

The author notes that “Islam’s greatest challenge to Syriac Christianity was not its alterity but its similarity” (100). Sharing a similar prophetic lineage and partially coinciding scriptural tradition, coupled with the social interactions of daily living, the two spiritual paths could seem almost indistinguishable, so that conversion to the community of power and influence presented itself as an attractive possibility. The Syriac writers thus endeavored to present Islam as an inferior derivative of the ancient, normative Christianity.

The Christian literature in Syriac presents many instances of indistinct boundaries. For example, the recently excavated Church of the Kathisma contains in its ambulatory the remnants of a *mihrab* that was apparently still in use for Islamic prayer in the same period when Christians were using the same church for worship. Boundary questions are recorded in catechetical texts such as, “If the emir invites an abbot to dinner, should he accept?” “Should a priest teach Muslim children if their parents have the authority to punish him if he refuses?”

In their efforts to define boundaries, the Syriac writers reflect a social system in which Christians are in a constant effort of adjustment to the realities of life under Islamic rule. In this volume, P. has done the scholarly world a service in making the challenges faced by this Christian society available to modern readers.

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The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology. By Thomas O. White. Thomistic Resourcement Series, 5. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2015. Pp. xvi + 534. \$65.

As the subtitle indicates, the present book is a Thomistic study in Christology. It is an excellent contribution to recent work on the person and work of Christ, written in a clear, accessible style—something not to be taken for granted. White defends the continuing relevance and vitality of Aquinas’s doctrine of the person of Christ in conversation with pivotal developments in the discipline, Catholic and Protestant. The exegesis of Aquinas’s Christology, however, is not an end in itself here. Rather, W. puts forward a constructive case for a modern Christology that is, indeed, heavily indebted to the Angelic Doctor, with whose work W. is masterfully familiar. Modern and contemporary Christology, both Catholic and Protestant, strayed away from a Chalcedonian metaphysic. Jesus’s divinity now tends to be expressed through other means, allegedly more conducive to a full appreciation of his authentic humanity. Such a turn is partly motivated by Kant’s critique of natural theology and metaphysics, partly by a Barthian-like suspicion of any mode of natural knowledge of God. For the former, speaking of a divine substance present and active in an incarnate Christ is a confusion of categories. For the latter, it is conceptual idolatry since it enlists God under a genus (nature), thus making God naturally knowable to us. In the wake of these critiques several new forms of Christology were articulated. Of those, W. is

mainly concerned with those who wish to retain the full divinity of Jesus, yet in a post-metaphysical rubric.

There are, on the one hand, Christologies which express the divinity of Jesus in terms of his special consciousness of God (Schleiermacher and Rahner). But the contents of consciousness, W. argues, are an accidental feature of the human person. Such Christologies are inevitably Nestorian. Kenotic Christologies, on the other hand, are also suspect, since they ultimately project the human history of Jesus into the divine nature and identity.

Against these approaches, W. counsels a return to Aquinas's robust metaphysical Christology, which adequately emphasizes the unity of the person of Christ, the fully divine center of its agency, yet without neglecting the full range of Christ's human experiences. Chalcedonian orthodoxy, he argues, demands rather than forbids robustly metaphysical ways of theologizing. Against Barth and de Lubac, this implies neither conceptual idolatry, nor the self-sufficiency of human nature in relation to grace. Such a metaphysical stance is chastened by Aquinas's analogy of being, which Barth grossly misrepresents, although it is rather consistent with his own aims. W. argues that it is precisely an analogical account of being and causation which best affirms the ability of God to be present and active in the world without becoming affected by it.

White's ontological account emphasizes the divine activity in the work of Christ. One of the consequences is that Christ shared in the beatific vision, without which the perfect unity of the human and the divine wills would be inconceivable. Similarly, he argues that Christ's human obedience is truly expressive of the Son's immanent relationship to and dependence upon the Father, yet without being predicated as such of that relation. Jesus's "cry of dereliction" itself is not indicative of any rift between the Father and Son, but is rather an expression of desire and agony. W. convincingly shows how a highly metaphysical account does not render the suffering of the Son illusory. Similarly, neither Christ's death, nor his descent into hell are instances of divine punishment.

W.'s fundamental argument goes something like this: the reality of supernatural knowledge of God (faith, grace, revelation) implies the possibility of a natural knowledge of God. Were this not so, the revealed concepts would be utterly unintelligible. What this means is

that if human beings *can* believe in the incarnation (by grace), then they are also capable of natural, analogical thinking about the transcendent God. That is to say, Christology makes implicit use of natural theology. If we believe in the incarnation, we need to be committed to the retrieval of some form of classical metaphysics. (66)

The argument seems to turn on the idea of recognition. A novel reality, revealed to us by grace, must activate certain capacities, inherent in our knowledge, in order to become knowledge. However, for this argument to work, it must be assumed that we do have knowledge through revelation in the first place. Or, to be sure, that God truly has become a human being. White's argumentation, then, mostly commends itself to readers who share those premises.

I do want to register one minor complaint. W. treats the Protestant doctrine of penal substitution within the framework of a kenoticist Christology. While this

atonement theory has indeed had its kenoticist proponents, Calvin was by no means a kenoticist. In fact, Calvin's doctrine is set squarely within the framework of a classical Chalcedonian Christology. Its presentation of Christ as having withstood the divine punishment for sin presupposes the primacy of the divine agency in Christ, not some form of kenoticism. What this means is that in practice the theory, and what the divine punishment of Christ actually means, has often been grossly misunderstood.

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The Politics of Jesús: A Hispanic Political Theology. By Miguel A. De La Torre. Religion in the Modern World. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. Pp. xv + 201. \$65; \$22.

The fourth entry in Rowman & Littlefield's "Religion in the Modern World" series, this text offers a full-fledged Hispanic political theology centered, not on the Jesus/Christ of Euro-American theology—a figure complicit in Latina/o oppression—but on Jesús/Jesucristo (45–46), who stands in solidarity with downtrodden Latino/as. The book's four chapters shuttle between personal narrative, Latina/o experience, and a roughly chronological reconstruction of Jesus's birth, ministry, and crucifixion. Throughout, de la Torre uses Hispanic names for biblical figures to distinguish the Latina/o from the Euro-American theological voice.

T. analyzes the Gospel birth narratives in the context of Roman imperial oppression. Through Latina/o eyes, the poverty of the manger scene, the imminent threat of murder, and the desperation driving José and María's flight to Egypt are painfully familiar. These narratives portray a family (and by extension, a people) struggling with the vulnerability and stigma of illegal immigrant status. They also reveal "a God willing, through Jesús, to assume the role of the ultra-disenfranchised" (33). This sets the stage for locating Jesús within the Jewish community as the bastard child of a teenage mother from the multiethnic backwater of Nazareth. In contemporary parlance, Jesucristo was "a street rat, a barrio kid, a spic from the 'wrong side of the tracks'" (59) to whom terms used to describe Latina/o identity, such as *mestizo*, *mulatto*, *ajiaco*, and *bilingüe*, may be applied.

T.'s analysis of unjust structures highlights the parallels between Jesús' day and our own. The very existence of poverty presupposes unjust structures that implicate those who benefit from them. Rich and poor alike have an obligation to dismantle these structures: the rich by relinquishing their privilege, and the poor by taking responsibility for their own liberation. T. then analyzes the crucifixion through the term *esperar*. In contrast to the English term "hope," which on T.'s reading implies expectation of a good outcome, *esperar* means "to wait in apprehension of either good or evil" (133). Thus, instead of encouraging us to passively expect things to improve, *esperanza* spurs us to change the structures that keep people trapped in Holy Saturday misery. T. neglects to take up the term for losing hope, *desesperar*. This is curious, as conceiving