

F.'s text is particularly evident in his third chapter on "the spirit of the age," in which he examines surprising but revealing texts such as those reflecting Rahner's revised angelology. A close reading of several key Rahnerian texts on Ignatius of Loyola from the 1950s and 1960s, coupled with insights from Louis Dupr  and Romano Guardini, challenge the standard reading of Ignatius as a quintessential modern. More exactly, according to F., Ignatius anticipatively guides modernity to transcend itself by emphasizing "communal, cooperative subjectivity, as opposed to individual, autonomous subjectivity."

To offer a fuller description of Rahner's understanding of the sublime, F.'s final two chapters juxtapose later Rahnerian and Heideggerian texts with respect to language and history. Both thinkers criticize the notion of reason as the faculty of calculating mastery and promote instead contemplative, appreciative thought open to primordial mystery. Rahner's well-known essays on "The Concept of Mystery" (1959) and "Reflections on Methodology" (1969) play the key roles, together with his early essay on the structuring aesthetic of Bonaventure's philosophy and theology. A further section on Rahner's Mariology and Heidegger's lecture "The Thing" surprisingly but effectively bolsters the claim for the primacy of language. This primacy opens up to mystery and a form of discourse based on "an aesthetic rapport with reality prior to reality's noetic determination" (194).

Following this superb book, F.'s current research project is to pair Rahner's ideas on freedom and sacramentality to show how the church communally embodies Christ's grace. The volume might aptly be called *Theological Aesthetics in Practice*. I trust that it will demonstrate how Rahner's Catholic ethos incorporates his basic theses that truth is fully attained only when it is transformed into love, and that the love of God and love of the neighbor are inseparably united.

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Existence as Prayer: The Consciousness of Christ in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. By Mark L. Yenson. American University Studies 7. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. Pp. vi + 231. \$85.95.

What did early Christianity think was Jesus' own understanding of himself and his mission? This volume by Yenson answers this question as Hans Urs von Balthasar has answered it in his voluminous publications. Balthasar in turn was indebted primarily to two main sources, Maximus the Confessor (d. 662 CE) and the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE).

A reader who is somewhat familiar with these conciliar and patristic sources will be impressed with Balthasar's unique rendering of them as Y. elaborates it. Mission becomes the key to Christ's identity. He is never a conscious subject independent of his mission; his conscious subjectivity is always determined by his mission. Rather than ascribing a *visio immediata* to Christ's human soul, as the tradition had usually

done, Y.'s understanding of Balthasar was that "Jesus' mission consciousness has the character of an inner imperative conditioning his entire being and knowing. For this reason prayer and action do not exist in juxtaposition in Jesus' life but mutually inhere" (132).

Unlike many 20th-century Christologies—Pannenberg's, for example—Balthasarian Christology does not posit a competition between a divine and a human ego. Thus Christ who "became like us in all things but sin" can become "the archetype of human receptivity, faith and obedience." Hence, just as Christian believers have to do, Jesus too needed to have hope, trust, patience, and obedience. Both are in a condition of "unknowing." This nescience was transfigured into a positive value in Jesus' human existence, as it can be in ours (147).

Y. is sensitive to the subtlety of Balthasar's understanding of the unique character of Jesus' faith—which is no small feat. Balthasar believed that Jesus lived by faith. At the same time, however, Balthasar is "critical of the univocal ascription of faith to Christ and contends that Christ's faith is qualitatively different from the faith of believers on account of the provenience of his mission" (137). Jesus' faith was in his Father. Our faith in the Father is mediated by Jesus, since "he expresses the faithfulness of God in and by his person" (137).

Is Balthasar's Christology a low Christology? Yes and no. Yes because he went against Thomas and the Scholastic tradition all the way back to Augustine in arguing that Jesus had the virtue of faith, and that his faith was on a continuum with the personal faith in God that Israel had. However, he saw Jesus completing and perfecting the Old Testament notion of faith (134). Thomas could not see Jesus having faith because he believed him to be in continual possession of the beatific vision. On the other hand, no, because for Balthasar faith is an existential and obediential stance, not primarily a category of religious knowing. In its inner essence he sees faith as "the complete correspondence between God's fidelity and man's fidelity" (134). Furthermore, his vision was "divine and universal"; thus hardly like ours.

Y. puzzles over the influence of Adrienne von Speyr's "visions" on Balthasar's Christology. Other commentators have also puzzled over her influence, especially over her understanding of Christ's descent into hell. Her visions of hell as a place where faith, hope, and charity were absent occurred annually during her Holy Week Tridua. These led her to underscore the absolute nescience Jesus experienced on the cross and at his death, but she interpreted this nescience positively, seeing it in the light of his absolute obedience.

Y. also touches on some of the difference between Rahner and Balthasar. Rahner was interested in a theory of consciousness and cognition in and of themselves, whereas Balthasar's interest was about these in light of Jesus' own consciousness. But both thinkers affirmed that nescience can be "a more perfect attribute" in a consciousness than knowing. Rahner believes that nescience gives "human freedom and susceptibility to temptation . . . room to operate" (132).

The volume's title appeals to the personal possibilities of such a condition, like being able to rid oneself of the need to keep at the activity of praying. Could one, for

example, imagine that being in Christ is to already be in prayer? But Y. does not exploit this line of understanding and leaves the reader to make what he or she will make of it. I suspect that Y. sees there is so much more to learn about Jesus' union with his Father before venturing such personal applications.

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Die Rehabilitierung des Opfers: Zum Dialog zwischen René Girard und Raymund Schwager um die Angemessenheit der Rede vom Opfer im christlichen Kontext. By Mathias Moosbrugger. Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2014. Pp. 398. €39.

This revised dissertation examines the status of the victim in the work of René Girard and Raymund Schwager, the Innsbruck theologian most responsible for bringing mimetic theory into Catholic theology. Having researched the soon-to-be-published letters from the Schwager archive, Moosbrugger carefully and painstakingly reconstructs the different stages of both Schwager's and Girard's intellectual development. He conclusively shows the impact Schwager had on Girard: he argues that Schwager, rather than simply being a translator of Girard into theology, already had a theological vision that helped him conceive how Girard's theory of religion could renew an understanding of the cross and the theological usage of *Opfer* (both "victim" and "sacrifice" in German).

Many critics of Girard have concentrated their concerns with mimetic theory on his nonsacrificial understanding of Christianity. Unlike the religions that deem sacrifice necessary, the victim culpable, and place God on the side of the persecutors, Girard famously claimed in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1978) that the Gospels overturn this system entirely: the sacrifice is arbitrary, the victim innocent, and God is identified with this victim. Such a total revolution in religion led Girard to conclude that Christianity was essentially nonsacrificial, and that texts like the Letter to the Hebrews represented a return to sacrificial logic and thus missed the whole point of the Gospels.

M.'s book does not overturn what readers of Girard already know about his opinion concerning sacrifice. His 1978 claims underwent a reversal: first in his 1993 interview with Rebecca Adams, where he admits that he was wrong about Hebrews, and then in his 1995 *Festschrift* article for Schwager he acknowledged the latter's central role in this reversal (this article was not translated into English until 2014 in *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*). The Christian revolution consisted not in a rejection of sacrifice, but in the willingness to sacrifice oneself in place of another, free of all violence. M. offers a blow-by-blow account of how both Girard and Schwager came to understand what was at stake in this question of victimhood. M. reconstructs how Schwager had admitted a "désaccord avec [Girard's] thèse" (239) already in 1977, a year before they both published books (*Things Hidden* and *Must There Be Scapegoats?*) applying mimetic theory to Christian theology. This discord was eventually bridged, largely