

solidarity with, the poor. The final two chapters illuminate concrete ways in which Christian communities can work, along with the Spirit, toward authentic justice in the world. C. advances “a revised version of Thomistic natural law” (249) as an adequate method of attaining a more just society. Part of this revision of Thomistic natural law includes a study of the traditional just-war theory as well as a discussion of natural law and ecology. These two sections should prove to be particularly substantial fare for Christian ethicists.

C. admits that she hopes to receive “productive critique” of her work (28). Along these lines, I wish to suggest one area that could strengthen this already impressive text: the issue of LGBT rights in global justice. Ethicists would do well to apply a key argument of C.’s book to the suffering of the LGBT community: “personal, communal, social, and political transformations are real possibilities, despite the intransigence of sin and evil” (6). When members of this community suffer hate crimes and feel shunned by church and society, this is a wonderfully liberating message to hear, and an even better one to live out in faith. C.’s work ends with a chapter fittingly entitled “Hope,” and indeed, this is a book that should be read by all who wish to engender that theological virtue in their work.

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*Wycliffite Spirituality*. Edited and translated by J. Patrick Hornbeck II, Stephen E. Lahey, and Fiona Somerset. *The Classics of Western Spirituality*. New York: Paulist, 2013. Pp. xii + 412. \$39.95; \$29.95.

The very fact that a volume on the Wycliffites has warranted inclusion in a series devoted to spiritual writings in the Western tradition illustrates the significant transition that has been taking place over the last few decades in the study of late medieval Christianity. Not too long ago the notion that Wycliffites might take their place within the great chain of Catholic spirituality would have raised some eyebrows. Were not the Wycliffites a confederation of English “heretics” (Lollards), destructive outriders in an otherwise pious Catholic society, most accurately defined by all that they opposed rather than by any positive spiritual vision of their own? The present volume goes a long way toward dispelling such a reductionist and deeply engrained characterization.

A new appreciation for the richness and complexity of late medieval Christian culture has meant that we have substantially revised previous categories of orthodoxy and heresy. We have come to recognize just how difficult it can be to designate a given belief as uniquely heretical in the fifteenth century amid the range of opinions that sat side by side, however uneasily, and lacked formal confirmation. As it was, the determination of heresy in the late Middle Ages remained a matter for ecclesiastical courts to decide; but these judicial decisions, although theologically informed, were not designed to withstand sustained theological reflection. Indeed, the defendant in a heresy trial—as this volume lucidly demonstrates—was most often asked to abjure a set

of starkly worded propositions that could scarcely capture the deeper, more nuanced, doctrinal import and religious sensibilities that lay behind them.

Perhaps, therefore, we should set aside judicial constructions of heresy and read the texts themselves to see what they have to offer. In this praiseworthy effort, the volume's editors have made it possible for a general audience, which might be unfamiliar with Scholastic Latin or Middle English prose, to read from a wide array of sources. The volume is arranged in three main parts: John Wyclif, English Wycliffite Writings, and Heresy Trials. Part I contains translations of Latin sermons and devotional works. Part II, which comprises the bulk of the volume, is broken down into four sections: forms of living, exegesis and commentary, Wycliffite devotion, and ecclesial spirituality. And part III provides trial records from the Norwich (1428–31) and Winchester (1511–13) dioceses. Comprehensive introductions and explanatory notes accompany all of the volume's selections.

Do certain elements characterize a distinctively Wycliffite spirituality? Are there tell-tale features, the presence or absence of which render identification possible? Yes, there are, but in our effort to identify them we need to avoid facile categorizations. Prescinding from the fact that no Wycliffite confession of faith (à la Augsburg or Trent) exists to which the disparate admirers of John Wyclif (d. 1384) subscribed, Wycliffites shared many of the beliefs of their neighbors and might express them alongside less common beliefs, thus affirming purgatory while rejecting indulgences. Yet, though controversial or polemical elements are not always necessary, other, more subtle but still distinctive, features may be present. Most notable perhaps is a spirituality deeply reliant upon the Decalogue, which was regarded as archetypal for the Christian life—not as a bare list of commands, however, for it was often allegorized.

Frequently enough topics and emphases were comingled. Wycliffite ecclesiology, for instance, tended to stress the division within the church of the predestined and the foreknown—itsself a traditional (Augustinian) distinction—that could provide solace to the persecuted community. And yet, for the Wycliffites, divine judgment remained, since a genuinely eschatological phenomenon abides beyond mortal ken; no one is certain of his or her ultimate status before God. Hence a consistent stress is laid upon members of the community to persevere in a holy life that conforms to the humble and suffering Christ presented in the Gospels.

Such conformity is marked chiefly by charity shown to one's neighbor, most specifically to the poor. In fact, if there is a single theme that runs consistently through a host of these different works it is concern for the poor. Members of the clergy are castigated because they live highly off the tithes of their poor parishioners, the friars because they feign poverty and thus divert funds from the truly needy, and the lay nobility for extorting taxes and rents from their peasant subjects. Care for the poor is frequently behind Wycliffite objections to what might otherwise seem to be harmless practices: costly images are venerated even though the neglected neighbor bears the very image of God, and pilgrimages are made at great expense when the poor need alms. For all the criticism leveled against abuses in their midst, however, Wycliffite sermons and tracts outlined the Christian life that they themselves were expected to

lead if they hoped to attain their final reward. This volume makes it possible for the reader to follow these wayfarers down their path to the heavenly Jerusalem.

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*Sacrifice as Gift: Eucharist, Grace, and Contemplative Prayer in Maurice de la Taille.* By Michon M. Matthiesen. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2013. Pp. xiii + 320. \$69.95.

The most important merit of this book is that it thoroughly familiarizes the reader with the fascinating thought-world of an interesting but undeservedly forgotten theologian, the French Jesuit Maurice de la Taille (1872–1933). Matthiesen brilliantly succeeds in presenting and interpreting the work of this profound thinker by showing in which discussions he was involved, and by suggesting what his contemporary relevance might be.

The book consists of three parts of almost equal length; each part contains three chapters. Part I is a reconstruction of de la Taille's theology of the Eucharist. This is particularly interesting because, unlike many contemporary (Catholic) theologians, de la Taille operated with an understanding of sacrifice in line with the tradition. Sacrifice is and remains an embarrassing notion, but if tradition and the loyalty toward it have any role to play in contemporary discussions, one cannot do away with it or let the hard core of the concept evaporate in the dew of a fashionable spiritualization. In recent years Robert Daly and Edward Kilmartin have posed problems with the way sacrifice has functioned in many post-Tridentine theological accounts of the Eucharist. Interestingly, and maybe paradoxically, one could make a case that de la Taille might rather be on their side than be a victim of their criticism.

Part II provides an extensive discussion of de la Taille's theology of grace. The strength of M.'s presentation is that she shows the intrinsic connection of grace with the Eucharist. Both grace and the Eucharist find their origin and meaning in the Christ event as it culminated in the Last Supper, Jesus' death on the cross, and the resurrection. However, the resurrection is not much thematized by M.—something that is probably due to de la Taille himself. On the one hand, de la Taille obviously inhaled the typically Christocentric atmosphere that had dominated the theological tradition of the West for ages, even if he personally was very open to the patristics and Eastern Church Fathers in particular. Apparently, however, the Church Fathers had not led him to think more in pneumatological terms. On the other hand, much of his attention was understandably focused on the unity of supper and cross, and this both for context- and content-related reasons. The way M. explains the rationale for this original theological intuition and at the same time argues that its persistent pertinence belongs to the best pieces of her monograph.

In part III M. deals with two related issues: contemplative prayer and the sacrament of baptism. Again, as was the case with grace in part II, she makes it amply clear that a strong coherence exists in de la Taille's thought between these issues and the Eucharist.