

*Truth and Relevance: Catholic Theology in French Quebec since the Quiet Revolution.* By Gregory Baum. Montreal: McGill-Queen, 2014. Pp. xi + 240. \$100; \$29.95.

The “innovative and often controversial” pastoral and theological literature produced by francophone theologians in the province of Quebec is little known in English-speaking circles. Baum, professor emeritus of theology at McGill University in Montreal, proposes in this book “to share my acquaintance with Catholic theology in Quebec with a wider audience” (4).

B. structures his volume in three unequal parts. The introduction and first two chapters give an account of the pre- and post-Vatican II context in Quebec, along with a discussion of the factors leading up to the “Quiet Revolution” that radically transformed Quebec society and culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Chapters 3 and 4 comprise the second part, which presents the foundational contributions of Fernand Dumont, Catholic sociologist (and eventually theologian) who chaired the Dumont Commission on behalf of the Quebec bishops; and Jacques Grand’Maison, priest, pastoral theologian, and political scientist. Chapters 5–10, along with the “concluding reflections,” discuss various themes that emerged from the foundations laid by the Dumont Commission and introduce the theologians who contributed to these themes.

The book’s first and second parts are by far the strongest. B.’s presentation of the historical issues is comprehensive, and will be a helpful introduction for anglophone readers not familiar with the trajectory of Quebec Catholicism. The account of Fernand Dumont’s theology, including its reliance on the sociology of knowledge and its debt to both Maurice Blondel and John Henry Newman, is enlightening. B.’s insight that Dumont’s commitment to the question of relevance, over and above abstract truth, has significantly influenced the course of francophone theology in Quebec. The book also has genuine explanatory power, making sense of many initially puzzling differences between French- and English-language theology in North America. Finally, B.’s presentation of Jacques Grand’Maison’s biblically shaped prophetic pastoral theology, with its concern for small faith communities, its awareness of structural sin, and its rethinking of original sin in terms of the “sin of the world,” helps ground the transpositions of the tradition that have been proposed in Quebec consequent to the Dumont Commission Report that defined Catholic faith as “an inheritance and a project.” Taken together, these early figures of Quebec’s post-Vatican II theology also help illumine the central role that the human sciences (as opposed to philosophy) have played in theology in Quebec since the mid-1960s.

The final section, organized according to themes, is less helpful. The themes themselves are well chosen and do help highlight key concerns of Catholic theology in Quebec. Unfortunately, the chapters get bogged down in listing theologians side by side, leaving to the reader the task of linking and contrasting them. Neither does B. make explicit (except in a few cases) how the theologians presented develop the orientations set by Dumont and Grand’Maison; this task is also left to the reader. In many chapters, the survey is so extensive that little can be presented of an individual theologian’s contribution. In some instances the treatment of individual theologians is superficial enough to be misleading and perhaps unjust. For example, B. reports that Anne

Fortin's work has been criticized for insufficient attention to social concerns (he cites only one critic), and then explains this supposed inattention as a function of her overriding concern for personal conversion (96–98). Fortin's engagement with questions of culture and religion, with the crisis of institutions in Quebec, and her extensive published work on Dumont all make clear the inadequacy of such an evaluation. In the end, a representative selection of voices and a more developed analysis and synthesis would have served the reader better.

Nevertheless, this work is a helpful introduction for those who have little or no knowledge of the developments in francophone theology in North America. Its conversational tone, along with the author's analogies drawn from the work of European and anglophone North American theologians, will help readers situate themselves in what can initially appear to be alien territory. Most importantly, the presentation of Dumont and Grand'Maison can prepare readers for their own deeper engagement with the primary sources.

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*Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method.* By Christina A. Astorga. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014. Pp. xxviii + 571. \$50.

Astorga offers a magisterial examination of contemporary developments in Catholic moral theology. The book's size alone signals her desire to make a substantial contribution to theological ethics. She does this by providing a richly researched volume that demonstrates her command of a wide range of current ethical scholarship.

A. does not, however, simply intend to map the current state of the discipline. Rather, she seeks to advance "a new method" for social ethical reflection. Her proposal can be described as a desire to unify what traditionally has been called fundamental moral theology—that is, a concern for ethical methodology—with social ethics, or moral reflection on matters of social, political, and economic concern. Thus, what A. offers is a post-Vatican II fundamental social ethics, a manner of ethical analysis that interweaves the components of vision, norm, and choice in light of a "global optic" that appreciates the significance of cultural location and advances the liberation of marginalized peoples.

In three chapters, she treats the primacy of vision, the horizon that ought to mark moral theology. The chief components of this vision are a sensitivity to culture and its influence on the moral agent; the importance of story and narrative as constituting the human person ("we are storied people"); and reconnecting ethical reflection to the whole of Christian theology, including creation, the Trinity, Christology, and ecclesiology. The next three chapters are devoted to the "norms" of ethical reflection, drawn from the papal social teaching tradition. Here A. reads four of these documents—*Rerum novarum*, *Mater et magistra*, *Octogesima adveniens*, and *Centesimus annus*—through the lenses of "historical context," "norms and principles," "directives for action," and "critical excursus." The project concludes by examining the moral agent