

human suffering to God's triune nature "in a fashion that redeems all human suffering and renders it of salvific value" (2). This study will nonetheless be attractive to theologians who are interested in Balthasar's thought, as well as in the cross-disciplinary conversation between analytic philosophy and contemporary systematic theology.

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INFINITY DWINDLED TO INFANCY: A CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL CHRISTOLOGY. By Edward T. Oakes, S.J. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011. Pp. xii + 459. \$44.

The figure of Jesus of Nazareth continues to both fascinate and provoke the modern imagination. From *The Da Vinci Code* to the latest dust-up over a tiny piece of papyrus of ambiguous provenance that mentions Jesus cryptically (something about his "wife"), the lingering influence of the Rabbi from Nazareth is incontestable. Nor is there any lack of more serious scholarly treatments of the life of this man, which, when taken as a whole, scarcely evince even a passing resemblance to an emerging consensus.

From the outset it is clear that the theological perspective of Oakes's text is rooted in that school of Catholic theology that has come to be known as *ressourcement*. And O.'s previous scholarly work as both a translator and expositor of the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar shines through. But the text is not, for all that, a "Balthasarian Christology," but it does allow for the full range of *ressourcement* theology to shape its topography. It begins by setting the table with the dinnerware of de Lubacian paradox, emphasizing again and again that both fideist approaches to the reality of the God-man rooted in a false positivism of Revelation, and rationalistic approaches that seek to "explain" the mystery of the Incarnation by dissolving it in advance, are unacceptable for the orthodox Christian. In a beautiful opening chapter, therefore, O. turns to the Christology of the poets to establish the priority of maintaining the tension of paradox in all that proceeds.

O. then analyzes various historical critical approaches, which he finds in the dizzying array of often conflicting titles applied to Jesus in the New Testament. He avoids the laziness of many who have taken up this task, who are content to lay out their own analysis of the historical Jesus, and who then attempt to make such exegesis normative by invoking the claim that the position is supported by a "majority of exegetes."

The text then proceeds historically in its analysis of the development of christological doctrine that begins with the Church Fathers and moves on to treat medieval, Reformational, Pietistical, and modern philosophical Christology, before concluding with an analysis of the pluralism of modern Catholic and Protestant theology. O. ends with an examination of modern

Catholic magisterial theology and the challenges facing Christology in light of the confusing aftermath of Vatican II. And as brilliant as his treatment of historical critical exegesis was in chapters two and three, the remainder of the text is simply breathtaking in its ability to detail the development of christological doctrine while not getting bogged down in overly technical jargon that in many writings obscures the central theological issues. It is this latter point that makes the text so eminently suitable for use in both upper level undergraduate courses as well as in introductory-level graduate courses. At once erudite and yet clear in its linguistic constructions, the text is a masterpiece of theological writing.

But beyond its beauty and usefulness, the text is also profound in its own theological perspective. O. concludes with a heavy dose of Ratzinger/Benedict and makes the observation that the “failure” of Vatican II to achieve the high ambition that many had for it (a reinvigorating and renewal of the church by opening to the world and unleashing her untapped creativity) can be placed at the feet of the failure of Christology to reach anything remotely resembling a consensus on the issue of the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Jesus as the linchpin for a renewed understanding of the nature/grace, God/world dynamic. Instead, we got a confusing array of attempts to resurrect a host of old heresies in new garb—i.e., we got a hermeneutics of rupture. O. agrees with this analysis of the council’s aftermath and argues for a *ressourcement* theological context as the council’s own proper hermeneutic—a hermeneutic of both rupture and continuity as a renewed Christology takes the older Chalcedonian categories and reprimates them by developing the old categories in directions influenced by modern personalism, phenomenology, and the existential Thomism of scholars like Pieper and Gilson.

Finally, to deal with some contested issues that are important but not critical to the flow of his general analysis in given chapters, O. frequently includes at the end of chapters some conversations in the form of an “excursus.” In sum, I repeat what I said at the beginning: this is the best Christology text in English I have seen in years.

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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE: DISCOVERING A DISCIPLINE. By Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. xi + 322. \$34.

In a collection of articles “spanning twenty years” (ix), Miller-McLemore argues the thesis “that scholarship in pastoral and practical theology has disrupted conventional theological boundaries, suggesting an expanded subject matter (Part I), alternative ways of knowing (Part II), and richer