

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

precisely how her book offers a valuable contribution to contemporary Catholic ethics. At the same time, she is careful to engage a range of contemporary scholars outside the Catholic tradition, drawing in particular on major Protestant ethicists. Her thoughtful use of sources from divergent traditions implicitly points toward ways in which an exploration of the nature of sin opens up possibilities for fruitful ecumenical conversations regarding sin, grace, and human nature.

Throughout the book, W. is careful to express her sympathies to contemporary Catholic positions that seek to avoid an excessive focus on sin and its penalties. At the same time, she suggests that current scholarly trends that emphasize persons rather than individual actions have coincided with a tendency to overlook the ways in which sinful actions impact a person's relationship with God in a manner that necessarily affects her character (34). W. works to develop a position that stands largely in keeping with person-centered tendencies of "revisionist" Catholic ethics, but that more fully acknowledges the impact of a person's actions on her relationship with God (98–99). She contends that actions are important in the Christian life because they draw humans closer to or drive them farther from God (87). Actions are a means by which humans grow in faithfulness toward God through ordering themselves in relation to particular created and spiritual goods. We "deepen or diminish" our intimacy with God when we choose particular actions (142). In turn, in order sufficiently to acknowledge the importance of actions for our character, we must take seriously the enterprise of naming moral actions so that we can live "truthfully" before God. W.'s reflection on truthfulness before God, drawing on Charles Pinches, is particularly insightful: she argues that our ability to name moral actions truthfully shapes our identity as moral agents, and that a truthful assessment of our actions is essential to promoting and pursuing the common good (144–45). W. concludes her work with a discussion of forgiveness and reconciliation, arguing that reflection on these activities points toward a view of sin that is not restricted merely to personal culpability, but that can instead be corrected and overcome through communion with God (161–62).

W. situates her work in relation to established debates in Catholic ethics. She offers two different balanced and extended discussions of debates between traditionalists and revisionists, noting limitations in both accounts of the relation between action and moral agency (68–79, 98–112). But strikingly, she is also intentional about engaging major Protestant theologians. For example, in arguing that action and personal identity are related, she refers positively to Stanley Hauerwas's advocacy of a teleological ethics of character that conceives human action in the context of personal narrative and stories (79–81). After discussing the role of narrative in shaping human identity, W. develops (and later returns to) an

extended discussion of the novel *Gilead*, by Protestant Calvinist Marilynne Robinson, which demonstrates precisely how actions help shape our relation before God and our own self-understanding. W.'s use of this novel, as well as other narratives from literature and from current events, is a particularly powerful feature of her book. Additionally, her defense of the need for truthfulness before God draws upon Karl Barth's account of the divine word that God speaks to humans in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (182–83). W. does not directly address ways in which her account of sin and grace may overcome limitations in contemporary Protestant ethics, but her constructive use of Protestant scholarship nonetheless points toward the value of dialogue between Protestant and Catholic ethicists concerning the nature of sin and sinful actions, the constructive possibilities that a robust conception of grace can provide to our understandings of agents' moral capacities, and the centrality of one's relationship with God for understanding one's character.

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THE LIMITS OF HOSPITALITY. By Jessica Wroblewski. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012. Pp. xvi + 168. \$19.95.

Wroblewski tackles a perennial question for the Christian faithful: "Should I welcome the stranger even at the risk of my safety, and that of my friends and family?" Her response is inductive and theologically rich.

The five chapters flow from narrative to theological analysis. The narratives are often W.'s, but they also include those of the likes of Henri Nouwen and Dorothy Day and her Catholic Worker movement. Throughout the book we find W. in two university towns with high poverty rates: South Bend, Indiana, and New Haven, Connecticut. Her graduate studies in theology function as the lens through which she interprets her role in these communities. Her experiences also serve as examples of the realities of lived hospitality in the United States in the 21st century.

The introduction contains the skeleton of her thesis: "For the sake of hospitality itself, there must be limits to hospitality" (xi). This finds quick support and flesh in the first chapter. It opens to find W. offering a homeless man her attic to escape the elements. Many will connect with her personal struggles to live the works of mercy, and with her ultimate decision not to turn her attic into a shelter. This narrative and the tension it presents beautifully orient the text. She lives out the limits of hospitality before she provides Christian and contemporary definitions of hospitality. She moves quickly but insightfully through the Christian tradition on hospitality; she then settles into a more extended treatment of contemporary approaches to the topic, focusing on the work of deconstructionist