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ressourcement, aggiornamento, and a belated recognition of religious liberty. Third, the council upheld the centrality of Scripture as the "soul of theology" (*Dei verbum* no. 24) generally, and of moral theology in particular (*Optatum totius* no. 16). Moreover, an appeal to common morality must be leavened by the distinctively Christian inspiration of moral discernment. Fourth, Pope John XXIII's embrace of the modern world gainsaid his predecessors' anti-Modernist defensiveness, inspiring ecumenical and interreligious collaboration. Finally, *Lumen gentium*'s recognition of the universal call to personal holiness underscored the living unity of moral theology, spirituality, and liturgy.

If in unraveling these strands C. touches lightly on emerging developments in the field, it is perhaps because the novel patterns are still being woven. Let me note three. Cultural hermeneutics reveals the multiplicity of influences shaping the discipline today. Asian, African, and Latin American moral theologians join ethnic and racial minority ethicists in reweaving the tradition. The cultural *loci* of moral theology are irreducibly plural, yet the very depth of difference enriches the whole *sensus fidelium*. The African appeal to *Ubuntu*, for instance, joins what Western philosophy rent asunder: dignity and solidarity. In a similar vein, gender influences not only the art but also the artisans. In moral theology of the new millennium, increasingly, the child is mother of the woman! Hierarchical, magisterial teaching can no longer ignore these influences. Finally, the tradition of natural law, or more precisely, methodological commitment to an intrinsic, objective morality, is mediated in novel, postmodern keys—for example, the discourse ethics of Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib, and the capability theories of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.

Such novelty, after all, marks a vital tradition. Far from being an axiomatic, deductive system, moral theology emerges as a complex web of beliefs, practices, and interpretations that each generation must weave anew. Continuities emerge in the warp and woof of tradition (we discern "family resemblances"), but so too differences. Indeed, we cannot grasp one without the other. No one has been a surer guide here than C. He is, as the poet Hopkins says of Duns Scotus, that "rarest veined unraveller." A generation of moral theologians remains in his debt.

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Flourishing: Health, Disease, and Bioethics in Theological Perspective. By Neil Messer. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. xvii + 256. $35.

Messer's book is ambitious. It aims to understand health, disease, illness, and disability. His approach to these essential dimensions of human life is threefold: dialogical, deconstructive, and constructive.

M. dialogues with philosophers by discussing multiple definitions of health and illness: from the biostatistical theory proposed by Christopher Boorse "in which health is the absence of disease and diseases are states that interfere with species-typical

natural functions" (xiv; see also 6–10) to holistic theories of health and to approaches that assign conceptual priority to illness instead of health; from S. Kay Toomb's phenomenological analysis of illness to a focus on human capabilities; from considering disorders as harmful dysfunctions to a teleological approach where illness and disease are failures of function (chap. 1).

Unsatisfied by these diverse philosophical insights, M. frames his constructive theological contribution by proposing a teleology that encompasses multiple human values and goods: one that is profoundly embodied, aims at personal flourishing, is sensitive to human frailty, and is profoundly practical (49–50).

Before articulating his constructive component, however, M. offers a series of deconstructive insights. I mention three. First, he joins other authors in challenging the famous and largely quoted World Health Organization's definition of health. He argues that despite drawing attention to the social, political, and economic dimensions of health, this definition puts matters backward by "claiming that health is necessary for good social and political relations, and at least implying that social and political matters would be better off if doctors had more say in them" (183; see also 3–6). Second, he is critical of disability studies and of the social and socio-medical models that have been proposed to reflect on disability (chap. 2). While M. does not offer a comprehensive survey of disability studies (53, 78), he focuses on approaches centered on phenomenology, capabilities, and teleology. In M.'s critical assessment, however, these contributions do not sufficiently articulate an understanding of health, disease, and illness centered on flourishing. Third, M. criticizes understanding health as wholeness, because such an approach is neither sufficiently biblical nor theological: "'wholeness' is an eschatological promise" (175).

To integrate insufficient definitions of health, disease, and illness, M. defines health (184) and flourishing (156) in light of his constructive theological approach (chap. 3). From the standpoint of his Reformed Christian tradition, he relies on four sources: (1) Christian commitment to practices that promote healing and health care, and that are shaped by the biblical account; insights from two authors who are rarely associated with each other: (2) Karl Barth and (3) Thomas Aquinas; and (4) theological reflections on disability proposing varied ways of living human life and of flourishing either by focusing on practices that foster participation or by pointing to the eschatological promise (157).

In particular, from Barth M. takes the definitions of health as "the strength of life" and of illness as its opposite. Hence, sickness is both an evil and a reminder of our finitude and dependence on God's will and command. Human beings are *creatures* of a particular kind (105), whose existence reflects the purpose of the *Creator*, and who obey God's command. From Aquinas, M. draws a vision of a rational human being whose good depends on fulfilling human goals and ends.

M. completes his constructive contribution by formulating 16 theses (chap. 4). They cover four topics: (1) humans as creatures; (2) health and creaturely flourishing; (3) disease, suffering, evil, and sin; and (4) practical implications. Each thesis is enunciated and briefly commented on. The theses are the result of the "building up" of M.'s reflection throughout the volume. Hence, their content sounds familiar. However, M.'s

choice of presenting the fruit of his reflection as theses seems to disrupt or even undermine his dialogical and critical methodology. The reader is left with the impression that the conversation on what constitutes flourishing shies away from holding on to the complexity and tensions of considering human health, disease, illness, and disability in favor of clear-cut and compact assertions. The phenomenological, existential, and relational space for vulnerability, frailty, and uncertainty that characterize how human beings think about health, disease, illness, and disability—and how they live them—seems to suffer from articulating conclusive theses.

M. is aware of some of the limitations of his ambitious project (xvii). He acknowledges that, despite his interdisciplinary methodology, "some interdisciplinary perspectives are underrepresented" (xvii)—notably the sociology of health. In a spirit of constructive collegiality, I would also add that references to Catholic theological ethics and to the growing theological literature on disability could further enrich the volume. Moreover, interdisciplinary interactions demand ongoing reflection on the epistemological status of each discipline to clarify the relevance of each disciplinary contribution (105). I praise the author for his ambitious and needed contribution, and for provoking his readers to further articulate their theological reflection on flourishing in health, sickness, and disability.

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Julian's Gospel: Illuminating the Life and Revelations of Julian of Norwich. By Veronica Mary Rolf. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013 Pp. ix + 660 $29.85.

We know very little about the life of Julian of Norwich, the great English mystic. She was born around 1348 and was still alive in 1416 when her writings became more widely known. She underwent a death-threatening experience around age 30 (her mother was there). During that near death, Julian had a profound revelation of Jesus in a surround of utter darkness, except for the dazzling image of the cross. She asked then for three wounds: true contrition, kind compassion, and a profound longing for God. Over the course of two days she received 16 visions. Julian is the first woman to write a book in English.

We are not even sure of Julian's real name. We know she wrote two treatises about her revelations. The first, called *The Showings*, relate to her first mystical experiences when dying. A second, longer text, *The Revelations*, was written later, after she became an anchorite attached to the church of Saint Julian. A least one citation from *The Showings* was circulated during her life. None from *The Revelations* circulated. This longer version was not widely read or even edited until 1911. Margery Kempe came to visit Julian around 1414 and speaks of her as an expert who gave good counsel.

There is so little autobiography in Julian's texts that many speculate about whether she was a nun (probably not) before becoming an anchorite. The genius of R.'s profound study is that it takes advantage of the fact that we know a great deal