

communion in the Church, of the communion of the whole people of God dedicated, in Christ, to appearing as an evolving mystery, the mystery of the communion of saints, in which it will disappear as the stream loses itself in the ocean" (100). Faith in God is not commitment to a set of beliefs but an attitude of surrender, praise, and adoration that unites spiritual seekers in the mystery of community.

From this perspective, difference is not an obstacle but a quasi-sacrament that betokens hidden unity. The diversity of creation, of individuals, and of cultures points to a transcendent unity that would not be perceptible were it not for variety. The unity of nature and of humanity springs from the oneness of God, who always creates differentiated unity, not homogeneity or uniformity.

"Difference conceived as an expression of unity, a unity that is greater and other than we can conceive it, opens us to the mystery of God and God's knowledge. It prevents believers from making an idol of their own religious traditions, their own formulas of faith; from constructing for themselves an identity based on opposition; and from an obsessive effort to affirm their uniqueness. Difference as a differentiated expression of unity allows us to let others take their place in the plan of God" (119–20).

Seeking unity through difference allows the eschaton to emerge in the present. What we seek in hope becomes incarnated in the here and now, first by living it, and only later by talking about it.

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PREDESTINATION: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PATHS. By Matthew Levering. New York: Oxford University, 2011. Pp. x + 228. \$110.

For a treatise on the doctrine of predestination, the thesis of this book seems deceptively simple. Levering argues "throughout this book that Scripture presents its theological interpreters with the challenge of holding together two particular affirmations about God's eternal plan" in Christ: (a) that his creative and redemptive love freely for all of his rational creatures is superabundant and perfect from eternity; and (b) that this God permits some of the same rational creatures to be lost ultimately (34–35; 199 n. 54). Key to his argument seems to be a sort of scriptural perspicacity and authority of the twofold affirmation (chapter 1).

The deceptive simplicity of the thesis apparently has less to do with the concision with which L. sketches two and half millennia of the doctrine's complex career; or with the scholarly economy in his self-consciously, though somewhat cryptically, Roman Catholic reading of more than 16 major "theological commentators" (34) from across traditions and time; or with L.'s especial attention to Augustine (44–54), Aquinas (75–83; 188–92; 200),

Calvin (101–10), Bulgakov (137–46), and Balthasar (162–75). By contrast L. dedicates a mere 17 pages to Catherine of Sienna (90–95) and Francis de Sales (117–27), both of whom he singles out to be exemplary (197–98). The deceptive simplicity of L.'s thesis has perhaps even less to do with his compressed reasoning in preferring certain Pauline epistles, Second Temple Judaism, and Aquinas's metaphysics (11) in his extensive treatment of canonical texts of the Bible than with what he means by "Scripture."

The point about Scripture is critical to the form and content of L.'s thesis. From the beginning (chaps. 1–2) L. claims that with predestination "the theological controversies arise from Scripture itself"; that it is "a biblical doctrine" (8) suggests Scripture's irreducibility as canonically text *and* authority. As he perceives in the canon an instructive witness to "the primacy of divine agency," L. observes: "In seeking to identify the history behind the biblical texts, scholars have not sufficiently entertained the idea that the canon itself is a providentially governed interpretation of history" (19). L.'s response is a programmatic "providential reading of the canonical Scripture" "as a providential whole" by "factor[ing] in" "one such divine agency" (19–25).

The point about Scripture's respect for God is key to L.'s critique of the career of the doctrine of predestination from the patristic period through the Middle Ages to the 20th century. On his reading of church history, the best of exegetes and theologians recognize a key principle in the theology of predestination: respect for Scripture's concept of God in Scripture's self-description as text, witness, authority, and history by virtue of God's mysterious *self-revealed* agency in and through Christ by the Spirit. It is in this sense that L. draws his readers into a respectful conversation with his select theologians as primarily readers of Scripture.

As L. frames the history of doctrine as a purposive series of negotiations and decisions in the pilgrim church learning and unlearning about God under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, he is summing up two and half millennia of all these as heirs of three types of Scripture reading: (eventual) universal salvation in Christ, whose victorious love "will not fail to unite all rational creatures to himself" through their freedom (Origen) (14); absolute priority and necessity of God's self-revealing agency from eternity and his assistance as sheer gift over and against our boasting "of the rationale of God's plan" (Augustine/Boethius) (51); and a distinction between God's antecedent will and consequent will (John of Damascus) (65). "The strengths of the three approaches arise from their attention to different aspects of Scripture" (66).

The point about reverence for Scripture's concept of God is key to appreciating L.'s analysis and his preference of Catherine and de Sales: humility in theologizing God's transcendent causality (leaving "more room for mystery about God's will," unlike the likes of Leibniz) (126); love

(which L. argues against Barth, is not irresistible to rational creatures [175]); election; and a commitment to the unrestricted plenitude of God's love. The commitment to divine love (191) is best understood and expressed doxologically and eschatologically: "We must remind ourselves once again of two irreducible truths about the eternal Trinity: he is Love and his eternal gifting is the source of every created good" (199). Even though L.'s style of quotation from scriptural and theological texts seems sometimes to leave more questions than answers in his expositions, he has put forward an impressively strong case for biblical scholars, historians, and theologians for considering their concepts of God, Scripture, theology, and humanity.

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SHARING GOD'S GOOD COMPANY: A THEOLOGY OF THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS. By David Matzko McCarthy. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. Pp. viii + 174. \$28.

McCarthy addresses the question of why saints are essential for our own time by arguing that saints mediate relationships that are at once historical and transcendent. His investigations are a labor of love and a manifestation of a *fides quaerens intellectum*. M.'s clear personal commitment to the saints leads to a theological anthropology revolving around social desire, the human longing for shared meaning that is personal without being individualistic, and that aspires to participate in a reality inclusive of the metaphysical. He employs social desire thoughtfully to explain why people are drawn to the saints and to emphasize the saints as agents within communion. Although he admits the difficulty of defining saints, M. describes them as men and women whose social desire is so marked by their relationship to God that they bear the family resemblance of kinship with God. The metaphor of family is deliberately chosen for its general emphasis on relationality and for its implicit allusion to various types of kin relationships, underscoring M.'s sensibility that we are not meant to relate to the saints as abstract brothers or sisters, but rather as particular members of God's family.

M. contends that through and with the saints we participate in a community that is deeply incarnational, being both receptive of the divine presence within history and drawn into the divine communion transcending history: "In the case of the saints, the history-bound people and events are simultaneously universal by personal association, by kinship, so that the relationship of historical and transcendent is not textual or symbolic, but social and practical. On the one hand, the saints are members of a heavenly communion, and on the other, they are remembered and venerated in and over time" (53). M.'s research develops a view of the saints as agents who