

Other recent institutions, including national or regional episcopal conferences, as well as the International Synod of Bishops (both general or extraordinary) have generally had little impact, since they are regarded as purely advisory and do not of themselves share in the authoritative magisterium. One aspect of this first-rate study, which Q. could have developed, is the practice and desirability of laymen's and laywomen's participation in institutions associated with papal primacy.

Q.'s text was completed before the election of Pope Francis (27). Consequently it does not comment on any of the structural changes already realized by the current bishop of Rome (establishment of the "Group 8" of cardinals) or those changes under consideration (e.g., restructuring the Vatican Curia).

Regrettably, few Catholic churches have bookshops or lending libraries in their settings where excellent books such as Q.'s could be readily obtained by the faithful.

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Connecting Jesus to Social Justice: Classical Christology and Public Theology. By Thomas Hughson, S.J. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. Pp. xxv + 313. \$85.

Hughson's impressive and innovative study displays three obvious merits: it is a clearly defined project, it is original in many ways, and it is persuasive. The next paragraphs expand on each of these three claims.

Much can go awry when theologians attempt to connect the core contents of Christian faith with ethical stances in the public sphere. While it is not uncommon to witness overreach when claims about the scope of public theology exceed what is prudent, it is equally disturbing to see excessively modest Christian approaches to the ethical contours of public life. If a faith community is to develop a sound analysis of ethical issues in a pluralistic society, as well as to muster an appropriate level of prophetic denunciation of unjust social structures and practices, then that community's discourse must be grounded in the deepest sources of creedal conviction. This is precisely what H. provides in his careful construal of the messianic identity of Jesus Christ. Consulting the Chalcedonian affirmation and many of its interpreters through the centuries, this work provides the foundation for strong claims regarding the social dimension of Christian faith. Many extant works do attempt to draw some type of connection between the contents of Christian faith and its implications in the public sphere, but this volume surpasses most by making explicit the link between the divine identity of the Messiah and the imperative of a just social order. H. succeeds in his project of grounding public theology in christological dogma, which provides the resources for both justification and application. The ancient confession of Jesus as divine has obviously not completely fulfilled its great potential as a leaven for Christian social consciousness and solidarity. It is important to add that, by conducting a project in *ressourcement* and starting with the contents of classical Christology, H. is by no means rejecting more

contemporary approaches to Christology, many of which he cites approvingly and to good effect.

The appearance of this volume just after the pontificate of Benedict XVI presents an opportunity for some novel analysis. H. provides an admirable review of the supposed split between the notions of social charity (accorded clear priority by Benedict) and social justice in his encyclicals and related church documents of recent decades. The evidence suggests that the closer one examines the putative controversy, the less significant for the social agenda of the church appears the semantic distinctions represented by these phrases. Benedict's caveats (especially in *Deus caritas est*) regarding the dangers associated with confounding charity and justice, such as when the church usurps the proper role of government in providing social services, or vice versa, never really rang true for American audiences from the start. H. comments insightfully on these recent debates, especially in his telling summary statement that, in light of the incarnation, "separating social charity from social justice is foreign to who Jesus is" (203).

Third, what makes this volume especially persuasive is the author's evident facility in consulting many relevant theological opinions. One might quibble at a few junctures about H.'s choice of primary interlocutors, but he covers the ground reliably and considers with consistent fairness the major objections to his claims. The most prominent potential criticisms of this project would invoke its indeterminacy; even the fine closing chapter addressing the task of engaging in public theology in a contemporary (and pluralistic) context will seem skeletal to many readers. Should we all somehow agree that the messianic potential affirmed in orthodox credal statements such as Chalcedon's makes a difference for public theology, a wide range of possible interpretations of the proper understanding of the social mission of any church dedicated to discipleship of this Messiah still remains. How precisely does Christ's divinity bear on proper social teachings and public engagement? No single answer to this question will ever satisfy all Christians. A range of styles and preferences regarding "the faith that does justice" will inevitably persist. In this whirlwind of contending opinions, the most articulate voices may well be those familiar with the reasoning contained in this satisfying work.

H.'s volume calls ethicists and public theologians to appropriate the profession of the creed in a more profound way than ever before. With the benefit of the insights provided in these pages, Christians enter the public sphere in pursuit of social justice on a more solid footing. Christian social ethics is a more promising enterprise because of this work.

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Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century: Developments, Emerging Consensus, and Future Directions. By Lúcas Chan, S.J. New York: Paulist, 2013. Pp. xix + 171. \$24.95.