

his informants' tendency to focus almost exclusively on contemporary concerns as they cobble together a moral compass for their lives. At the same time, the pointed questions B. poses dredge up deep-seated issues regarding religious authority, church polity, and appropriate models for belonging to a community of faith. Looming in the background of the entire project are concerns about the proper meaning of adherence to official moral teachings of the Catholic Church on difficult topics such as contraception and sexual morality, including the stock image of "cafeteria Catholicism"—which some informants openly embrace and others decisively denounce.

It takes a bold and skilled author to record, organize, and present this range of styles prevalent among Catholics today, and B. is fully up to the task. Documenting how certain church teachings and practices continue to be sticking points for his informants sets up some rewarding, more strictly academic, treatment of issues involving the limits and possibilities of forging responsible personal agency and practicing genuine discernment within a faith context today. A concluding chapter proposes three motifs (negotiating, reframing, and innovating) that capture the patterns US Catholics commonly employ as they navigate their way through the maze of faith and public life. B.'s synthesis here builds on earlier chapters that highlighted the relevant themes of family life, personal development, institutions, and authority in church and society.

It is possible to fault B. for some minor flaws in this work. His exclusive focus on parish life leaves aside major loci of religious vitality today (e.g., college campuses, new ecclesial movements, and various institutions sponsored by religious orders). He chose a geographical area that is hardly fully representative of US culture. He engages in some awkward name-dropping to honor the literature that influences him. But these mere quibbles are far eclipsed by what B. has accomplished. With a lively prose style and fine wit, this volume describes and analyzes the lived experience of American Catholics without shying away from the messiness of living a life of faith in contemporary society.

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THOMAS AQUINAS ON GOD AND EVIL. By Brian Davies. New York: Oxford University, 2011. Pp. xvi + 172. \$99; \$29.95.

To the philosophically fashionable discussion of the problem of evil, Davies has added this most unfashionable volume. Unfashionable because his subject, Thomas Aquinas, does not endorse the broadly accepted premise that evil poses a problem for belief in God and in his goodness. Though many theists have in recent years undertaken to vindicate God

as morally good in spite of the reality of evil, D. shows that Aquinas's entire approach to the question of God and evil is quite different from these moderns in both method and substance of argument. Aquinas engages "in no sustained theodicy or defense of belief in God written with an eye on evil" (6).

After three introductory chapters treating the modern conception of the problem of evil, Aquinas as a philosopher and theologian, and his basic philosophical underpinnings, in the seven remaining chapters D. launches into a more detailed examination of Aquinas's thought on goodness, evil, and God. He first sets forth Aquinas's basic distinction between good and evil (29–36). Whatever is desirable for a thing to be or become in accord with its nature is "good" for that thing. Most fundamentally, existence is what contributes to a thing's goodness. Evil, on the other hand, is the lack of goodness where it ought to be. Evil is not a created essence or accident, but the absence of any goodness that is required for the perfection of a particular nature, that is, a certain lack of existence. Aquinas classifies evil as evil suffered (i.e., *malum poenae*, as when fire consumes wood thereby depriving wood of goodness in order to perfect its own goodness as fire) and evil done (i.e., *malum culpae*, moral evil committed by volitional agents).

So, is God responsible for evil? D. shows that Aquinas's answer to this question is partly affirmative and partly negative. God does not cause evil directly or as an end in itself, but God does cause the existence of the creaturely agents of evil and, in the case of moral agents, of their evil volitional acts (71). But the existence of volitional agents and of their acts of willing is actually "good" inasmuch as such existence is desirable according to their nature. Still, if God causes moral agents and their evil volitional acts to exist, does God not cause the evil of those acts? Thomas thinks not. "Aquinas's view," D. explains, "is that while God causes those actions we freely choose, he does not choose those actions for us" (72).

Given that God grants existence to moral agents and to their evil volitional acts, how is it that God is not morally culpable? How can God still be regarded as good? For most modern theists this is the heart of the "problem" of evil, and it is here that D. unveils his most striking discovery. *Aquinas does not believe that God is a moral agent.* Inasmuch as moral goodness is measured by habitual conformity to some standard of goodness, it simply cannot apply to God. First, God cannot be virtuous inasmuch as God lacks the key ingredient of virtue, i.e., dispositions (or habits) by which one moves toward the perfection of one's nature (60). As pure act, God is immobile. Second, God cannot be subject to some standard to which he must conform. True, God is identical with his own goodness and thus cannot but act in agreement with it; but this

acting is not rightly conceived as *conformity* inasmuch as conformity implies some subjection of one thing to another (e.g., action to nature). But God is simple and thus possesses no parts that can be subjected to other parts. Moreover, God is not well behaved or poorly behaved because, as pure act, God simply is not behaved at all! This undoubtedly is one of D.'s most profound contributions to the modern discussion of God and evil.

One deficiency in D.'s treatment is the absence of any sustained discussion of God's *plan* or *purpose* with respect to evil as historical event. One would have expected D. to discuss this in his section on divine providence (81–84), but he does not. In fact, it is surprising that he makes no reference to Aquinas's exposition of Job, since the Angelic Doctor there explicitly states that his purpose is to discuss human affairs as ruled by divine providence, especially affairs dominated by evil.

D.'s volume does not intend to dissolve the reality of evil or the challenges it poses. Rather, it aims to set forth, through Aquinas, an alternative to the popular theodist approach that treats evil as a moral problem for God. Why God created a world with evil when G. could just as well have created one without it is a great mystery, but it is not a problem for God. This classical position is too often neglected by modern Christians, and we can be grateful to D. for helping rehabilitate a focus on God's transcendence in the discussion about evil.

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HABERMAS AND THEOLOGY. By Maureen Junker-Kenny. Philosophy and Theology. New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2011. Pp. x + 213. \$80; \$24.95.

For most of his life, in pre-Dawkins, postwar Europe, Jürgen Habermas was perhaps as famous for his atheism as for his philosophy. Since passing the age of 70 in 1999, he has paid more attention to religion and now admits that in some forms it is socially useful—albeit for people other than himself. Why the writings of a person with such a distant understanding of the contours of faith would be at all relevant to theology, therefore, requires considerable explanation.

This is amply provided in the latest offering from Continuum's Philosophy and Theology series, where, in an astonishingly concise yet full account, Junker-Kenny spells out just how much Western theology in the last 50 years has in fact owed to Habermas (and, surprisingly, vice-versa).

Inheritor of the critical traditions and historical materialist commitments of the Frankfurt School, Habermas in his many and varied inquiries has consistently sought to understand power, so as to champion both equality