

both? In the case of Jesus's crucifixion, for example, the New Testament makes claims that are both theological and chronological. In a similar way, N. and others who treat the issue of the appearances of the risen Jesus as being *either* objective events *or* subjective experiences risk ignoring that the Easter encounters have both an objective *and* subjective character.

In treating possible analogies to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, it always seems useful to examine not only the similarities but also the dissimilarities. Since the pioneering work of Dewi Rees on widows and widowers experiencing their beloved dead, some writers have found here an analogy to the disciples meeting the risen Jesus, as N. points out. But we neglect the dissimilarities at our peril. The "bereavement" the disciples suffered was not that of those who had lost their beloved spouse. Moreover, unlike any of the cases studied by Rees, Jesus was a major religious reformer who died a most painful death by public execution. Then, over 70 percent of the widows and widowers interviewed by Rees and his colleagues had never previously mentioned to anyone their experiences of the deceased spouses. This silence sets them utterly apart from the disciples who quickly announced to the world the good news of Jesus's resurrection. In my *Believing in the Resurrection* (2012), I presented eight reasons for denying that the bereavement analogy is close and truly illuminating for those who examine Jesus's post-resurrection appearances.

To state that "all historical events are unrepeatable and thus unique" (130) fails to do justice to the core meaning of unique as "the only one of its kind." The unique as such is always unrepeatable, but the unrepeatable is very rarely genuinely unique. Likewise, it misconstrues historical judgments to claim that "all historical judgments are open to revision" (128–29; see 155). It is historically certain that Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo, even if some secondary details of the event can be open to revision. While certainty in history is not established in the way certainty can be reached in mathematics, chemistry and other disciplines, there are innumerable cases of historical certainty. In debates about the status, historical or otherwise, of Jesus's resurrection, *pace* N. (154), there are examples of skeptics changing their minds. Frank Morison's *Who Moved the Stone?* (1930) is a spectacular and now classic case of that happening.

Despite these quibbles, this book persistently comes across as a well informed and fair-minded study of the Easter mystery, which is at the heart of Christian faith.

Gerald O'Collins, SJ  
*Jesuit Theological College, Parkville, Australia*

*The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas.* By Bernhard Blankenhorn, OP. Thomistic Ressourcement, 4. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2015. Pp. xxxiii + 508. \$65.

In this revised version of his doctoral dissertation, Blankenhorn has produced an impressive and illuminating study of the mystical theologies of Albert the Great and of

his most well-known disciple, Thomas Aquinas. As his subtitle suggests and his Introduction explains, in treating “mystical theology” here B. is concerned neither with extraordinary experiential phenomena such as visions, which constitute mystical union, nor with such themes as prayer and meditation, which are understood—particularly in modernity—as practical paths to union. Rather, Albert’s and Thomas’s “theological exposition[s] of the highest union with God accessible here below” (xii) provide the subject of B.’s research. Through painstaking analyses of the key texts on mystical union found in the theological works of Albert and Thomas, particularly in their commentaries on the Areopagite, B. aims to elucidate their answers to four essential questions: (1) who is being united (i.e. what “part” of the human makes union with God possible)? (2) to whom is the human joined (i.e. to what extent does God’s triune nature affect union)? (3) what does God do to join the human to himself? and (4) what does the human mystic do in union? In comparing his thirteenth-century Dominicans on these questions with Dionysius’s theology of union, B. arrives at his main argument: “Albert and Thomas interpret Dionysian mysticism in a kataphatic way, emphasize our need for mediations as well as the mystic’s active cooperation in union, and posit a trinitarian structure for union, all the while retaining a qualified apophaticism, the noetic status of union, and the immediacy of God’s conjoining action” (443).

Reaching and elucidating this conclusion requires that B. formulate, in considerable detail, “the systematic motives” that remain latent in the mystical theologies of Albert and Thomas (xxvii). And so, B. spills much ink in offering propaedeutic syntheses of their doctrines of the soul’s ontology, the relationship between body and soul, epistemology, nature (in its relation to grace), the *imago Dei*, the invisible divine missions, grace, faith, charity, the Spirit’s seven gifts, divine naming, the vision of God, and (in the case of Thomas) divine action and the psychology of love. An explication of these “doctrinal pillars,” which undergird the two mystical theologies that constitute the heart of this study, occupies chapter 3 (for Albert) and chapters 5–7 (for Thomas). The book’s first two chapters—which treat Dionysius on union with God and key pre-thirteenth-century developments in the Dionysian tradition, respectively—are also, by B.’s own admission, “strictly preparatory” (xxviii). It is not until 157 pages into the work, then, that the reader comes to these words: “Having considered the background doctrines for union . . . I now turn directly to our main theme.” Whereas only two of the study’s eight chapters deal *directly* with its central topic—chapter 4, on union with God in Albert’s Dionysian commentaries, and chapter 8, on Dionysian union in Thomas—these two chapters could hardly stand (and would certainly be far less fruitful) without the foundation (and nourishment) of the others. B. himself notes, for example, that his background study on the divine missions enabled the identification of a strong trinitarian dimension in Albert’s teaching on union.

This monograph has much to commend it. With an impressive command of his medieval Latin sources, B. provides the most extensive study to date of Albert and Thomas on Dionysian union and the “first extensive historical dialogue” among Dionysius and his two most celebrated scholastic commentators (466). Readers will surely welcome B.’s syntheses of a number of key theological themes in Albert, the various lines of influence he sketches between master and disciple, and the clarity and

vivid humanness with which he contextualizes the work of both Dominicans (e.g., “Aquinas left Cologne in 1251 or 1252, his notes of Albert’s lectures on the Dionysian corpus in hand. Thomas walked to Paris . . .” [215]). The study should not, therefore, be mistaken as a book for beginners. B. most often assumes a certain familiarity on the part of his readers with basic categories and concepts of medieval scholastic philosophy and theology. In treating Albert’s anthropology in *De homine* and the *Sentences Commentary*, for instance, B. dives immediately into the deep waters of Augustinian illumination theory, Aristotelian active and passive intellect, the soul’s *quo est* and *quod est*, etc. without introduction. Often B.’s analyses are sophisticated and his prose dense, and his “signposting” sometimes confusing (see, e.g., his discussion of “Grace, Faith, and Charity in Albert’s *Sentences Commentary*,” 75–90), requiring even the seasoned scholar to read with vigilance and care. In spite of such minor imperfections, however, this outstanding study contributes much to our understanding of the medieval Dominican tradition of mystical theology and will bear rich fruit for years to come.

Franklin T. Harkins

*Boston College School of Theology and Ministry*

*Brain, Consciousness, and God: A Lonerganian Integration.* By Daniel A. Helminiak. Albany, NY: SUNY, 2015. Pp. xi + 417. \$95; \$27.95.

Present interest in neuroscience and questions about the brain make Helminiak’s supremely readable new book especially timely. In it questions related to the problematic of “God in the brain” and religious or so-called “transcendent” experiences are put on a solid methodological foundation, giving readers of all stripes the tools for a more intelligent inquiry.

Inasmuch as such questions are now approached in an interdisciplinary manner—implicating the study of science, psychology, and religion—H.’s task involves him with many disparate disciplines. Accordingly, chapters 3 through 6 treat respectively neuroscience; psychology; what he calls “spirituality”—the academic study of human consciousness as distinct from other themes traditionally treated in psychology; and theology. To properly differentiate and interrelate these fields, chapter 2 offers what H. considers the key to the entire problematic: Bernard Lonergan’s account of human knowing.

For H., the primary cause of oversight is the variety of “inadequate epistemolog[ies]” (84) operative in the works of otherwise perceptive thinkers on the topic. The suggested solution is the replacement of Lonergan’s more adequate account of human knowing: a tripartite scheme involving a cognitional theory that outlines the *de facto* process of human knowing; an epistemology (in the strict sense) that validates this concrete process of knowing; and a heuristic metaphysics to which this process corresponds. For Lonergan, human knowing is not merely a matter of palpable experience but is in addition a question of inquiring intelligence and rational judgment. Correspondingly, reality does not simply consist of materially perceptible “stuff taking