an historical-based form of worship that Jesus challenges primarily because it is "not at all Davidically messianic in character" (3). But, Temple-worship and the offering of sacrifices and priest-led worship are not the answer either, because the Temple is also a matter of history. "Jesus is inaugurating a worship without temples, priests, and literal sacrifices . . ." (8), an apophatic point that Witherington reiterates often. So much is this the case that it becomes difficult to understand exactly what Christian worship should entail beyond a few principles Witherington eventually enumerates in his last chapter.

His abiding point is that true Christian worship is eschatological, meaning, for Witherington, that "worship dwells no more in the past. It is forward-looking and forward-thinking, and it focuses on the future and what it means to worship in spirit and truth" (9). True worship comes from God through Jesus and "is a result of having a saving relationship with God . . . the ultimate aim and goal of salvation" and is "the ultimate ethical act on earth" (7–8). Witherington offers no evaluative tool for distinguishing when eschatological worship is happening. Nor does he tell us how to keep forward looking without losing sight of the saving acts of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, that is, incorporating the anamnesis of the Paschal mystery into the present moment of worship.

In the second chapter, Witherington tells us that glory is related to the essence of worship: "for it is indeed our task to glorify God and love God forever" (13). He reproduces one of his lengthy sermons on the visions of Isaiah (chap. 6), Ezekiel (chap. 1), and John (Rv 4), in order to stress that if worship is to glorify God, it must be *theocentric*. It's not about the minister or the choir or anything else anthropocentric, such as fellowship. "It is about union and communion with God" (20). What Witherington critiques as having happened to much of worship in Protestant America is not without merit as an evaluation tool for Catholic pastors, deacons, lay ministers, and music ministers: "Worship has increasingly modeled itself on some form of entertainment—the performance of the few for the appreciation of the many listeners . . . and of course the congregation begins to see itself as an

audience, and, not surprisingly, what we end up with is applause. But in worship, no one but God should be praised and glorified" (21).

The problem, Witherington thinks, is that people do not come to church prepared for worship, meaning that, unlike Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John, "they are not prepared to receive any kind of vision, and the result is that they are not prepared to commune with God. They're just hoping . . . to take a little McNugget away from the sermon, or to enjoy a hymn or a song or two, and then leave" (21). They should be receptive to the action that God initiates in order that his people might experience an encounter with him. An important point for Catholics, clergy and laity alike.

To explain the priority of divine glory, Witherington cites Paul's discussion about head-coverings, especially for women. A woman, Witherington says, has her hair as her glory, but "only God's glory should show up in Christian worship," not the glory of human beings (23). The restoration of proper human glory results when human beings find themselves restored as the image of God. "Human beings most perfectly *are* the glory of God when they most perfectly reflect (and deflect) that glory, and that happens when they are best glorifying God in worship" (24). We become what we worship, Witherington notes, and therefore the more we glorify God by forgetting the self and being caught up in wonder and love and praise of God, "presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice, bowing down . . ." the more we are transformed by divine glory and "changed into the image of Christ" (25). Evidenced by his repeated rejections of ordained priests and rituals, it is most unfortunate that Witherington cannot see that this is precisely what is supposed to happen at the Catholic Mass as a result of Christ coming to us in the Holy Eucharist, worship *par excellence* because Christ taught it and commanded it (cf. Mt 26:26–28, Lk 22:14–20).

Witherington returns to the theme of worship as an eschatological act in chapter three, in the context of the Sabbath rest. "Worship restores order and recognizes the original divine design of space and time . . . looking forward to the new creation . . . the final rest of God and creatures in the Kingdom" (28–29). The Christian "sabbatical" day was transferred to Sunday, Resurrection day, a point that Witherington uses to decry liturgies that involve sacrifices and priests, in what could be taken to be an anti-Catholic screed (see, for example, 42–43). He emphasizes, instead, the need to offer oneself spiritually to God as Jesus did on the cross (35–36). Witherington believes that the act of self-offering must be accompanied by a development of the capacity for Christian moral discernment, that is, "discerning what is good, pleasing, and perfect in God's sight" (38). Ethical thinking results from "team thinking" or coming

together to reason about moral issues (39). He offers no consideration of divine grace, or how it is obtained. There is, however, a faint outline of a magisterium of sorts in Witherington's proposition that the Christian community should act as a moral guide. But, the community he envisions has no binding authority beyond making suggestions based on a democratic consensus of right and wrong.

Witherington portrays Christian worship, in chapter four, as a natural development of Judaism. "Jesus, at least during his earthly life, did not initiate a new pattern of worship" (46). Rather, Witherington thinks that the post-Christ preaching of St. Paul gives the broad outlines of the order for prayer meetings, evidenced in later chapters. Describing the practice of the Christians who continued to attend synagogue but also met together in their homes or even underground churches "for the sharing of a meal, including the Lord's Supper" (51), Witherington is careful to avoid any mention of the celebration of the Eucharist, opting to interpret New Testament descriptions of worship as the beginning of Christian prayer meetings. He tends to oversimplify when he insists that *presbyteros* refers to *elders* (distinct from overseers and deacons, but without explaining how) whose role seems simply to serve as a kind of leader with life experience (59), while he ignores the role of the *episkopoi* altogether.

In chapter five Witherington describes early Christian worship essentially as prayer and praise, song and supplication. He says that the Pentecost story in Acts 2 "suggests that Christian worship was often ecstatic and jubilant, involving loud singing" (63). Based on his reading of St. Paul's circular homilies (that is, meant to be shared among different churches, 63), Witherington emphasizes the emotional aspect of Christian prayer, even finding a proof-text in John Chrysostom's homily on Ephesians to support his assertion (64). Witherington wants his readers to note that these worship services were not "clergy-dominated." There were leaders, but everyone could join in according to his abilities (67). After an excursus on Christological hymns in the New Testament, he comments on the Lord's Prayer in the context of addressing God as *Abba*, underscoring the intimacy befitting the prayer of Christians. He ends the chapter with a brief presentation of chapter 10 of the *Didache*, which serves as evidence that the Lord's Prayer is most fittingly said after the Lord's Supper (84). He leaves it to the reader to discern the worth of celebrating the Lord's Supper as part of Christian worship.

Witherington's socio-rhetorical critical method comes into full play in chapter six. He presents an apologetic for the claim that the apostolic letters in the New Testament, especially those of St. Paul, "are actually homilies, sermons, and rhetorical discourses meant to be delivered in

worship settings by whatever co-worker was able to communicate it in person" (87). Paul's letters were not for private study, he says, but "were surrogates for the speeches Paul would have made could he have been present with his audience. . . . They were intended as timely remarks, their goal being to affect the belief and the behavior of the various audiences" (94–95). "The New Testament documents . . . should in the first instance be analyzed primarily by ancient social and rhetorical conventions, and only secondarily by epistolary ones" (96). Thus, these homilies will then "tell us a good deal about the worship life of the house church" (100).

"What has impeded an adequate definition of worship?" he asks in chapter seven (131). While worship is "the ultimate ethical act," he says that we must also view worship in the context of work and rest (131–32). Christian worship is supposed to be different from Old Testament patterns "not because Christ has inaugurated his kingdom on earth, but because believers are different and should worship differently" (134). For Witherington, the "difference" centers on the eschaton. Christians praise God in a forward-looking way rather than through former sabbatical practices, the old ways of distinguishing work and rest (135). Work, he says, is to be understood as doxological, that is, "doing things to God's glory" (140).

In his eighth and final chapter Witherington reviews the ideas he has laid out to "do worship better" (161). We have to get worship right "because human beings were created for worship" (151). Moreover, good preaching is essential to good worship because, as he puts it "God wants to clear his throat each week and address his people" (155).

The most useful and important point that Ben Witherington makes is that worship must be about God, a lesson not only for his Christian evangelical readers, but for Catholics, too. Witherington wants to see Christian worship as invigorated today as it was during the time of apostles. For Catholics, this means, in the words of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14, "fully conscious and active participation," in the liturgy that is necessarily rooted in the Eucharist, "source and summit of our faith" (*Lumen Gentium* 11) revealed by Christ. We need not reinvent the worship service; we need to be united by grace to Christ the High Priest and to participate in his worship of the Father in his Body, the Church, already invigorated by the Holy Spirit. N V

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La Trinitaire Théologie de Louis Bouyer by Guillaume Bruté de Rémur (*Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2010*), 378 pp.

GUILLAME BRUTÉ de Rémur, a priest of the Diocese of Rome and rector of the Eparchial International Territorial Seminary of the *Mother of the Redeemer* in Beirut, Lebanon, recently completed a dissertation on Louis Bouyer's Trinitarian theology that has been published by Gregorian Press. The dissertation is notable. It provides (among other things) an important, although not decisive, clarification of Bouyer's uses of phenomenology for understanding the God-world relationship. Bouyer, on whom several dissertations have been written internationally in recent years, was one of the first theologians to integrate the twentieth-century phenomenological method with theology. His use of phenomenology to understand the data of revelation is omnipresent especially (although not only) in his nine-volume treatise dedicated to systematic theology. An early advocate of the work of Edith Stein, we see in Rémur's study that Bouyer is among the most important twentieth-century theologians to have used Husserl rather than Heidegger as the primary contemporary philosophical resource for theology. Through the purifying lens of Stein's Thomist, theological reworking of Husserl, Bouyer develops a phenomenological analysis of intentionality to think anew the Western, Augustinian-Thomist understanding of the Trinity in relation to creation. Moreover, he develops this Husserlian approach in connection with a fully ecclesial phenomenology of the Holy Spirit that overturns the nineteenth-century phenomenological method of Hegel.

Rémur's work is broken up into three lengthy chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter, he explores the connection that Bouyer establishes between three levels of human consciousness—individual, social, and cosmic—that are, historically speaking, each awakened in man in the framework of religious activity. Bouyer's use of the phenomenology of religion, especially as found in Mircea Eliade, comes to the foreground here. Myth and ritual are the fundamental cultural activities that give birth to, or that first instance, human self-reflection on its various levels. For Bouyer, divine inspiration works through and in the natural religious forms and patterns of primordial culture and civilization, transforming them progressively through the critique of magic by myth (understood in the sense of Eliade) and through the rational interpretation that is given to the myths through the development of philosophy. Rémur does not explore the interplay between the various meanings that the term "phenomenology" takes in Hegel, Husserl, and Eliade. But he does provide a suggestive exegesis that points a way forward for future research

into Bouyer's unique integration of these different approaches to phenomenological investigation.

In chapter 2, Rémur explores Bouyer's "faith-phenomenology" (my term) of God's contesting and reworking of natural religion through his re-creative Word in his covenantal revelation established with Abraham and brought, slowly and progressively under the incubation of the Holy Spirit, to a surpassing fullness in the Incarnation and redemptive work of Christ. Bouyer develops in this aspect of his work a historical phenomenology of the Holy Spirit that counteracts Hegel's *a priorism* in the analysis of history and his conflation of world and Spirit in metaphysics. We get a sense in Rémur's study of Bouyer's impressive attempt to overcome the earlier modern effort to fit the whole of historical, contingent fact, especially as it concerns the manifestation of religious meaning in human culture, into the necessary structures of human consciousness. This earlier modern effort inevitably led to a reduction of the religious fact to some prior natural substratum of cultural or anthropological meaning, such as economic need or psychological reaction. It led to a reduction of Christian revelation to already existing religious forms. Husserl's more refined phenomenological method requires empathetic openness to the intentional objects of human consciousness and so enables discrete displays of religious meaning in history to be known according to their proper essences. The Husserlian approach thus allows the irreducible character of Christian revelation to shine forth.

In chapter 3 and in the conclusion of his study, Rémur brings us into the heart of Bouyer's understanding of Trinitarian doctrine. It is here that the influence of Edith Stein on Bouyer's thinking and his correction of the Hegelian approach to the phenomenology of the Spirit becomes most clear. Rémur argues that Bouyer's lifelong intention to express by means of a philosophical investigation of modern science the permanent value of a Christian vision of the universe corresponds to Husserl's desire to find an apodictic philosophical foundation for modern science. Rémur argues that Bouyer saw in the theology of Edith Stein the only way forward, ultimately, with Husserl's project. Basing himself on Stein's interpretation of Saint Thomas's *De veritate*, Bouyer argues that at its base the intentionality that ultimately moves human consciousness is the consciousness that God has of all of creation. Thus, Bouyer would consistently emphasize that we can only know and love ourselves fully if we know and love ourselves, by the grace of God, with the knowledge and love that God has of each of us eternally. The knowledge and love that God has of us eternally is a Trinitarian act, and it is therefore in communion with the Trinity that human consciousness is brought by God in

Christ and the Holy Spirit to its summative, supernatural end. The point of Bouyer's development of the Western tradition of Trinitarian theology is to capture in consideration of the relation of divine to human consciousness the Trinitarian creationism of the tradition that had not always been thematized in modern theology.

Bouyer, Rémur shows, holds that human knowledge is ultimately grounded in participation in the Eucharistic communion of the Church. It has been argued that Hans Urs von Balthasar's project was motivated fundamentally by his desire to recover the anti-Gnostic, sacramental gnoseology of Saint Irenaeus in the face of the recrudescence of heretical Gnosticism in all areas of modern life. The same could certainly be said to be true of Bouyer. Toward that end, Bouyer demonstrates that true gnosis has its roots in religious, ritual sacrifice. In the pre-Christian world, the quest for gnosis was ultimately hindered because religion was not yet fully real or true. God had not yet offered to man true, logical sacrificial *cultus*. In the case of the heretical Christian Gnostics, the quest for gnosis was detached from the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church and so led down false or even diabolical paths. Similarly, in the modern age, the quest for gnosis is at times diabolical because it has been abstracted altogether from its proper, Eucharistic site. Bouyer, it should be emphasized, is unique among twentieth-century theologians in the thoroughness of his demonstration of the liturgical basis of human knowledge, both natural and supernatural.

Rémur concludes his study by noting the importance of Bouyer's work today, especially in the context of the new ecclesial movements. Given that Rémur heads a seminary of the Neo-Catechumenal Way dedicated to the new evangelization, it is clear that he himself is involved with these new movements. He suggests that Bouyer's agitation with the post-Conciliar Church, evident in several of his later writings and in his still-unpublished *Memoirs*, stemmed from frustration with the inability of the academic community to understand that Catholic theology should find its roots in the cloister rather than in the halls of academe. Bouyer wrote many books on spirituality and liturgy precisely to recover an ecclesial sense of the cloister as the place where theology ultimately lives. Rémur suggests that the new ecclesial movements themselves evince this understanding. Bouyer's theology is thus quite at home in the new movements.

There is much more that could be said about Rémur's analysis of Bouyer's Trinitarian theology. He competently demonstrates Bouyer's sympathies for the Western mystics and for Eastern sophiology and how these sympathies have influenced his reflections on the Trinity. Yet I would insist that the value of Rémur's dissertation is ultimately that it

helps us to see the different ways in which the method of modern phenomenology is at work in Bouyer's corpus. Husserl's project, itself corrected in the Thomist, theological perspective of Edith Stein, is the corrective in Bouyer for Hegel's *a priorism*. Rémur shows that there is as well a distinct focus on history or genealogy throughout Bouyer's writings, whereas in Husserl this concern is largely absent, except in his *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, written near the end of his life. Bouyer's phenomenology, then, is not only an attempt to uncover the essential structures of human intentionality, grounded in the Trinity, but to uncover by the light of ecclesial faith the distinctive work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the world against the backdrop of the whole movement of human history. Although Rémur is not quite as explicit about all of these factors at play in Bouyer's work as one might desire (his study is, after all, only a dissertation), he has nevertheless expounded competently both the phenomenological history of faith in Bouyer's writings and the phenomenology of human and divine consciousness.

It should be said that Rémur himself does not give an account of the place of Bouyer's work in the vast sweep of modern theology and philosophy. He seldom strays outside of Bouyer's own texts. This is a good method of research for a dissertation. His goal is simply to uncover the intrinsic logic of Bouyer's demonstrations and method. Yet even with these limits his study is indicative of why Bouyer's work is important and why it should be studied as one of the seminal Catholic, theological responses in the modern age to the sorts of concerns raised for theology by the various forms of reductionism that have predominated in public thinking about human meaning. As of now, the most important comprehensive study to have been done on Bouyer's life and work remains Davide Zordan's monumental *Connaissance et mystère. L'itinéraire théologique de Louis Bouyer* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2008). But Rémur's study is more suggestive than Zordan's of the philosophical depth of Bouyer's work. Although Rémur's study was written as a dissertation, its French style is readily accessible to the English scholar with a basic knowledge of French, and so it can help introduce the reader to the philosophical dimension of a writer who, although still little known in the full scope of his work, is one of the most important Catholic theologians of the modern age. N V

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Thomism and Tolerance by John F. X. Knasas (*Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2011*) vii + 168 pp.

IN HIS INTRODUCTION, Professor Knasas states that this book is a continuation of the main idea of *Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists*, namely, “looking to our fellows as intellectors of being.” The work is divided into seven chapters, the last one being just a succinct summary of the main conclusions.

Chapter I establishes the basis for the compatibility between the person who knows with certainty some truths (the intellector of being) and tolerance. This means that tolerance cannot be mere indifference, which is rooted in a privatization of truth, as Rorty proposes, and which Knasas rightly identifies as another form of skepticism. The undesirable result of this skepticism for our society, and especially for a democracy, is the danger of inhuman, imposed dogmatism. This could be the case of a government that imposes laws that violate the moral conscience of people.

This topic is extremely important, but Knasas is too sketchy here; he does not provide a clear and solid account of how the indifference to truth ends up in intolerance. He provides a few ideas: the natural law and the notion of tolerance as a virtue. A possible line of thought might have been to say that the natural law is based on the truthful notion of the human person. A skepticism about the truth of the human person will imply a failure of the precepts of the natural law. The latter will make it virtually impossible to have a workable virtue of prudence that applies the universal law to particular cases and, specifically, that determines the meaning of the rest of the virtues, here the virtue of tolerance. The lack of a commitment to truth will corrupt tolerance into its two opposite vices: mere indifference (usually under the form of irenicism) and inhuman dogmatism. With this line of reasoning, Knasas shows clearly the need for truth in order to have sincere tolerance. The next logical step is a definition of tolerance, and Knasas proposes “mutual assistance,” that is, “fraternal tolerance” (6) as distinguished from mutual indifference.

Chapter II deals with the metaphysical notion of person, and the characteristic of dignity which is attached to the ontology of person. All of these elements will provide an adequate approach to tolerance. Following St. Thomas Aquinas, Knasas claims that the person is the most perfect being in all nature, because of its fundamental rationality (13). Thus, if rationality is connected with our dignity, then, Knasas proposes, the dignity of the human person derives from the person’s being “an intellector of being.” This formula allows a double metaphysical access to person, one from the person itself as a being fundamentally open to the

infinity of being, and the other from the *ratio entis* in which all our concepts are resolved. The author dedicates most of the chapter to explaining the importance of the latter (the *ratio entis*) in establishing a correct notion of good, as a transcendental of being; from here, the chapter moves to the first principles of practical reason. In this fashion, Knasas develops an interesting Thomistic personalism: human persons as intellectors of being, and intellectors of good, wherein the good of the person is included. This leads him to the next step: "The first rule of a moral life is to be respectful and solicitous of the human person" (22), which is supposed to be a personalist version of the Thomistic principle of synderesis (the good ought to be done and evil avoided). The change can be explained because being itself prompts us to be respectful, that is, to be respectful to any being, and respectful first to the most important beings of nature, persons.

Among the many interesting insights that Knasas presents, there is one I would like to clarify. He characterizes the notion of being, following Phelan and Owens, as "sameness-in-difference" (15), which is strongly reminiscent of the Hegelian formula "identity-in-difference": the identity of the opposites which are not destroyed but overcome in a higher level, in a dialectical unity that keeps the negativity (of the opposites) as such. On the contrary, the Thomistic notion of being is not of a dialectical unity of negativity but of an analogical unity, which, as Knasas puts it, implies "the sum total of all conceivable perfection" (17).

Chapter III is dedicated to the metaphysical underpinnings of the natural law. In addition to the traditional Thomistic primary and secondary precepts of natural law, Knasas advances the cause of human dignity by introducing the fact that "the knowledge of themselves as intellectors of being is present and is explaining their inchoate sense of their own dignity" (33). Hence, Knasas can justify that everyone can know, in some way, the basic principles of natural law because everybody has a certain knowledge of themselves as open to reality, being. The result of this analysis of a person as intellector of being will be the base for an explicit knowledge of natural law. The metaphysical analysis of being, which the intellector of being is and is open to, serves many purposes; one is to connect God as the *esse purum* and the person as *habens esse*, and another is to establish the *ratio boni* (being as perfect and desirable) as the foundation for the first principle of practical reason (to do the good and avoid evil). In a nutshell, "the notion of being controls, and has always controlled human psychology" (41), and human psychology determines ethics.

In Chapter IV, Knasas deals with tolerance from the point of view of natural law. By nature (as the intellector of being), human beings are

social persons, but “society is not simply for intellectual pursuit” (46). In support of this statement, Knasas points out that “the longing to live upright is more primal than the longing for truth.” This statement is relatively true, but ultimately incorrect, for if happiness is the ultimate contemplation of Truth, our whole life must be ruled by this contemplation, which expresses the priority of the theoretical over the practical intellect, contemplation over ethics, and theoretical over practical truth. The knowledge of truth by itself and contemplation are the ultimate longings of humans as intellectors of being.

Next, the author develops a theory of political tolerance from the model of “legitimate and noncontradictory pluralism” (51) on the speculative level. He indicates that “any conceptual attempt to express reality would fall short,” as a consequence of our way of knowing by abstraction, that is, “concepts are abstractions, but abstractions leave something out about reality,” and hence “any concept necessarily only approximates the real.” The conclusion is that “no speculative system can claim to be the expression of truths as such.” This imperfection in our knowledge of truths entails the necessity of tolerance about other approximations to truths. From these insights, Knasas defends the importance of practical reason, applied specifically to society, politics, etc., where tolerance is involved. What Knasas’s argument underlines, if I am not mistaken, is that if practical truth is based on theoretical truth, and the later is not exhausted by one single conception, then with more reason no single belief will exhaust the practical truth, which requires the acceptance of other perspectives.

Brief, but with promising arguments, the last part of the chapter is dedicated to the place of tolerance in Heidegger’s philosophy. Our author maintains that Heidegger’s notion of existence, as freedom, seems “to exclude a rational basis for freedom” (55). If being is an *a priori* projection of *Dasein*’s freedom, then *Dasein*’s freedom appears to be ungrounded. Heidegger places freedom before being (unlike Aquinas, who grounds freedom on being). Heidegger prioritizes freedom over being because his notion of being is the emptiest concept, and thus the concept of being is not analogous but univocal. Knasas does not say how tolerance can be accommodated within Heidegger’s philosophy, but it seems obvious that in his philosophy, ethics—and with it the virtue of tolerance—is very difficult to justify.

Chapter V, “Defending Tolerance without Becoming Intolerant,” deals with utilitarianism, Kant’s ethics, Rawls, and Rorty. Because utilitarians confuse happiness with pleasure, they do not understand the hero whose happiness is a goal that implies pleasure-extinguishing. The latter is a justification of the claim that tolerance sometimes is pleasure-extinguishing,

where utilitarianism fails miserably. In commenting on Kant, Knasas maintains that the idea of a self-legislator is a contradiction in terms, because one cannot be really autonomous and at the same time dependent on reason (categorical imperative) (70). Kantian autonomy is autonomy from any imposition, including the logic of the categorical imperative. In addition to this, the natural consequence of “Kant’s strategy of denying reason to make room for faith” (112) makes Kant’s ethics unsuitable for justifying tolerance, for tolerance is based on truth, and specifically, theoretical truth, which Kant replaces by the practical truth of belief.

Rawls’s political liberalism is under the influence of Kant’s autonomous will: “Rawls bases tolerance on power. I should tolerate you because you can cause me trouble. But likewise, if you cannot cause me trouble, then I need not tolerate you. Tolerance is just for those in power” (81). Rorty tries to appeal to the Humean sentimental principle of sympathy between humans. But sentiments are essentially variable and even absent. So the only conclusion that Rorty seems to draw—Knasas believes—is a “hope for tolerance” and not a real tolerance (91).

The last section of this chapter is dedicated to Aquinas’s thought on heretics, wherein St. Thomas distinguishes formal from material heresy. Usually there are problems not with tolerance of material heresy but with formal heresy. Formal heresy entails the malice of the will against the truth—at issue is not the obligation of following one’s conscience; at issue is evil conscience, malice.

Chapter VI, “Cultural Pluralism,” deals with the present cultural situation of tolerance of other cultures in our own cities. Cultural pluralism in our democracies is in danger of causing the loss of national identity, culture, philosophy, and even religion. Knasas rightly argues that there is the wrong idea that tolerance implies skepticism and the fear that truth is tyrannical. He contrasts this combination of misunderstandings with Aquinas’s understanding of natural law as the fundamental ground for cultural identity: morality is the basis for cultural identity, and this morality springs from our fidelity to ourselves as intellectors of being. Knasas’s analysis of Dawson’s thesis that cultural development follows essentially upon the religious impulse is interesting, but unfortunately, Knasas claims, Dawson does not see that human intelligence is able to achieve an integral view of morality, where tolerance is rooted (121). Our author criticizes also Tracey Rowland’s Augustinian Thomism, because it bases the whole of culture only in tradition and therefore results in possibly incompatible cultures—such as Christian and liberal cultures. Knasas rejects this radical view in favor of people who are intellectors of being, a common feature of the essence of any culture, and tolerance. Knasas objects to Alas-

dair MacIntyre for his notion of truth, that moral truth is viewpoint-dependent. This notion poses the serious possibility of falling into relativism. Knasas is well known for his defense of traditional Thomism (Maritain, Gilson, etc.) against Transcendental Thomism, and he sees in MacIntyre an echo of the latter. Transcendental Thomists interpret the natural inclination of the intellect to the truth as an inclination to project, not to conform. MacIntyre's perspective moral truth has this flavor of Transcendental Thomism. Knasas's analysis of Schindler's criticism of liberal culture, as essentially Cartesian, is very interesting. Schindler states that liberal neutrality is not neutral but is a comprehensive rationalistic doctrine, which is already an imposed pseudo-faith. Nevertheless, Knasas thinks that Schindler's epistemology is also affected by Transcendental Thomism to some degree; there is the danger in Schindler of a notion of being that is a *projectum* more than a Thomistic *abstractum* taken from sensed objects, where the intellect grasps reality as reality (136).

I would like to make a minor observation on the main topic, tolerance. Knasas expresses and develops very well the compatibility between tolerance and truth. Not only are they compatible, but it is impossible to have tolerance without truth, and truth is Knasas's main goal. Nevertheless, I think that he is missing a more precise definition of tolerance, one that does not blur the borders with the virtue of fraternity. Knasas seems to start with a very common notion of tolerance, which is precisely the liberal one, namely tolerance as neutral acceptance. Against this common and liberal notion, Knasas rightly proposes another notion of tolerance as mutual assistance in the way of fraternal love, what he calls "fraternal tolerance." However, I do not think that this is the nucleus of tolerance. Tolerance is always for what is evil and bad, not for what is good. Tolerance is in reference to something really evil or perceived as evil. I can tolerate an impertinent person, an insult, and even worse evils (real evil), but it would be incorrect to say that I tolerate that I won the lottery, or that I tolerate good food or good company. Tolerance should be guided by the rules of cooperation with evil or other appropriate rules in order to discern the limits of tolerance. The difficulty with tolerance in our society comes from the "perceived evil." Let us see this case very briefly. In some circumstances, we have to be "tolerant" of something that is good, as in the tolerance of other, minority cultures within a prevalent majority culture. If the minority culture is good, there should be no question of tolerance but only of fraternal acceptance and assistance. If there are problems with acceptance of a good minority culture, then people should be educated to see the good of other cultures, and fraternal acceptance will be a natural result. It is possible to call the latter "tolerance" only if the acceptance of

a “perceived” evil is necessitated in regard to a culture that is perceived as hostile; such a perception can result from a failure to see the good in others. Also, it is possible to describe tolerance as the acceptance of a real evil or “perceived” evil that cannot be avoided without bringing worse evil. But the “liberal tolerance” of our democracies is a product of a problematic notion of freedom—as the mere choosing between evil and good; “liberal tolerance” is not founded on the Thomistic notion of freedom as a choosing among several (created) goods, which are means for an end; in this latter view, evil is a defect of created freedom and not part of freedom’s essence, for the essence of freedom is to direct oneself toward an end. The liberal notion of freedom seems to be the foundation of a tolerance for the good and evil of everyone’s freedom, because, according to that notion, the only good is the freedom itself; the effects of freedom are considered to be neutral: one is pro choice (freedom) regardless of the results (good or evil). Paraphrasing Maritain, modern societies seem to be more occupied with the means, and they forget the ends. The liberal notion of tolerance is based on a liberal notion of freedom, wherein freedom is viewed as an (ultimate) end; that “freedom” contrasts with the Thomistic view of freedom (a means to be directed toward an end)—which end, ultimately, is the contemplation of God.

In general, the book is clear, sincere, and well articulated, with very valid analyses of the current devastating problems of relativism and the devaluation of tolerance, its transformation into mere indifference. Knasas expresses very well the necessity of a good metaphysics to resolve present practical problems in our society, and specifically, to restore a positive notion of tolerance. N V

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Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths by Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), x + 228 pp.

TEACHING HISTORY of theology in a Catholic university, one often finds that Catholic students are among the most vociferous classroom opponents of the notion that a vigorous doctrine of predestination—one that prioritizes God’s election and grace over the sinner’s exercise of the free will—has ever had a proper place in the Catholic theological tradition. Start out with Paul’s words in Romans 8:28–30 and the students will be sure that the Apostle had nothing more in mind than God’s foreknowledge of right or wrong use of the free will. Mention Augustine’s

idea of operating grace and the students may puzzle, but will probably decide he is distant enough to disregard. Toss in the authority of Aquinas and their confused expressions will suggest growing worry. Aquinas couldn't have said that, could he? Review the Molinist controversy and they will likely puzzle over the intensity of the debate. Confront them at last with the relevant pages from such a classic source as Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, which gives both election and reprobation *de fide* status, and they will likely be baffled. Search for a clincher from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, however, and find scant mention of the theme. The contrast between Ott and the *Catechism* is glaring. How, one might well wonder, did we get from there to here?

Levering's rich and wide-ranging study offers answers to such questions in the form of an eminently readable and theologically sensitive reflection on the theology of predestination from its roots in the Old and New Testaments down to the present day. A slim volume, it eschews the encyclopedic approach in favor of a method that selects particular theologians over the various periods of church history and sets their views out for analysis and reflection. The goal is wisdom for faith and teaching, that is, "biblical and theological paths" toward a proper Catholic embrace of the mystery of predestination.

The volume begins with Levering's own review of the biblical roots of the doctrine of predestination in the Old and New Testaments. Scripture, Levering argues, presents a generally coherent narrative of a God who providentially directs the cosmos as a whole toward its ultimate fulfillment, who freely elects Israel as the privileged agent of that providential care, and who brings his promises and covenants with Israel to fulfillment through Jesus Christ. At the same time, Scripture also affirms human responsibility. The foundation for God's own providential care and electing grace, moreover, is solely his own love. More than that, the election of the Father itself stands as the point of origin of the missions of the Son and the Spirit. Examining Romans 8–11 with this broad characterization in mind, Levering sketches out the problem of a God who has "mercy upon all" but also "hardens" the heart, for example, of Pharaoh. Attending with care to the results of contemporary exegetical studies of Romans, Levering concludes that the Scriptures challenge the theologian with a difficult balancing act. On the one hand, there is no deficiency in the grace and love of God for every rational creature. On the other hand, God freely elects to allow some rational creatures to remain in their sin. This is the mystery of predestination.

The next four chapters examine the treatment of this mystery in the works of a small group of representative theologians. For the patristic

period, Levering chooses Origen, Augustine, Boethius, and John of Damascus. In each case, here and throughout the book, Levering demonstrates a remarkably wide and deep reading, not only in the primary sources, but in the relevant secondary literature as well. His conclusions are drawn with care and with an admirable commitment to fairness and attention to nuance, even in theologians with whom he seems to disagree. Augustine and Boethius, Levering notes, emphasize God's providential control but seem at times to struggle to affirm the universality of God's love. The latter point is admirably underscored in Origen's work. John of Damascus, on the other hand, emphasizes creaturely freedom in such a way that human freedom threatens the priority of God's gift of grace.

Moving to the Middle Ages, Levering examines the positions of Eriugena, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, and Catherine of Siena. Both Eriugena and Ockham tend to reduce predestination to God's foreknowledge. Ockham sees predestination as God's foreknowledge of human good deeds, although he allows that God is free in rewarding them. Aquinas, on the other hand, makes a series of crucial distinctions. Most fundamentally, perhaps, God's providential care involves a "transcendent causality" that mysteriously upholds the freedom of "created causality" (78). At the same time, God permits but does not will evil. Instead, God only "wills to permit evil to be done" (79). Antecedently—that is, as the gracious giver of all being and salvation—God wills the salvation of all. Consequently, however—that is, with a view toward their free rejection of his love and persistence in sin, God wills the everlasting punishment of some rational creatures. God gives good to all and does not cause the failure of those who are lost, but the good of eternal life is given only to some, through God's predestination of particular rational creatures to the good of a supernatural end that lies wholly beyond their natural capacities. Why do not all persons receive this supernatural destination? Catherine of Siena, Levering argues, better balances the sense of the believer's radical dependence on the gift and grace of God with the superabundant love of God for all rational creatures. In her willingness to live with this tension rather than seeking to resolve it in a conceptually rigorous manner, she points the way forward for those who would be faithful to the Scripture's own inner tension.

Reflecting on the treatment of this problem in the Reformation and early modern period, Levering turns to the writings of John Calvin, Luis de Molina, Francis de Sales, and G.W. Leibniz. In this group, he finds that de Sales best preserves the salutary tension between the priority of God's gift and the superabundant love of God. Levering offers an ecumenically sensitive but not uncritical treatment of Calvin, whose position on this

matter is all too easily caricatured. Calvin did not accept the notion of a “permissive will” in God, and thus he concluded that God, who after all is Lord over all of history, both does not and does will sin. The difficulty for Calvin, then, is to explain how it is that God does not somehow commit the sin that, as part of his “secret plan,” he allows. Calvin’s doctrine of predestination, however, is “asymmetrical,” for he located the cause of election in God’s grace, but the cause of reprobation in the defect of the rational creature itself. In denying God’s permissive will and assigning reprobation to God’s active will, however, “Calvin solves the problem by, as it were, seizing the nettle” (197). Molina, on the other hand, famously distinguished God’s “middle knowledge” of the causal nexus by means of which rational creatures may come to participate in himself from his “natural knowledge” of all possibilities for the created order, as well as his “free knowledge” of what will happen within the created order he has actually chosen to instantiate. On the basis of this “middle knowledge,” God knows how free creatures will act, that is, turning themselves either toward or away from God. Predestination, then, means God’s free choice of that particular order in which some creatures turn toward, others away. Predestination, in short, is not causative; instead, it is a matter of foreknowledge. Leibniz continues the emphasis on causal chains characteristic of Molina, but without the “middle knowledge.” Finally, de Sales radically emphasizes the love of God, even for those who persist in sin. He allows as a possibility the explanation that God wills the beauty of diversity in allowing some to be lost eternally, but he does not wish to assert it. The mystery of predestination will be revealed only in heaven, and every attempt to grasp that now threatens to undermine the revealed knowledge of divine mercy and love.

A final historical chapter examines twentieth-century theologians, including Sergius Bulgakov, Karl Barth, Jacques Maritain, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Both Bulgakov and Barth tend toward a universalism that seems to compromise the revealed truth that some rational creatures are forever lost, as Jesus himself repeatedly warned. For his part, Maritain seeks to resolve the difficulty of the relationship between the creature’s free response and the grace of God. Levering offers a brilliant and illuminating account of Maritain’s proposal of a “non-active nihilation” that renders the grace of God ineffective in some rational creatures without involving God as cause at any level. Levering argues that, in spite of Maritain’s intellectual agility, the latter does not resolve the question why God does not infallibly move all to assent to grace. The mystery of God’s permissive will remains firmly in place. Lastly, in von Balthasar, lostness is taken up into the mystery of the divine life by means of an intra-Trinitarian kenosis, a

strategy that (Levering not implausibly complains) “imports horrors into the divine life” (176). His gentle but persistent argumentation here suggests that these twentieth-century strategies for taming the problem of predestination focus one-sidedly upon God’s love to the exclusion of his free and providential decision to allow some to be permanently lost.

A concluding chapter engages these problems energetically. Here, Levering observes that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that some of the angels have been irrevocably lost. Likewise, the *Catechism* warns that we human beings may also be lost if we persist in mortal sin without repentance, even if it does not ask or answer the question who or how many may be lost. If, however, we embrace the position that none will be lost, then we render a good deal of Jesus’ own teaching misleading at the least. In the end, we must in our praise of God affirm the mystery of predestination after the manner of Catherine of Siena and Francis de Sales, that is, that God superabundantly loves each rational creature and that God permits the permanent free rebellion of some of them.

In probing the question of predestination in dialogue with Scripture, tradition, and magisterial teaching, and in listening well to a wide range of Protestant and Orthodox voices, Levering offers a fine model of the Catholic theologian at work today. In doing so, moreover, he provides no little assistance for all who would teach not only the history but also the faith of the Church Catholic. N.V.

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Genesis by R. R. Reno (*Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010*), 304 pp.

RENO IS ONE of the editors for the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, and this volume is his particular contribution to the series. The series takes as its starting point the recognition that biblical scholars, who typically produce today’s commentaries, tend not to have a robust theological training, while for its part, “[t]heology has lost its competence in exegesis” (13). Like an army whose corps have retreated each to its own bastion to survive, “each dimension of a formerly unified Christian practice now tends to function independently” (13). The result is that, in commentaries at least, the Bible is not read as *Christian Scripture*, and therefore the “living voice of Scripture” is not heard.

Volumes in this commentary series are written by theologians rather than biblicists, and its authors are asked to offer dogmatic interpretations of Scripture; that is, they are asked to use “the Nicene tradition, in all its

diversity and controversy” as the lens through which to illuminate the biblical texts (11, 9–10). This mandate does not supply a particular way of proceeding, however. The volumes are described as reconstructive rather than reactionary, as an [ecumenical collection of] “experiments in postcritical doctrinal interpretation” (13, 14).

As such, this volume and the series help fill a void. For, in a typical traditional commentary one may find ample material about scholarly debates, discussion of philological and historical critical issues, along with some interpretation, and perhaps a nod here and there to the history of interpretation. But what if one wants a fuller sense of how a biblical text has been engaged by the Christian theological tradition, or how the text intersects with that tradition? What if one wants to think about a biblical text *theologically*? This volume, and this series, do precisely that.

The Genesis volume is not designed as a comprehensive history of theological interpretation. Nor does it follow Genesis chapter by chapter or verse by verse. Rather, as the author reflects at the outset:

Commenting can feel like standing at the headwaters of the Colorado River and trying to see, as in a vision, its long flow as it reaches to the Gulf of Mexico. How does one bring others to see the Grand Canyon in the reflections of the small ponds of the Rocky Mountains? (19–20)

Reno’s response is to offer an eccentric, although coherent, approach (20). The eccentricity comes in the choosing of those passages that will be commented on. The coherence comes in an overall approach that traces important theological threads throughout Genesis, grouped under the headings Creation, Fall, Dead Ends, Scandal of Particularity, and Need for Atonement. Simply from these major groupings one can begin to see how the Christian theological tradition is serving as a lens for what is important in, and how to think about, the book overall. Such an approach ensures that some aspects of the text will get less attention, or none at all. But it also means this commentary can be read in large uninterrupted pieces that follow an argument or provide a lengthy elucidation of an issue, unlike a traditional commentary; there, one is more likely simply to dip into it for information.

In some of those arguments Reno converses with the biblical guild. For instance, he spends considerable time discussing the translation of Genesis 1:1 (ought it to be “in the beginning God created” or “when God began to create”?), because the concept of beginning is so important theologically. However, his decision to go with the more traditional “in the beginning God created” is not based only on a logic internal to the Christian tradition.

In support for it, he draws on traditional Jewish readings, historical-critical judgments about the Priestly material in Genesis, as well as on traditional Christian readings. He observes that, while the three positions differ in their particulars, they all point to the same fundamental logic behind a substantive reading of the term “beginning”: in all three, “[t]he divine plan or project, however spelled out, is the beginning out of which and for which God creates” (32). How that divine project is conceived may vary: it may be “‘the world to come’ in which Torah obedience and disobedience define existence”; the “temple and sacrifice along the lines of the Priestly theology”; or Christ, the divine Word. Yet in each of these three cases, creation is seen to emerge “out of a prior plan or purpose” (a “beginning”) whether in the mind of God (in the first and third cases) or in the mind of a particular circle of tradents in ancient Israel (in the second case). This thorough argumentation allows one to see that the translation choice is not simply the result of a traditionalist impulse or of a preference for the Septuagint. It also more than adequately demonstrates that philological choices can be profoundly influenced by, and can profoundly shape, theological conclusions.

The discussion over the translation of “beginning” is in effect a programmatic statement of Reno’s approach for the whole commentary, which is why it warrants some serious attention here. Reno speaks of the “double quality” of his interpretation, directed on the one hand toward the details of any given passage and, on the other hand, toward the larger project or aim of his exegesis, which is “to move forward ever more deeply into the beginning,” which is, in the case of his interpretive aim, “to move forward ever more deeply into the mystery of Christ” (38). He writes:

... theological interpretation necessarily combines a global framework with local color. Our overall take on the divine plan interacts with particular moments of scriptural evidence. The best possible reading of any verse of scripture will be one that allows us to *both* make sense of the words in front of us *and* see their role in guiding us toward fulfillment in Christ.” (38–39)

In discussing Abraham’s call, he demonstrates a way of thinking Christologically about an Old Testament text without completely leaving the *historia* or plain sense of the text behind. For example, in discussing the break between Genesis 1–11, with its discussion of the whole world, and Genesis 12, he writes, “The extraordinary and unexpected shift in focus from universal to particular is the clearest way in which the Old Testament prefigures the fulfillment of the divine plan in Jesus Christ.” And it is this shift, this particularity of Abraham, that “prepares us for the claim that the salvation of all rests on the death and resurrection of Jesus” (139).

But not all of Reno's theological readings are Christological. For example, in discussing Abraham's test, the near sacrifice of Isaac, he talks of how Abraham's trial, like that of all spiritual trials in the Bible, helps free one "from our impulse to live as children 'of the world,' . . . so that we can become more fully capable of living 'in the world.'" He continues:

If we no longer invest our worldly powers and capacities with the vain hope that they can be the point and purpose of human life, then we can actually live as finite creatures with bodies, families, and social institutions, and do so without making them into idols. . . . [Trials] purify our loves. They are forms of grace that prepare us to love God and love others in God. (197–98)

Reading as a biblical scholar, I found it interesting to be looking over the shoulder of a theologian, observing the kind of issues the text of Genesis raises for him. Certainly, this commentary is helpful in showing how the text of Genesis has been a source for the development of, and how it intersects with, the Christian theological tradition. But also as a biblical scholar, I found some things missing. In particular, there was perhaps not *enough* attention to the "plain sense" of the text, and not enough attention to or appreciation for the literary artistry of the text.

Happily, what this volume demonstrates is that a theological reading of a text as rich as Genesis by no means exhausts the possibilities. In showing what a theological reading of Genesis looks like from where he stands, Reno also opens up one's horizons for how *else* the text might speak to, and out of, the Christian theological tradition. Reno's contribution will surely whet one's appetite to see how other theologians might engage the conversation in their own distinct ways. But even more interesting would be to see what sort of commentary a biblical scholar and theologian might produce working in concert. N.V

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