

Book Reviews

Medieval Christianity: A New History by Kevin Madigan (*New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 2015*), xxiv + 487 pp.

WITH THE EXISTENCE of so many great introductions to the history of Christian thought from scholars like Jaroslav Pelikan or Richard Southern, does there need to be another survey of medieval religion? Kevin Madigan's *Medieval Christianity: A New History* is an attractive volume boasting a wide array of endorsements from medievalists such as John Van Engen and Bernard McGinn. It is clearly intended to become the new standard narrative, written at a popular level for the typical undergraduate survey course or armchair historian. Yet, what could recommend Madigan's work over older and more easily obtainable surveys? He declares that his intent is to "produce a volume that integrates the best of traditional scholarship with the rich and important developments that have occurred in the study of medieval Christianity over the past forty years or so." The present review will primarily judge whether *Medieval Christianity* successfully accomplishes his stated goal. Is Madigan's new book just old information placed in a stylish new binding, or does it breathe fresh air into the field of medieval religious studies?

Madigan's decisions about what to include and how to organize his text represent the principal success of *Medieval Christianity*. By including a short overview of early Christianity, for example, he lays the groundwork for the medieval "faith of our fathers" mentality. Then, allowing equal time to the early, high, and late periods, he avoids the unbalanced focus on the twelfth and thirteenth centuries so common in other surveys. One of the key organizational elements making the book a "new history" is the space it devotes to "marginal" groups in each period: women, Jews, Muslims, and heretics. By bringing nuns and other female saints and mystics to the foreground, for exam-

ple, Madigan makes a more truthful presentation of the medieval conception of gender. The sheer numbers and social esteem of these important women problematizes any previous survey that would relegate them to their own isolated chapter as if they were not integrated into the whole of medieval society. Madigan's narrative makes sense of the twelfth-century upsurge in female monasticism and female integration with reform movements such as the Cistercians, as well as the flood of anchoresses, Beguines, and women mystics in the centuries following. Unfortunately, he often hurts his credibility on the subject of women with repeated value judgments based on his own religio-political opinion: what he calls the "sad predicament" of canon law restricting priesthood to men. By viewing this issue through a purely pragmatic lens (e.g., the monetary disadvantage of an all-lay monastery), Madigan forgets that the religious women who "suffered" this patriarchal subjection would have thought of the restriction in primarily theological, not fiscal, terms. Madigan makes it sound as if the exclusion of women from the priesthood was all about keeping nuns in the poorhouse.

Madigan imports a similarly modern worldview to his discussion of medieval heresy. His entire chapter on this subject (and other discussions of Christianization) are symptomatic of a fundamental flaw in the book's methodology: in his entire survey of *Medieval Christianity*, Madigan does not provide any definition of "Christianity," nor does he himself appear to have a clear idea of what it is. In several places, he affirms a relativistic stance on the difference between heresy and orthodoxy in early Christianity (even asserting incompatible Christologies among the Gospel writers) and then extends this theological relativism into the middle ages.

Like his discussion of women, Madigan's narrative about heresy disappoints by painting a picture of the period highly dissonant with the outlook of the primary sources. He uncritically implies several controversial positions: for example, that twelfth- and thirteenth-century heresy was "nearly indistinguishable" from monastic and mendicant reform movements, and that condemnation of such heresies was a form of mimetic rivalry between clerically approved reform movements and anti-clerical heretical groups. In fact, Madigan's narrative is strongly reminiscent of many polemical anti-Catholic "medieval histories" from the nineteenth century, which praised medieval heretics like the Waldensians for their "proto-Reformation" willingness to seek a pristine Christian faith outside the bounds of the institutional Church.

The same tone emerges when he considers paganism and early Christianization. Thus, for example, Madigan can point to the invocation of saints and angels as examples of “grey areas” between Christianity and paganism, even though such practices have always been central to orthodox Christian culture. Though he takes time in the book to caution against the anachronism of modern perspectives, it is clear that Madigan himself is far from guiltless in this regard.

These methodological problems stand out as the most troubling and systemic in Madigan’s book. However, lest the verdict of this review appear to be an unqualified condemnation of *Medieval Christianity: a New History*, several positive remarks can be made. As the book’s endorsers all note, Madigan makes a skilled synthesis and presentation of numerous complex historical moments: the rise of Charlemagne, the lay investiture controversy, twelfth-century monastic orders, and the Avignon Papacy, for example. He includes over forty black-and-white photographic illustrations that are well-matched to the text. He commendably limits himself to a concise and balanced discussion of almost 1500 years of history, all the while maintaining a clear narrative program. *Medieval Christianity* is highly readable and without a doubt the work of a professional author. Given the narrow “liberal progressive” view of Christianity (especially Catholicism) for which Madigan has become elsewhere known, I was prepared for a much less balanced treatment of the medieval West. Hence, I was pleasantly surprised to find that biases from modern religious politics were not the book’s most visible shortcoming.

Unfortunately, the book’s narrative also suffers in other ways that earn it at best a mixed review. It pontificates on a host of controversial historiographical problems with scant citation of sources; the notes section of most chapters would not pass the evidentiary standards of Wikipedia. This begs the question of why, given the easy accessibility of free online sources, *Medieval Christianity* would even be worth buying. It also contains many historical errors and misleading statements. For example, in an area of Madigan’s own specialization, medieval scholasticism, he apparently relies on outdated scholarship and seems to misunderstand key concepts. While attempting to give a brief intellectual history of the thirteenth century, he makes demonstrably false assertions about Bonaventure’s illumination theory and Thomas’ view of sense experience. In other chapters, Madigan repeatedly uses anachronistic epithets like “neo-Donatism” that are more vitriolic than historical: “Augustine would have wept,” he writes of Gregorian reforms in the eleventh century. To those attuned to such

concerns, they impair an otherwise graceful and engaging narrative.

Perhaps the best advice I can offer readers of *Medieval Christianity: a New History* is a disappointed yet open-minded *caveat emptor*. As a popular history, Madigan's book has the value of opening the medieval world to the inquisitive reader. Yet it should be read as an open invitation to ask questions of the historical record, not as a book of answers to those questions. Rather than a "new standard text" to introduce this captivating period of church history, it should be seen as a challenge for other medievalists to produce ever "newer" histories of medieval Christianity that provide a multiplicity of ideological perspectives. N·V

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Revelation as Testimony: A Philosophical-Theological Study

by Mats Wahlberg (*Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014*), x + 246 pp.

THIS BOOK MAKES two interrelated arguments: divine revelation involves propositional knowledge, and faith on the basis of testimony is rationally warranted. In his introduction, Wahlberg notes that it is now commonplace to emphasize that "revelation" occurs in historical events, not in the words or propositions that mediate revelation. Wahlberg grants that revelation involves an encounter with a person, Jesus Christ, but he makes clear that the propositional element cannot be excised. He also notes that the act of faith, by which we believe on the authority of the divine revealer, is now often set in opposition to reason, which proceeds largely without appeals to authority. This way of differentiating faith and reason is a mistake, since it is reasonable to believe things on the basis of testimony, as faith does.

After this introduction, the second chapter focuses on revelation and propositional knowledge. Wahlberg begins by pointing out that a non-propositional revelation would have difficulty in defending the claim that the revelation comes from "God." Since non-propositional revelation could give no propositional knowledge about God, believers could suppose that the revelation comes from "God" only on the basis of an incommunicable personal experience or intuition, or on the basis of a strong natural theology, which those who deny propositional revelation are unlikely to affirm. Christian belief in the self-revealing God would thus be a pure fideism, impossible to defend rationally.

Furthermore, how could a personal relationship with God be established unless one knows something (inevitably as expressed in a proposition) about God? Wahlberg astutely observes that “the object of knowledge always includes some proposition; it is never merely, say, a physical object” (27). Propositions involve concepts, and we cannot think without concepts. It follows that, in order to know God personally, we must have some true propositional or conceptual knowledge about him. As Wahlberg states, “if there are no true propositions about God that we can grasp, then God cannot have personal communion with us” (28). These propositions must be ones that uniquely specify God, who is the transcendent source of all creatures.

What about “manifestational” revelation, in which something is revealed without words? Even in such a case, says Wahlberg, propositions are involved because “God, or any agent, cannot make knowledge of some reality available to a subject except by making knowledge of some proposition available” (30). When God manifests himself without words, we cannot know that God is doing so or has done so without propositional knowledge. Wahlberg gives the following example: “if God *manifestationally* reveals that he loves a certain person—for instance, by making her feel his love in a mystical experience—then it is the receiver of that revelation who must conceptualize the relevant proposition (*that God loves her*) herself” (32). For this reason, even a “manifestational” revelation is in a certain sense propositional, although, in propositional revelation that involves words, the revealer is more fully in charge of the meaning of the revelation.

Wahlberg also notes that the symbolic language of prophecy and parable should not be contrasted with propositional revelation, since metaphors and symbols in fact have a central role in propositional communication. Nor should the information provided by propositional revelation be thought to be opposed to spiritual transformation. On the contrary, the latter requires some propositional knowledge. In the case of the self-revelation of God, since “it is highly doubtful that infinity (and other theistic properties) can be represented in experiences” (45), God’s own propositional testimony is needed for us to know that it is God who is revealing himself.

To buttress this case, the third chapter reviews various ways of understanding revelation, following Avery Dulles’s fivefold typology in his *Models of Revelation*: doctrine, history, inner experience, dialectical presence, and new awareness. Doctrine is obviously propositional. Regarding history, we can know that something is an act

of God only if God tells us so; otherwise, the most we would be warranted in affirming is that a very powerful being has acted. Inner experience, or an “intuition” that “is not dependent on concepts” (60), also requires propositional knowledge. Wahlberg remarks in this vein that “[a] mental state cannot both be intentional—that is, be about or directed at some object, at least not an object such as ‘the infinite’—and at the same time be independent of concepts” (61). If we had no concept of the “infinite,” then our inner experience could not be intentionally directed to the “infinite.”

Still focused on the category of revelation as inner experience, Wahlberg critiques Rahner’s view of a “prereflective, nonconceptual awareness of ourselves as grounded in an infinite, personal mystery” (65). Here Wahlberg points to what Wilfrid Sellars terms the “myth of the given”: if an experience is utterly nonconceptual, the experience cannot justify any particular belief as arising necessarily from the experience. As Wahlberg puts it, “if the content of the transcendental experience lacks conceptual structure, it cannot, by itself, justify the choice of any particular characterization over any other” (68). If it is God who makes clear what particular characterization should be chosen, then this would simply be an instance of propositional revelation. Even in mystical experience, in order for the mystic to know that he or she has experienced God, the mystic must rely upon some propositional knowledge, without which the claim that the experience was specifically of *God* could not be warranted.

Among the advocates of revelation as dialectical presence, Wahlberg highlights Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. While they are known for the view that revelation as an “encounter” with the divine Word, Jesus Christ, as a living man should be strictly separated from propositional revelation—a deeply problematic view, since, as Wahlberg says, “We can only *consciously* encounter a reality by grasping propositions about it” (81)—Brunner and Barth in fact affirm divine (propositional) testimony to Jesus Christ. Wahlberg observes that “Barth unhesitatingly says that revelation provides knowledge of God” (84) through the work of Christ and the Spirit. The opposition between revelation as event and revelation as propositional is a false one. If the Spirit somehow gave “rise to a conviction in us that ‘God was in Christ,’” then this would already be a form of propositional revelation.

Lastly, Gregory Baum and William Thompson represent the model of revelation as new awareness or raised consciousness. Wahlberg points out that, whatever new awareness of the world and the self

we might obtain, we cannot call this a revelation of God unless the new awareness also contains the (propositional) insight that the cause of the new awareness is God. Here, as well as in the Barth section, Wahlberg makes use of a distinction between two kinds of propositional revelation: John Locke's direct divine infusion of knowledge, and revelation through spoken or written words (testimony).

To Dulles's fivefold typology, Wahlberg adds a sixth type: post-liberal accounts of revelation as found in Ronald Thiemann and John Milbank. Thiemann argues that the doctrine of revelation is about the absolute priority of God, not about (foundationalist) epistemological justification of Christian beliefs. But Thiemann's commitment to "epistemological coherentism"—the view that beliefs are justified by their coherent interrelationships (rather than by their relation to anything outside them)—makes clear that he is in fact concerned with epistemological questions. Wahlberg shows that it would be equally coherent to attribute Christian revelation merely to a very powerful being as it would be to attribute Christian revelation to God, unless God has spoken in some way. Indeed, Thiemann himself supposes that God, in the Gospels, makes promises—speech-acts (through human delegates) with propositional content.

Milbank considers that divine revelation consists in an illumination of the mind rather than new information. At the same time, he holds that we can infer from miraculous events that it is God who is acting. If we can make this inference, Wahlberg asks, why would we need the illumination of our mind? Milbank's answer is to point to the structure of human knowing: all real knowledge depends upon knowing finite realities in their relation to the Creator, and thus all knowledge involves a revelation of God. "Grace" is involved in this knowing as an illumination or intensification of reason. In response, Wahlberg concludes that "Milbank's denial that revelation provides new information is, in itself, rather peculiar. One would think that the proposition that God will judge all humans at the end of time would count as a piece of 'new information' that God has revealed" (101).

The fourth chapter, indebted to Nicholas Wolterstorff, focuses upon the theme of "divine speech" in relation to the status of Scripture. Wahlberg explores Wolterstorff's account of "double-agency discourse," in which, for example, a man deputizes someone else to speak in his name and authorizes this speech as his own (111). An example of this is prophecy, in which God is the author of words spoken by the prophet, who is deputized and authorized by God.

God can also speak “by appropriating the *discourse* of humans” as his own (113). In this way, certain books of the Bible are divine speech, even though God does not directly speak through them. In this way, too, God establishes himself as the author of the whole of Scripture by bringing together various texts to form one Bible. God can also speak directly to individuals, who then share this speech with others.

Does God speak directly to all believers, or only to the prophets and apostles? Drawing on the work of John Lamont, Wahlberg argues that “to conceive of God’s speaking as direct is to conceive of it as something that directly confronts believers of all times” (115). Direct divine speech, then, can come to us in a publicly available way through Scripture, through the Creeds, and through the Church’s teaching. The Church’s teaching includes the Creeds and also includes (in a certain way) Scripture. Christ thereby speaks to all of us directly and publicly through his Body, the Church.

Does this mean that everything we find in Scripture is God’s direct speech to us? Indebted to Wolterstorff (and also to Richard Swinburne), Wahlberg notes that here the key is to determine what the human author actually said and then to interpret “what God is saying by means of the appropriated human discourses in the Bible” (117). This enables us to distinguish between what the human author intended in passages commending the total annihilation of enemies, such as Joshua 11:20, from what God intends by appropriating such passages.

The fifth chapter explores the question of whether rationally justified knowledge can come from testimony. The “received view in Western epistemology” (125), first formulated by David Hume, is that testimony can be the source of knowledge, but only if one has non-testimonial reasons for knowing that the witnesses are reliable. On this view, knowledge through testimony must be “reducible to non-testimonial sources of justification, such as perception, memory, and inference” (126). Drawing upon C. A. J. Coady, Michael Dummett, and others, Wahlberg points out that the problem with Hume’s view is that, since so much of our knowledge comes from others’ testimony, we cannot personally check whether each source is reliable. Nor can we rely on other people checking the sources, since to do so would be again to rely upon testimony. Wahlberg’s solution, much like that of Hume’s contemporary Thomas Reid, is that testimony is an irreducible source of knowledge. When we judge that particular speakers are trustworthy, we are rationally entitled to believe their testimony, which thereby counts as knowledge.

Drawing upon John McDowell, Wahlberg therefore denies that the justification of our knowledge has “a world-independent status, achievable by our own autonomous powers, without dependence on ‘favors’ from the world” (135). Instead, because our minds are related to the external world, we are justified in believing that we see (for example) a tree in front of us, even if this might be a hallucination. Justified knowledge entails a certain “epistemic vulnerability” (137). We must actively inquire as to whether our source(s) are trustworthy; Wahlberg, following McDowell, terms this “doxastic responsibility” (140). But the fact that some testimony may be unreliable does not mean that we lack justification in accepting testimony as knowledge. We can accept testimony as a real source of knowledge without having to justify it on the basis of other kinds of knowledge that we gain by our own autonomous powers.

In chapter six, Wahlberg asks how we are justified in believing the testimony of a prophet that his (or her) words come from God. What kind of “doxastic responsibility” (as distinct from “justification”) is required in order for one to be warranted in believing that the prophet’s words are God’s? Normally, of course, “it would . . . be utterly irresponsible to believe somebody who claims to speak in the name of God” (145). Wahlberg focuses on the instance of Jesus’s speech in the name of God. Would it have been doxastically responsible for Jesus’s contemporaries to believe that he was speaking in the name of God and with God’s authority? Wahlberg rejects the claim that Jesus, in claiming such authority, must be either a madman or a genius; after all, Jesus could have been a madman-genius. For Wahlberg, however, Jesus’s miracles and his Resurrection suffice for ensuring the doxastic responsibility of his disciples. When Jesus told them that he spoke in the name of God, they rightly believed his testimony due to his miracles and Resurrection. Here, miracles provide motives of credibility, not demonstration, and the disciples’ knowledge is irreducibly testimonial knowledge. Christian faith “is an instance of belief in testimony, and testimonial beliefs are not justified by arguments from evidence for trustworthiness” (162).

Yet, even if Jesus’s disciples had good warrant to believe his testimony, do later Christians have good warrant to believe the testimony of the early Church as recorded in the New Testament? In chapter seven, Wahlberg examines the question of whether we today should trust the testimony of the Gospels. He notes that many biblical scholars refuse to trust testimony as a source for historical knowledge. As he points out, “modern historical research emerged when historians

gradually moved away from treating the sources as testimony and increasingly started to treat them as forensic evidence” (176). This had good results insofar as sources had been approached with too much credulity, but it has been taken too far in the field of biblical scholarship, resulting in the negation of testimonial knowledge. Among biblical scholars who are pushing back against this distortion, Wahlberg names Richard Bauckham and Samuel Byrskog, both of whom argue “that the Jesus material reached the written Gospels through formal, controlled transmission processes in which eyewitnesses played a central role” (179). Given that the field of biblical scholarship is now conflicted on this point, we have no reason not to treat the Gospels as testimony: “No positive reasons to mistrust the Gospels’ *general* portrait of Jesus have emerged” (181).

The Gospels clearly testify that Jesus claimed to speak for God. But the Gospels also testify to a number of miraculous events. Wahlberg therefore pauses to defend these miracle reports against Hume’s argument, widely discredited by theist and non-theist philosophers alike, that no report of a miracle can be rationally believed. For Hume, it is impossible to credit such reports because miracles violate the laws of nature, but Hume’s calculus presumes that God (or at least a powerful supernatural being) either does not exist or cannot act. Having made this case, Wahlberg turns to the Gospels’ reports of Jesus’s Resurrection. He shows that, even from the perspective of forensic historical-critical scholarship, belief in the testimony of the New Testament to the Resurrection is not irresponsible. Drawing especially upon N. T. Wright, he notes that the Resurrection would not have been credible without both an empty tomb and appearances of the risen Jesus, and if the latter had been mere visions (or hallucinations) they would have not been described as “resurrection” by Second Temple Jews. As Wahlberg observes, “the case for doxastic responsibility is further strengthened if we consider the undeniable, intrinsic beauty, depth, and transformative power of Jesus’ message and the story about his life, death, and resurrection, seen in the context of the history of Israel as recapitulated in the Hebrew Bible” (210). Even though we cannot know forensically that Jesus must surely have been resurrected, we can trust the Gospels’ testimony and be rationally justified in possessing secure testimonial knowledge of his Resurrection.

What about individuals who do not have the leisure or expertise to assess the evidence—are they rationally justified in believing the Gospels’ testimony? In his final chapter, Wahlberg argues that they

are because “the doxastic rights that belong, in the first instance, to the epistemic elite can be extended to the church as a whole” (218). If this were not so, then only scientists, for instance, could be justified in believing scientific discoveries that the vast majority of persons receive on the basis of testimonial knowledge. Why, however, would God reveal himself in a way that makes so many people have to rely on testimonial knowledge? Wahlberg’s answer to this crucial question (indebted to Laura Garcia) is deeply instructive: “The frail and trust-requiring process of human testimony is exactly the kind of means that would be fitting for the God of the Bible to choose for making himself *known*. . . . An interpersonal God (the Trinity) who saves by making himself vulnerable (the Incarnation) might very well want to make himself known through an interpersonal and vulnerable process” (222–23).

Having shown that it is by believing in testimony that we come to believe that it is *God* who is speaking, Wahlberg inquires into whether such belief is suited to the supernatural virtue of faith as traditionally understood. Faith involves knowledge of God, but the assent of faith, while reasonable, is not compelled by demonstrative clarity. The act of faith therefore requires an act of the free will, moved by grace. All of this fits well, Wahlberg considers, with testimonial knowledge. To accept the testimony of a speaker, one must trust the speaker, and thus, “faith in the sense of *cognitive assent* and faith in the sense of *trust*” are “inseparable” (229). Wahlberg argues that the assent of faith can be given without grace—as in the case of demons—but such faith “would not be *Christian* faith”—that is to say, would not be “conducive to salvation” (230). As a last step, Wahlberg proposes that his approach resolves the tension between those who hold that revelation cannot be measured by or grounded in anything other than itself (e.g., Barth and Balthasar) and those who hold that such claims about revelation would reduce Christian belief to pure fideism. As Wahlberg points out, testimonial knowledge solves this problem because it is not justified by anything other than the testimony, while at the same time, the credibility of the testimony can be measured and assessed.

Wahlberg’s masterful book leaves me with only a small caveat: I am not sure that there can be a human act of faith that is not moved by grace, i.e. that is lifeless from the outset. As a question for future study, I would also be interested in how Wahlberg would engage the covenantal election of Israel: would Israel’s election be rooted in the testimony of the prophets (not least Moses) as confirmed by miracles,

and would it require the same level of historical-critical plausibility as Wahlberg found for the Gospels' testimony?

This book demonstrates that divine revelation must be propositional, and it also demonstrates the significance of testimonial knowledge. These insights should transform both the theology of divine revelation and the disciplines of biblical studies and apologetics. Wahlberg's work, which places him immediately in the highest echelon of contemporary philosophical theologians, needs the widest possible circulation. N.V.

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The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: A Counterpoint for the History of the Council by Agostino Marchetto, translated by Kenneth D. Whitehead (*Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010*), xxiv + 723 pp.

IN A SERIES of occasional articles and book reviews brought together in this single volume (and originally published as *Il Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II: Contrappunto per la sua storia*, Rome: 2005), the former President of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, has opened up a serious academic challenge to the received reading of the history of the Second Vatican Council. He argues compellingly that much of the most influential historiography of Vatican II—that produced by the historians of the so-called Bologna School—depends for its organizational coherence both on a commitment to a hermeneutic of rupture and discontinuity and on privileging certain categories of evidence (those that support its own favored discontinuities), as well as on diminishing the significance of, or even simply ignoring, other sources (those that do not support those positions).

It is a matter of some debate whether it is strictly accurate to call those who followed in the footsteps of Giuseppe Dossetti a “school” in the proper sense, but it is surely beyond argument that the histories of the Council they have produced, for example the quasi-canonical *History of Vatican II* (the English language translation of which is edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Fr. Joseph Komonchak, S.J.), have become the received reading of the event of the Council. Indeed, if the historical accounts of the Council given by those who seek to undermine its very legitimacy are excluded, it would be fair to say

that this received reading has been almost the only one presented. It is quite proper, therefore, that its assumptions and methodologies are subject to serious scrutiny, and it is to this task that Marchetto sets his hand.

His approach is, to say the very least, robust. He pulls no punches, and Kenneth D. Whitehead's translation loses none of the pungent tone of the Italian original. Marchetto accuses the authors of the Bologna School of being "saturated with quite evident ideology" (685), "afflicted" with a systematic bias that is "consistently one-sided . . . in the animosity shown against some of the prominent persons in the Council's minority," and "neither justified, nor . . . scholarly" (667). Most damning of all, they attend only to that evidence (in the form of diaries and "journalistic" accounts) that supports those theological positions that the proponents of this approach seek to advance (*ibid.*). These positions are, Marchetto contends, not representative of what happened at the Council, nor of its teaching as expressed in its documents. They are advanced, rather, in support of what was "an extreme position at Vatican II, even among the so-called 'majority'" (382–83).

Most seriously of all, Marchetto suggests, the historians of the Bologna School deliberately and knowingly distort the history of what happened at Vatican II, where there "was a constant and active search for a *consensus*" (383), in order to present a history of the Council that appeals only to predetermined political and sociological criteria and ignores "what is specific to an ecclesial council" (384). Here he has in his sights the journalistic over-simplification of positions and groups at the Council into what, he suggests, are inappropriate, inaccurate, and inconsistent political categories. These categories are always presented in dialectical opposition: "progressive/reactionary" and "liberal/conservative," for example. It is, Marchetto argues, history in secular, political terms.

Furthermore, the ideology that underpins this historiographical approach, Marchetto maintains, is aimed at winning acceptance for the notion that the Council could have done more, could have been more radical, and that those who wish that it had done so are justified, by the "event" of the Council, in arguing for and behaving in accordance with such more radical positions in the post-conciliar period. It is, he writes, the appeal to "the spirit of Vatican II" (691).

The counterpoint that Marchetto proposes is a history that takes as a normative record of the Council the sixty-two volumes of its *Acta* and (especially) its nineteen formal teaching documents. It

seems clear to Marchetto that, in producing the now quasi-canonical *History of Vatican II*, the members of the Bologna School made deliberate choices about whose diaries, journals, and personal reflections they would consider and whose they would not. In his five chapters reviewing the five volumes of *History of Vatican II*, Marchetto is relentless in attempting to demonstrate the accuracy of his criticism and the historiographical shortcomings of the authors. He suggests that the authors have “mined” the sources they “prematurely” chose in order to privilege those sources and their perspectives, a method he dismisses as “*ad usum delphini*” (154). He accuses the authors of “inaccuracies” (155), of “exaggerated language . . . and . . . ‘colored’ adjectives” (171), and—most seriously of all—of the inventing of events for the existence of which there is simply no evidence (199).

Marchetto’s analysis is far from dismissive of the work of Alberigo and his collaborators, but he cites so many examples in *History of Vatican II* of how methodologically and factually suspect accounts are put consistently to serve a particular theological agenda that his criticisms cannot be dismissed, as they have been by James Sweeney, who labels them “pure polemics.”¹ Marchetto makes a strong case for his accusation of a systematic bias in this history (a history that certainly can claim to be *the* received reading), and it is a case that deserves detailed consideration. It is to be noted that such detailed consideration is already being given to Marchetto’s analysis in the *Casa Santa Martha*. An October 2013 letter from Pope Francis to Marchetto, recently made public on Sandro Magister’s *Settimo Cielo* blog,² makes clear that, far from being dismissed as a view from the margins, the crack opened up in the edifice erected by the Bologna School by Marchetto enjoys support at the highest level. Papa Bergoglio writes to Marchetto: “I once told you . . . and I wish to repeat it today, that I consider you to be the best interpreter of the Second Vatican Council.” This book should need no further recommendation than that.

N V

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¹ “How should we remember Vatican II?” *New Blackfriars* 90 (2009): 253.

² Available at http://magister.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2013/11/14/melloni-c-in-lutto-traditi-da-papa-francesco/?refresh_ce.

Origin of the Human Species by Dennis Bonnette, ed. Peter A. Redpath, 3rd expanded edition (*Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2014*), xxviii + 266 pp.

THE THIRD EDITION of Dennis Bonnette's *Origin of the Human Species* is substantially the same as the first edition, which came out in 2001. There has been a minor emendation of the text, and the footnotes and bibliography have been corrected where that was necessary. This expanded edition includes two articles by Bonnette published since this work first appeared: "The Myth of the 'Myth' of Adam and Eve," from a Polish publication edited by Mary Helen Klinge-Drucker, *Humanistyka i realizm*, which has not yet appeared, and "The Philosophical Impossibility of Darwinian Naturalistic Evolution," in *Faith & Reason* 33:1–4 (2008): 55–67. The index has been revised to include these two appendices.

This is fundamentally a philosophical and theological analysis of the issues underlying the theory of evolution from a Thomistic perspective. Bonnette is well-informed on the scientific data brought to bear on the question and the positions taken by atheistic naturalists and "scientific creationists." Intelligent design proponents are also represented—indeed, Michael Behe wrote the foreword to the second edition. Bonnette will side with paleoanthropologists on the antiquity of true humans. The artistry of the Acheulean tools, for instance, indicates true intelligence but is associated with *Homo erectus* (and not *Homo sapiens*). Recent earlier dating of these tools has proved awkward for some theories of evolution, and Bonnette reports the arguments from all sides with considerable detachment, tracing the debate from Darwin's original theory of gradualistic transformism to the theories of "punctuated equilibrium."

As a philosopher, Bonnette examines the logical, epistemological, and metaphysical foundations of various, at times conflicting, claims of natural scientists. He notes that the process of classifying fossil remains, or of connecting them into a series, is itself a "mental, not an extramental, act," an interpretation imposed on the empirical data (11). This interpretation is based on a convergence of evidence that "persuades 'beyond a reasonable doubt'" (13). Bonnette does not challenge this as such (though he is conversant with the inconsistency in the evidence), but he points out that "perinoetic speculations, especially as they extrapolate from present data to prehistorical conclusions, forever foreclose the possibility of apodictic certitude" (14).

Metaphysics, on the other hand, is able to achieve such certitude. Thus, for example, metaphysics can establish that there is a Creator. Any theory of evolution that purports to do away with the necessity of God is philosophically incoherent. This does not preclude the possibility of an evolution that “may give greater glory to the First Cause by preserving the natural efficacy of secondary causes” (18).

Bonnette’s study begins in earnest in the second chapter. Anti-evolutionists are generally willing to concede that there is variation within a given species and that there can be development in these variations (intra-specific evolution). The problem enters in with claims that “a form has transcended its species” (extra-specific evolution). Bonnette sets himself the task of determining whether “natural species” exist and “how inter-specific transformism, if it occurs, can be compatible with traditional philosophical principles.” The nominalist understanding of “species” as “only convenient words to describe mid-ranges of ever-blending series of unique individuals” (28) is rejected. The “biological species concept” is likewise set aside: “The biologist seeks perinoetic knowledge: knowledge in which, by purely descriptive substitute signs, we conceptually grasp an organism’s sensible or common accidents. The philosopher pursues dianoetic knowledge in which, by careful examination of essential properties or proper accidents, we understand a thing’s essence or nature” (30). He concludes that “several progressively more perfect natural species exist” and that “more than one natural species of animal exist” (38–39). This philosophical definition of species would place mice and elephants within the same species (possessed of five senses) but oysters (not possessed of those senses) in another. He examines only the most important natural species—plants, animals, and human beings—to determine whether they are truly distinct and to determine what would be “the metaphysical possibility and implications of inter-specific evolution.”

In the third chapter, Bonnette considers the possibility of abiogenesis, the emergence of living matter from non-living matter. He notes that many biologists, materialistic in philosophy, would “deny any essential distinction between non-life and life” (47), reducing all to sub-atomic entities. Philosophers who would “admit the existence of substantial beings above the atomic level would follow Aristotle in accepting a hylemorphic (matter-form) constitution of physical things” (48). For such philosophers, “truly self-perfective actions (1) are typical of living things, and (2) essentially distinguish living from non-living things.” The chief metaphysical objection would be that

“an effect cannot be higher than its cause, and every agent produces a like unto itself” (52). Still, the “totality of the interacting agents” might “suffice to produce matter’s requisite organization” and not violate the causality principle. Evocation of “chance” can work only if chance is understood in terms of the existence of an orderly universe (contemporary “chaos theory” would presume the same). This leads to a discussion of teleology in the universe. He concludes by saying that “natural extrinsic bioteleologism, many contemporary natural scientists, and Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy agree that some form of abiogenesis is a legitimate possibility or even probability” (63).

Bonnette will take this back in his second appendix—“Now I propose to show that even the initial stages of evolution from lower to higher natural philosophical species cannot be explained adequately merely in terms of purely physical agents” (231). Relying on an insight by Austin Woodbury—“the ultimate disposition [of the matter] is never together with the form which is corrupted, but is together with that which is generated”—he argues that “the material organization needed for the new and higher form is never present until that new form itself is present. But it is the form that is the active principle in the hylemorphic (matter-form) composite, whereas matter is the potential, or passive, principle. This means that form places matter into its proper species, and not *vice-versa*” (235). “Genuine transformism from lower to higher natural species requires preternatural intervention, though such intervention need not be discernible to natural scientists” (238). This conclusion is not really surprising. Alfred North Whitehead, whose process philosophy is generally taken to be connatural with the theory of evolution, comes to a similar conclusion. His philosophy is atomistic, reducing everything to subatomic “actual occasions” that are grouped into “societies” (his equivalent of Aristotelian substances) that “prehend” (from “comprehend”—a perception or taking in of influence from previous reality) all previous actual occasions within their ambit in coming into being. Whitehead discovered, under the force of the same causal consideration influencing Woodbury and Bonnette, that the only way to introduce novelty into the universe was if those actual occasions were also prehendng the primordial nature of God—in effect, the divine ideas. The point is not to commend the Whiteheadian God but merely to point out that fashioning a coherent philosophical system requires taking the character of metaphysical causality seriously.

Turning to the transition from animals to humans, Bonnette examines recent ape-language studies in chapter 5. The results of those studies underscore the qualitative difference between ape and human language ability and intelligence. Such studies have not been able to escape the training effect that can produce seemingly intelligent activity on the part of animals. Bonnette distinguishes elsewhere between, on the one hand, mere tool use and crude construction of tools that are consistent with animal sensate and instinctual behavior (birds use tools but are not really considered to be intelligent) and, on the other, the design manifested in true human tool-making. The artistry of the Acheulean tools that implies true intelligence has already been mentioned. With this empirically observable qualitative distinction between animal and human intelligence established, Bonnette then, in chapter 6, sets out Thomas's demonstration for the spirituality of the human soul and the metaphysical need for a direct creation by God.

Chapter 9 shifts to theological concerns. The fundamental compatibility between natural science (pursued in a philosophically coherent fashion) and Christian faith is affirmed. Chapter 10 examines what the Catholic magisterium has taught with regard to human origins, beginning with the 1909 Biblical Commission's statement of the essential facts that may not be called into question "because they touch upon Christian fundamental teachings." Two of these have already been treated, creation of all things by God and the special creation of man. Beyond these, there are "the formation of the first woman from man, the unity of the human race . . . [the preternatural gifts] . . . the divine command . . . the transgression of that divine command . . . the fall of our first parents from their primitive state of innocence, and the promise of a future Redeemer" (145). Several of these are beyond the ability of empirical science to judge. Bonnette cites Ludwig Ott, who notes that "the teaching of the unity of the human race...is a necessary presupposition of the dogma of Original Sin and Redemption."¹ Bonnette concludes that, "if Adam and Eve did not exist as individual human beings who sinned, thereby communicating their fallen nature to all their descendants, there is no need for redemption or a Redeemer" (153). There must be a first true human who sinned and from whom the human race descended.

Chapter 11 examines current theory on human origins. His presumption that the first true human was a *Homo erectus* is reprised

¹ *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 6th ed. (St. Louis/London: Herder, 1964), 95.

(167). The special creation of man, he notes in the next chapter (on the origin of Adam and Eve), is to be identified with the infusion of “the first intellective soul into properly disposed matter” (169). He acknowledges that the biological species *Homo erectus* might have existed prior to this; it is the creation and infusion of the intellective soul that makes such a creature to be a true human. “An absolutely literal reading of Genesis . . . constitutes no metaphysical problem,” but Bonnette is intent on reconciling “biology’s evolutionary theory with the historical Adam and Eve of Genesis” (171). While God could create the human body directly, Bonnette asks “what would possibly be served by creating the appearance, but not the substance of human bodily evolution?” He examines various possibilities for the first infusion of a human soul and for Eve’s derivation from Adam and admits that such discussion is all conjectural.

Bonnette returns to the topic of a literal Adam and Eve in the first appendix, asking whether alternate explanations are theologically adequate and whether natural science proves that a first couple is “impossible.” The first question had been answered in the basic text. The second focuses on the sort of objection raised by Francisco J. Ayala, who argued² that, “at the time of the *Homo* (human)/*Pan* (chimpanzee) split there must have been thirty-two separate versions of this gene [HLA-DRB1] present in the founding population. Since a single mating pair can pass through only four versions, he inferred that a bottleneck of two individuals as founders was not possible then or any time since” (221). Subsequent studies have narrowed the gap, reducing the number of versions perhaps even to just four (222). Even if there are more than this, an original human couple is not necessarily ruled out. Making use of articles by Kenneth Kemp³ and myself,⁴ Bonnette argues that, to rule out the possibility of a first human couple, one would also have to rule out any and all interbreeding between the first true humans and non-human members of the same animal species. Practically speaking, such a proof would be impossible to verify.

Bonnette’s presentation is an excellent example of a nuanced Catholic approach to evolution. His careful distinction between

² “The Myth of Eve: Molecular Biology and Human Origins,” *Science* 270, no. 5292 (1995): 1930–36.

³ “Science, Theology, and Monogenesis,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85.2 (2011): 217–36.

⁴ “Evolution,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement* (Detroit, MI: Gale/Cengage Learning, 2009).

a scientist's and a philosopher's understanding of terms such as "nature" or "species" are quite helpful, as well as his exploration of the philosophical and theological implications of various approaches to evolutionary theory. A similar distinction between a scientist's and a philosopher's understanding of "matter" would also have been helpful. He slips too easily between a scientific approach to this and Aristotle's hylemorphic analysis. Likewise, his discussion of the senses that distinguish animals from plants and inanimate objects would benefit from a closer analysis than one would find in Thomas. Taste and smell, which are closely allied, are grounded in chemical reactions—molecules binding to specific receptors; touch and hearing are grounded in electrostatic pressure; and vision is grounded in electromagnetic effects. Binding reactions, electrostatic pressure, and electromagnetic interaction characterize even the most fundamental of particles. What is distinctive about the senses of animals is, rather, how these influences are communicated to the whole. It is the organization that is "novel," rather than the influences themselves. The distinction between philosophical species, based as it is on "essential properties or proper accidents," would need to be based on this rather than on sense powers as such. N V

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