

when hypothetically deprived of grace, would remain that of a spiritual substance by nature “*capax Dei*” (*Summa theologiae* 3, q. 6, a. 2), still naturally desiring what it could never attain, the universal good (*ST* 1, q. 60, a. 5). No wonder, then, that Aquinas focused on and “maximally developed,” not the commentators’ hypothetical *status purae naturae*, but man’s openness by nature and actual ordination by grace to a supernatural beatitude.

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THE PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN HUMANISM: THOMAS AQUINAS ON HOPE.
By Dominic Doyle. New York: Crossroad, 2011. Pp. ix + 225. \$34.95.

“Does belief in a transcendent God help or hinder human flourishing in the world?” With this question Doyle launches into a tightly argued thesis that a renewed contemporary Christian humanism can respond to this question, and that a theological foundation for this humanism is found in Aquinas’s understanding of the theological virtue of hope. Humanism here refers not to the senses found in the Renaissance and Reformation, but to the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures (*imago Dei*), amplified by the incarnation and elaborated by early Christian writers. In this lineage, Aquinas emerges as a Christian humanist himself, not only in his theology of incarnation, but also in his theology of grace, which affirms the goodness of human nature and its potential for fulfillment by and in God.

Still, the problem of humanism needs to be worked out before theological grounds for a renewed Christian humanism can be claimed. The two central interlocutors are Charles Taylor and Nicholas Boyle. Each is heir to Jacques Maritain’s openness to the secular world, but with distinctively contemporary accents. Taylor’s work is by now well known, but D.’s rehearsal of it here is masterful and very helpful in orienting the reader and assessing the sufficiency of Taylor’s response to modern secularism, which Taylor identifies simply with denial of belief in God. Boyle frames the secular in terms of consumerist culture and its distortions of both time and identity. His response is a “liberal Catholic humanism” that would invoke an authentic sense of self and community.

Missing in both approaches, according to D., is a dynamic appropriation by faith of the promise of Christian humanism. This promise is classically embodied in the virtue of hope, which can give “Christian humanism both its humanism and its Christianity” (40). In Aquinas hope correlates with Christian humanism in two ways: “(1) as the human good in the present, because hope sustains and animates Christian life in the pilgrim state by

allowing the wayfarer to lean on God for any difficult good insofar as it is ordered to God (which manifestly includes the present common goods of social and political life); and, (2) as the transcendent object of human happiness, because hope moves the believer to God as his or her future good through great difficulties that culminate in death" (40). The heart of the book can be seen as a very fine articulation of these statements.

D. takes on this task by parrying throughout formidable objections to the adequacy of Aquinas's doctrine of hope offered by Gordon Kaufman, Jürgen Moltmann, and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Each shares a common prejudice that Aquinas's speculation is so directed toward transcendence that it cannot also generate a notion of hope that can be appropriated in the concreteness of the human situation. This is the kind of claim that D. sets out to disprove, but in the service of a much more constructive undertaking: to demonstrate that precisely in the Thomistic understanding of grace and hope we find the theological warrant we need for a renewed Christian humanism.

The argument proceeds in two stages. In the first D. establishes that Aquinas's doctrine of grace affirms the goodness and autonomy of human nature, for grace that meets nature and draws it toward a flourishing proper to itself. In the second stage, virtue is understood as the manifestation of grace in human action. The theological virtue of hope (as opposed to the passion of hope) is infused and theo-logical (deriving from God and working through the embodied rational nature that is the human). It is distinguished from faith and charity in several respects, yet works organically with them to bring about the transcendent finality of the human, in and through her freedom and concreteness in the present order of space and time. Elaborating, D. also discusses how hope is cruciform, for it involves struggle and difficulty, including the shadow of death. His reflections on suffering are illuminating and of great theological depth. Equally, his descriptions of the experience of hope, influenced by Rahner, verge on the lyrical.

The outcome of this investigation is that the eschatological hope of faith works in congruence with secular hopes by deeply informing secular action and confronting the temptation toward despair on a purely secular plane of existence. Thus, secular hopes themselves can prepare one for God, as evidenced in D.'s profound treatment of the Fourth Commandment and the Fourth and Fifth Beatitudes.

As a coda, D. offers, in a welcome irenic spirit, what is perhaps the finest theological rationale I have seen for an understanding of Vatican II as a council of change. The promise of Christian humanism is articulated beautifully in this book. For good reason it received the John Templeton Award for Theological Promise.