

Augustine's theory of original sin caused the Incarnation to be conceived as a plan of atonement by which the Son made satisfaction to the Father for the sinfulness of humankind. In the East, absent that theory, the Incarnation of the Son was a model of *theosis* or deification, a process of becoming more like God through emptying of the self and greater openness to transformation by the Spirit.

A compendious work such as this can lead one to wonder whether the time spent with it can have any practical benefits. Such a skeptical attitude, however, most likely arises out of my Western bias in favor of philosophizing about the Trinity. Karl Rahner once observed that, "despite their orthodox confession in the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists'" (5). For if the inner life of the transcendent God is totally inaccessible to human experience, then even what is known by analogy is pure speculation. On the other hand, however, if we take the Eastern tradition as our guide, conceiving God as Father, Son, and Spirit can lead us to seek God by inviting the Spirit to make us more like God's Son.

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*This is Our Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism.* By Thomas P. Rausch, S.J. New York: Paulist, 2014. Pp. xii + 204, \$17.95.

In this volume Rausch offers a most helpful introduction to the core trinitarian belief of the Catholic faith and to recent trends in the Catholic Church. Written for nonspecialists, its concise chapters, numerous headings, and plain style contribute to pedagogical clarity. The footnotes, though relatively scarce, witness to a broad scope of contemporary theological scholarship and suggest directions for further readings. Prepared initially as a course for a Chinese audience, R.'s book is nonetheless shaped by the Western cultural context—as seen for example by the appeal to philosophical framework sketched by Charles Taylor—and peppered with references to the major voices in American theology.

R.'s book has a dual purpose. The first half, comprising five chapters, deals with faith through the lens of the doctrine of God: God (the Father), Christ, and the Spirit—whose treatment is nonetheless minimal in a chapter devoted de facto to the Trinity. R.'s approach is methodical, starting with the experience of the divine, moving to the progressive revelation of the God of Israel, then to the Jesus of the Gospels—as seen through his preaching of the Kingdom of God, and the experience of his death and resurrection—before addressing trinitarian theology as a whole. The reader is presented with the general flow of the development of the trinitarian faith up to the creedal statements.

The second half of the book is more circumstantial and relates to the recent history of the Catholic Church. One chapter deals with the Church per se, centered on two of its sacraments: the Eucharist and baptism. A subsequent chapter offers a vivid presentation of the main achievements of the Second Vatican Council. R. then jumps over John Paul II's pontificate to devote a chapter to the pontificates of Benedict XVI and Francis.

He shows his empathy in the treatment of those two contrasting figures: Benedict the theologian, pope of “affirmative orthodoxy” (158), and Francis the surprising Jesuit pope. Although Francis’s pontificate was only beginning when R. wrote his book, his analysis of the pope’s style and vision is insightful. The final chapter presents in broad strokes the current “Global Catholicism” with some of its regional challenges.

While written with pedagogical gusto and clarity, R.’s book is not simplistic. He does not shy away from explaining in few words intricate theological notions and their significance for theological discourse, e.g., the notion of the *analogia entis* (31). R. tackles burning issues for contemporary readers with pointed remarks; hence his fair treatment of the fine line to walk in the midst of various theological readings of Jesus’s resurrection (73), and his discussion of the challenges to religion by the “New Atheists” (13). Throughout, R. avoids unnecessary polemics, remaining benevolent towards the authors he calls to the fore. This attitude is extended to the ecumenical perspective, although R. contrasts when needed the Catholic position with Protestant ones, for example, on theological anthropology.

The balanced nature of the book does not preclude the author from discreetly weighing in on some current theological debates. In his treatment of the Eucharist, R. emphasizes the fact that conversion flowed from communion, that is, table fellowship (62), not the other way around, a thought to be considered in the current debate on access to communion. In his compelling presentation of Vatican II, R. sides with the proponents of the newness (i.e., rupture) introduced by the Council, showing both the backstage work and the unexpected resulting sea changes regarding the role of the laity, religious freedom, the liturgy, and ecumenism. Such positive appraisal does not impede R. from criticizing the unresolved issue of the relationship between the pope and the local church (137).

R.’s book is brief, but evocative and at times even poetic. The use of a variety of images of Christ, the Church, and the Kingdom of God speaks to the broadness of perspectives of faith and nourishes theological imagination. This introduction to the Catholic faith could, nonetheless, have devoted more space to the lived experience of faith, for example, through the sacraments (only two are developed), prayer (“mysticism” only gets one paragraph), and social justice (referred to only briefly on p. 197). Overall, this book can be used advantageously to foster theological discussions in an adult faith-formation program, or be read by those interested to gain a sweeping view of what Christianity is about in its Catholic form with an eye on contemporary trends.

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*Twentieth Century Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism: Difference is Everything.* By David Pitman. The Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies Series. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. x + 246. \$109.95.

This book returns to 20th-century arguments about a conundrum the author claims remains crucial for the 21st century: how Christian truth claims can engender