

salvation, sin, or God's suffering—but either closes them quickly or walks through without sufficient explanation or elaboration. This can be distracting and leave the reader wondering why she places so much on the table that she has no intention of developing in this particular work. She admits that it is impossible to adequately address each topic and integrate it fully into her theological anthropology, but this weakness remains.

All in all, G.'s book is a resounding success. This creative work deserves to be studied by a wide audience of fellow scholars, graduate students, and those seeking to better understand the foundation of the question of innocent suffering.

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The Eucharist: Origins and Contemporary Understandings. By Thomas O'Loughlin. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015. Pp. xvii + 229. \$120; \$34.95.

Western eucharistic theology since Trent has been focused on the limited questions of Real Presence and sacrifice, despite the 20th-century recovery of more capacious models for the Eucharist. O'Loughlin argues that this is because of a fundamental misconstrual of the Eucharist which sees it as an encounter with Christ in a special mode set apart from other human experience. The book presents a compelling alternate vision: that the early church recognized that their needs, the gifts of food and drink, and the thanksgiving rendered for these gifts to the Father, were themselves the ultimate model for Christian life.

O'L. distinguishes the "myth of monastic reform," which seeks to recover originary ideas from later deformation, and the "myth of development," which clarifies original insights through progressive reflection (93). The Eucharist, he argues, is best seen within the former model of history: the church "forgot" the meaning of the thanksgiving meal when it whittled it down to a token of bread and wine (88). While it is medieval scholasticism that comes in for the bulk of the blame of this forgetting, its roots are in the second century, where already, any eucharistic association that leads to the later division between the sacred and profane must be attributed to "the familiar shapes of Greco-Roman religion," which eventually leads to the unjustifiable and ecumenically problematic question of validity (98).

In fact, eucharistic theology is neither marked by an originary "forgetting" nor solely by theological development; instead, each generation of the church has responded to new challenges by making sophisticated and selective developments on aspects of the complex tradition they have inherited. In order to understand the ongoing hold of scholastic questions like "What is required for the Eucharist to be validly celebrated?" and thus to reach an ecumenical consensus and spiritual renewal that recovers some of the insights of the early church, we need to understand the selective memory of the churches both sympathetically and critically. Both thanksgiving to the Father and encounter with Christ are grounded in the NT sources: to say we should

recover the former does not necessarily mean dispensing altogether with the latter. At its strongest, ecumenical theology allows the coexistence of mutually informing models in tension with another.

That said, within a context like my own of contemporary Roman Catholicism, which includes ambivalence about meal terminology and requires that one be able to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary food to receive it, O'L.'s vision of the Eucharist as a meal at which thanks is rendered to the Father emerges as a welcome challenge. Not only scholars and students but also preachers and lay readers will find much food for thought here. Through a well-informed survey of the diversity of Christian practice in its early origins, O'L. suggests a model that recognizes the Eucharist (thanksgiving) not only in the liturgical rites of other Christians, but even in ordinary table blessings.

In the first two chapters, O'L. argues that the Christocentric understanding of the Eucharist as an encounter with Christ is a late deviation from the "giving thanks" to the Father that was characteristic of all Jewish meal prayers and gave the Eucharist its name. In chapters 3–5, which are especially valuable, he grounds the theological meaning of the Eucharist in the cosmic, human, and cultural meaning of food and memory. Chapters 6 and 7 model a rereading of the NT evidence.

O'L. recovers a sense of the cosmic and anthropological significance of human food, and thus recognizes food as a reminder of our deep dependence on creation, human beings, and cultural structures. This is an invaluable reminder to those of us whose meat is packaged, frozen, and seemingly in infinite supply. Thanks given to the Father for food in the face of want is already eucharistic, absent any consecration: "the vision of a life lived under the care of a loving God finds its simplest expression in being thankful for food" (78). This insight, supported with abundant evidence from the first and second century, not only ties the Eucharist to ordinary dining but also calls for an ecumenical outlook that questions criteria for a "valid" Eucharist (cf. 96).

On the undervalued cosmic and human importance of the eucharistic meal in the earliest church and today, O'L. is a persuasive and knowledgeable guide, but for a genealogy that explains how eucharistic theology got where it is today—and how to reincorporate those early insights into a tradition also formed by Ephrem, Ambrose, and Charles Wesley—his work must be complemented by those with a less restrictive view of history.

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The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission. By Walter Kasper. Trans. from German by Thomas Hoebel. Edited by R. David Nelson. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015. Pp. xvii + 463. \$60.

An English translation of Walter Cardinal Kasper's 2011 monograph on the Church, *Katholische Kirche: Wesen—Wirklichkeit—Sendung*, has finally appeared. The present volume is the last of his trilogy on systematics that began with *Jesus der Christus*