

can we responsibly move to the next stage, *judging*” (214). This provocative, stimulating volume, hopefully will be followed by others, maybe less intuitive and more “academic.”

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DU CHRIST À LA TRINITÉ: PENSER LES MYSTÈRES DU CHRIST APRÈS THOMAS D'AQUIN ET BALTHASAR. By Étienne Vetö. Paris: Cerf, 2012. Pp. 478. €45.

When Christians say “Our Father,” are they addressing the first Person of the Trinity, thus expressing their participation in the intratrinitarian relations? Or are they addressing the one God, who is “Father” as creator of the world, whose works *ad extra* are without differentiation of persons?

Aquinas explicitly affirms the latter. So does Balthasar, despite his close adherence to the differentiation of the roles of the three Persons in the Scriptures. Vetö has attempted a renewed trinitarian theology inspired by these two, but overcoming their perceived limitations and keeping a “balance” between the unity and distinctions in God. To do this, he suggests a modification of the traditional doctrine of God’s operations *ad extra* and its corollary, the notion of “appropriation.” He carefully reviews the history of the doctrine of God’s operations, concluding that the intent of the magisterial statements does not preclude his reformulation. He proposes a distinction between God’s “operation,” which is common to all three Persons, and the three different personal “activities” within that operation.

V. devotes the final third of his book to making this argument. The prior two sections are devoted to the treatment of the Trinity in the events of the life of Christ in the theologies of Aquinas and Balthasar. In the chapters on Aquinas there is a good deal of repetitiveness. V. examines every mention of Father and Spirit in the treatment of the “mysteries” of Christ’s life in the *Tertia pars* of the *Summa*, only to conclude each time that for Thomas the action involved is common to all three Persons, and is merely “appropriated” to a single Person. Aquinas hence overemphasizes God’s unity.

The chapters on the trinitarian dimension in Balthasar’s Christology would be valuable to any student of Balthasar. Although V.’s sympathy with Balthasar is obvious and explicit, he does not accept Balthasar’s views uncritically. He points out significant inconsistencies, if not contradictions, in Balthasar’s thought. At one point he remarks, “Let us note—and regret?—the determinative influence of A[drienne]. von Speyr” (264 n. 1). He twice cites Rahner’s remark that “Balthasar is a tritheist” (25, 301). V. disagrees; but he finds that in contrast to Aquinas, Balthasar errs on the side of plurality.

The book has much to recommend it to a student of trinitarian theology. The lengthy sections of exposition and commentary on Aquinas

and Balthasar are insightful and valuable in their own right. One of V.'s goals is to show the possibility of theologizing not merely "after" but also "with" major figures of the past, especially of the Middle Ages. That goal is admirably attained in his critical appropriation of Aquinas's thought and his joining it to insights from Balthasar.

At the same time, V.'s approach has significant limitations. His work is in the genre of traditional Roman Catholic speculative dogmatic theology. For the most part V. avoids posing "fundamental" theological questions. Instead, he builds on doctrinal and philosophical positions that are taken for granted. A prime example is the very existence of a "Trinity" of "persons." V. asserts that "it is difficult to perceive in the few rare trinitarian formulas of the New Testament a revelation of the God who is one and three. The doctrine of the Trinity is in reality an explication of the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, and commentary on the form of Christ and his mysteries" (352). But to speak of "mysteries" in this context presumes that the events of Christ's life are extensions of the "mystery" of the incarnation—which itself is understood in terms of the Chalcedonian dogma of the two hypostases in Christ and the principle of the "exchange of attributes" of the council of Ephesus. Does this beg the question? V. wishes to follow Pannenberg in defining revelation as "event," but he never considers the question of exactly what a divine "act" in history can be. Moreover, V. pre-scinds from the question of historicity: "In placing the mysteries [of Christ] within *history* we do not make a judgment on their *historicity*. Even though this question is fundamental, we limit ourselves here to the manner in which they are presented in the gospel narrative" (352 n. 2, emphasis original).

In his conclusion, V. writes with disarming candor: "Perhaps some will say that our solution remains too much on a simply verbal level. Perhaps that is true" (445). In fact, this names a major problem with V.'s proposal. He asserts that trinitarian faith does not result from subtle articulation of unity and plurality, but this seems to be just what V.—*malgré lui*—ends up doing.

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THE ACTING PERSON AND CHRISTIAN MORAL LIFE. By Darlene Fozard Weaver. Washington: Georgetown University, 2011. Pp. 209. \$32.95.

Weaver's book develops a compelling and subtle argument about the importance of reflection on sinful actions for a Christian understanding of the moral life. In developing her account of the relation between sinful actions and human identity, W. speaks most directly to issues of particular concern for post-Vatican II Catholic ethicists and situates her work in relation to other Catholic scholars; she clearly and effectively demonstrates