

Christian Pasts

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[The Triumph of Christianity: How a Forbidden Religion Swept the World by Bart D. Ehrman Simon & Schuster, 781501136702\]](#)

From the New York Times bestselling authority on early Christianity, the story of how Christianity

grew from a religion of twenty or so peasants in rural Galilee to the dominant religion in the West in less than four hundred years.

Christianity didn't have to become the dominant religion in the West. It easily could have remained a sect of Judaism fated to have the historical importance of the Sadducees or the Essenes. In [The Triumph of Christianity](#), Bart Ehrman, a master explainer of Christian history, texts, and traditions, shows how a religion whose first believers were twenty or so illiterate day laborers in a remote part of the empire became the official religion of Rome, converting some thirty million people in just four centuries. The Triumph of Christianity combines deep knowledge and meticulous research in an eye-opening, immensely readable narrative that upends the way we think about the single most important cultural transformation our world has ever seen—one that revolutionized art, music, literature, philosophy, ethics, economics, and law.

In my junior year of college I took a course in English literature that made me understand for the first time how painful it can be to question your faith. The course introduced me to poets of the nineteenth century who were struggling with religion. Even though I was a deeply committed Christian at the time, I became obsessed with the work of the great Victorian poet of doubt, Matthew Arnold. Nowhere is Arnold's struggle expressed more succinctly and movingly than in that most famous of nineteenth-century poems, "Dover Beach." The poem recalls a brief moment from Arnold's honeymoon in 1851. While standing by an open window, overlooking the cliffs of Dover, Arnold takes in the shoreline below, mesmerized by the sights and sounds of the sea as the tide goes out:

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

He asks his bride to join him at the window to enjoy the sweet night air and to look down where the waves break upon the beach:

Listen! You hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back,
and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

This is the sound, he notes, that Sophocles described many centuries before, in his play *Antigone*—a sound that made the Greek dramatist think of the "turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery." The sound gives Arnold a thought as well, but one quite different and particularly attuned to his age. For Arnold the retreating sea is a sad metaphor for the Christian faith, ebbing from his world and leaving a naked shoreline in its wake.

There was a time, he wistfully recalls, when the world was comfortably filled to the full with faith:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round
earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.

But that sea too is now retreating, and one can hear the sucking sound as it pulls back from the shore:

But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges
drear
And naked shingles of the world.

For Arnold, the modern, educated person no longer has the comforts of religion, the presence of an all-powerful and loving divinity, or the redemption provided by a Son of God who has come into the world to save those who are lost. In the void left by the withdrawal of the Christian faith, all that remains is a confusing and chaotic emptiness, filled only in part by the presence of others, the people we love and cherish who can join us through the uncertainties, pains, and anxieties of life. And so he concludes his poem:

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for
pain.
And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle
and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Here is a world of profound and disastrous mayhem and confusion—a struggle of armies fighting to the death, in the dark, with no joy, peace, or certainty. In this void we have only are our friends, companions, and loves: "Ah, love, let us be true to one another."

"Dover Beach," and other poems of its era, resonated with me as a young college student because I was beginning to move through my own nineteenth century. In my liberal arts education I had begun learning about the geological and biological sciences, philosophy, critical thinking, and intellectual history—all of which posed problems for my faith, much as they had for the intellectuals of Arnold's era. And I too found my emerging doubts deeply disturbing.

Now, forty years later, I have a different perspective on these nineteenth-century struggles. Rather than experiencing them personally as a Christian, I look on them as a historian specializing in the study of religion. Even though I myself am no long at sea, I can empathize with those who have been racked with doubt and uncertainty, forced to reconsider and even abandon their faith, not simply since the rise of modernity but throughout history.

The Christian Revolution

In the first four Christian centuries, the religions of the Roman Empire came under assault by those proposing a new faith, declaring that only the worship of the god of Jesus could be considered true religion. As Christianity spread, it destroyed the other religions in its wake, religions that had been practiced for millennia and that were simply assumed, everywhere and by everyone, to be good and true. But Christians insisted they were evil and false. For those reluctant to accept these claims—or even those unsure of what to believe—this transition was no less agonizing than that of Victorians living centuries later.

The Christian revolution proved far more massive and its triumph far more enduring than the skepticism that emerged as a counterforce in the nineteenth century. Even though many Victorians experienced radical doubt, or left the faith

altogether, the Christian tradition did not disappear. There are still two billion Christians in the world. By way of contrast, in antiquity, when Christianity succeeded in taking over the Roman Empire, any pagan religions left in its wake were merely isolated and scattered vestiges of ancient "superstition."

The ancient triumph of Christianity proved to be the single greatest cultural transformation our world has ever seen. Without it the entire history of Late Antiquity would not have happened as it did. We would never have had the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Renaissance, or modernity as we know it. There could never have been a Matthew Arnold. Or any of the Victorian poets. Or any of the other authors of our canon: no Milton, no Shakespeare, no Chaucer. We would have had none of our revered artists: Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, or Rembrandt. And none of our brilliant composers: Mozart, Handel, or Bach. To be sure, we would have had other Miltons, Michelangelos, and Mozarts in their places, and it is impossible to know whether these would have been better or worse. But they would have been incalculably different.

By conquering the Roman world, and then the entire West, Christianity not only gave rise to a vast and awe-inspiring set of cultural artifacts; it also changed the way people look at the world and choose to live in it. Modern sensitivities, values, and ethics have all been radically affected by the Christian tradition. This is true for almost all who live in the West, whether they claim allegiance to Christianity, to some other religious tradition, or to none at all. Before the triumph of Christianity, the Roman Empire was phenomenally diverse, but its inhabitants shared a number of cultural and ethical assumptions. If one word could encapsulate the common social, political, and personal ethic of the time, it would be "dominance."

In a culture of dominance, those with power are expected to assert their will over those who are weaker. Rulers are to dominate their subjects, patrons their clients, masters their slaves, men their women. This ideology was not merely a cynical grab for power or a conscious mode of oppression. It was the commonsense, millennia-old view that virtually everyone accepted and shared, including the weak and marginalized.

This ideology affected both social relations and governmental policy. It made slavery a virtually unquestioned institution promoting the good of society; it made the male head of the household a sovereign despot over all those under him; it made wars of conquest, and the slaughter they entailed, natural and sensible for the wellbeing of the valued part of the human race (that is, those invested with power).

With such an ideology one would not expect to find governmental welfare programs to assist weaker members of society: the poor, homeless, hungry, or oppressed. One would not expect to find hospitals to assist the sick, injured, or dying. One would not expect to find private institutions of charity designed to help those in need.

The Roman world did not have such things. Christians, however, advocated a different ideology. Leaders of the Christian church preached and urged an ethic of love and service. One person was not more important than another. All were on the same footing before God: the master was no more significant than the slave, the patron than the client, the husband than the wife, the powerful than the weak, or the robust than the diseased. Whether those Christian ideals worked themselves out in practice is another question. Christians sometimes—indeed, many times—spectacularly failed to match their pious sentiments with concrete actions, or, even more, acted in ways contrary to their stated ideals. But the ideals were nonetheless ensconced in their tradition—widely and publicly proclaimed by the leaders of the movement—in ways not extensively found elsewhere in Roman society.

As Christians came to occupy positions of power, these ideals made their way into people's social lives, into private institutions meant to encapsulate them, and into governmental policy. The very idea that society should serve the poor, the sick, and the marginalized became a distinctively Christian concern. Without the conquest of Christianity, we may well never have had institutionalized welfare for the poor or organized health care for the sick. Billions of people may never have embraced the idea that society should serve the marginalized or be concerned with the well-being of the needy, values that most of us in the West have simply assumed are "human" values.

This is not to say that Judaism, the religion from which Christianity emerged, was any less concerned with the obligations to "love your neighbor as yourself" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." But neither Judaism nor, needless to say, any of the other great religions of the world took over the empire and became the dominant religion of the West. It was Christianity that became dominant and, once dominant, advocated an ideology not of dominance but of love and service. This affected the history of the West in ways that simply cannot be calculated.

Explaining the Triumph of Christianity

But there was no reason this cultural shift had to happen, no historical necessity that Christianity would, in effect, destroy the pagan religions of the Roman Empire and establish itself as the supreme religion and ascendant political and cultural power of its world. That is why the question I address in this book is so important. Why did this new faith take over the Roman world, leading to the Christianization of the West? It is obviously not a matter of purely antiquarian interest, relevant only to academic historians. What question could be more important for anyone interested in history, culture, or society?

To be more specific: How did a small handful of the followers of Jesus come to convert an unwilling empire? According to the New Testament, some days after Jesus's crucifixion, eleven of his male followers and several women came to believe he had been raised from the dead. Before four centuries had passed, these twenty or so lower-class, illiterate Jews from rural Galilee had become a church of some thirty million. How does a religion gain thirty million adherents in three hundred years?

As I give lectures around the country on a variety of topics related to early Christianity, this is the question I hear more than any other. The answers people suggest are wide-ranging. Many committed Christians appeal directly to divine providence. God did it. God guided history so the world would become Christian. I respect those who have this opinion, but I have one very big problem with it. If God wanted the world to become Christian, why hasn't the world become Christian? If God wanted the masses to convert, why are most of the masses still not converted? Moreover, just in historical terms,

if God made the Roman Empire Christian, why did it take so long? And why was the job never completed? Why did non-Christian religions continue to exist at all? Why are they still in the majority today?

By far the most common secular answer I hear is that the Roman Empire became Christian because the emperor Constantine converted to the faith. Constantine was the sole ruler of the empire in the first part of the fourth century. Early in his reign he turned from traditional "pagan" religions to become a follower of Christ. After that, masses of people began to convert as Christianity went from being a persecuted minority to being the religion of most-favored status, and eventually the religion of Rome. So it was all about Constantine, right?

Until recently, that is what I myself thought. But I no longer think so. On the contrary: I think Christianity may well have succeeded even if Constantine had not converted. That will be one of the theses of this book.

Still, it cannot be disputed that, after Constantine's conversion, masses of people came to embrace the Christian faith. Not absolutely everyone. And not immediately after Constantine did so. Indeed, not even a century after Constantine's death. But eventually Christianity became the religion of the multitudes, and the Roman pagan religions they had formerly practiced more or less disappeared or, in a few instances, went underground. For those supporting the Christian cause, this has always been considered a real triumph.

I will not, however, be writing this book in a triumphalist vein. That is to say, I will not be celebrating the rise and eventual domination of Christianity, claiming it was inherently superior or even necessarily a very good thing. On the other hand, I do not want to claim it was bad either. Ultimately good or ultimately bad: as a historian I will remain neutral on these kinds of value judgments—in part, this is because the triumph of Christianity also entailed losses, especially for the devoted followers of other religious practices. Whenever one group wins a struggle, others lose. Those of us with historical interests need to consider both winners and losers.

Winners and Losers

And so, before detailing the remarkable events that led to the triumph of Christianity, I want to pause to reflect on loss.

Nowhere in modern times have the losses occasioned by clashes of religions and cultures crystallized more dramatically than in the city of Palmyra, Syria, where, in 2015, representatives of ISIS captured the city, executed a number of its inhabitants, destroyed archaeological remains, and ravaged its antiquities, torturing and beheading their chief conservator. Nothing of equal savagery has ever affected the site. But this is not the first time Palmyra endured an assault by religious fanatics who found its sacred temples and the holy objects they contained objectionable. For that we need to turn the clock back seventeen hundred years.

The ancient city of Palmyra lay to the northeast of Damascus, almost exactly midway between the Mediterranean in the west and the Euphrates in the east. Originally a caravan oasis, it became a center of transport and commerce, an obvious stopping point at the crossroads between Rome and Persia.

As it grew in size and economic importance, Palmyra attracted the attention of Mediterranean powers from the Greeks in the fourth century BCE to the Romans later on. Assaulted by Mark Antony in 41 BCE, it was eventually incorporated into the empire under Tiberius (emperor 14-37 CE). Two and half centuries later it established its independence as a breakaway state, ruled most famously by Queen Zenobia until its reconquest by the Roman emperor Aurelian in 272 CE. Taking Zenobia captive for his triumph back in Rome, Aurelian eventually ordered the city's destruction. Although partially rebuilt, it was never again to return to its former glory. Its magnificent private and public structures stood for centuries, isolated in the Syrian desert.

The first recorded instance of specifically religious intolerance leading to the destruction of Palmyra's antiquities occurred at the end of the fourth century. The Roman imperial throne was occupied at the time by Theodosius I (ruled 379-95 CE), a passionately committed Christian determined to establish Christianity as the official religion of the

empire. Theodosius was not the first Christian emperor. That, as I have indicated, was Constantine (ruled 306-37 CE). And Theodosius was not the first Christian emperor to order the destruction of pagan temples. That was Constantine's son Constantius II (ruled 337-61). But Theodosius was the first to legislate Christianity as the one legitimate religion and to order a general cessation of pagan practices. The enforcement of Theodosius's policies was spotty at best, but it did affect Palmyra and at least one of its most glorious sacred shrines, the temple of Allat, the Syrian pagan goddess.'

Allat was worshiped by nomads throughout the region and eventually came to be identified as the Greek goddess Athena. An archaeological team from Poland excavated the ruins of her temple in the spring seasons of 1975 and 1976. Inscriptions discovered at the site, along with coins, pottery, and a severely mutilated statue of the divinity, allowed these experts to write the history of the sanctuary. Built in the middle of the second century CE, the sanctuary stood for over two hundred years, until being destroyed sometime in the 380s. It did not perish from natural causes, such as an earthquake or storm. That much is clear from the remains of the cult statue, whose facial figures had been intentionally mutilated. As the archaeological report notes, this kind of mutilation "suggests that it was done by a man of set purpose rather than by brute forces of nature."

We know of numerous other statue mutilations around the empire from about the same time. They were not perpetrated by thoughtless, godless hordes but by committed Christians with clear intentions. Statues of pagan deities often had their eyes, noses, ears, mouths, hands, and genitals removed. This was a religious statement. The gods of the pagans were nothing but stone or wood. They could not see, smell, hear, speak, or act. They were useless, lifeless, and dead. The Christians were out to prove it.

The date established for the destruction of the temple of Allat is particularly telling. It coincides with some of the most virulent antireligious legislation the ancient world had ever seen. From 381 to 392 CE Theodosius issued laws forbidding pagan sacrifice and ordering the closing of pagan temples. This legislation—like most legislation

throughout the history of the Roman Empire—was inefficiently administered. The Roman state simply had no apparatus for empire-wide enforcement of the imperial will. But the legislation that did issue forth was taken seriously in some places, leading to regional destructions of temples and pagan cult objects, including some of the great gold, bronze, and stone statuary of the empire.

The best-known acts of enforcement involved one of the highest-ranking officials in Theodosius's administration, the praetorian prefect Maternus Cynegius. Like Theodosius, Cynegius was a deeply committed and zealous Christian. In 385 CE he undertook a tour of the eastern provinces to carry out Theodosius's anti-pagan policies. In the words of one modern archaeologist, this tour led to an "unprecedented devastation of the most admired objects of pagan sacred architecture and art." Cynegius spent considerable time in Syria, and with the backing of local Christian leaders, destroyed the important Temple of Zeus in the city of Apamea.

There is nothing to suggest that Cynegius was personally active in Palmyra. But his presence in the region motivated local Christians to send in wrecking crews of their own. That is what happened with the temple of Allat. It was a local job, inspired, rather than carried out, by imperial authorization. It is impossible to say whether the destruction was sponsored by the leaders of the Christian communities in the city or was instead the work of a marauding mob of fervent Christians. We do know that, several decades later, Christian leaders converted other pagan temples into Christian churches, including the oldest and finest pagan sanctuary of the city, the famous temple of Bel whose remains were destroyed by ISIS in 2015.

We grieve over such senseless—or, rather, highly intentional—destruction of antiquities in part because we see in remnants of ancient culture the treasured history of our own past. And so we are dismayed, or even incensed, to hear a recent archaeologist declare: "There can be no doubt on the basis of the written and archaeological evidence that the Christianization of the Roman Empire and early medieval Europe involved the destruction of works of art on a scale never before seen in human history."

The ancient world did not share our modern passion for the material remains of earlier millennia. The agony of that era's destruction was even more profound, since these temples and statues were still then part of a living, vibrant culture. The very core of people's personal and spiritual lives was under assault, mocked, mutilated, and destroyed before their very eyes.

I do not want to undervalue the enormous benefits derived from the triumph of Christianity. Christians and non-Christians can surely agree that the cultural glories we have inherited from the Christian tradition—the art, music, literature, and philosophy justify our gratitude and awe. But I begin with the temple of Allat in Palmyra to emphasize my point: every triumph is also a defeat, and the ecstasies of those who prevail are matched by the agonies of those who lose.

[Paul: A Biography by N. T. Wright](#) [HarperOne, 9780061730580]

In this definitive biography, renowned Bible scholar, Anglican bishop, and bestselling author N. T. Wright offers a radical look at the apostle Paul, illuminating the humanity and remarkable achievements of this intellectual who invented Christian theology—transforming a faith and changing the world.

For centuries, Paul, the apostle who "saw the light on the Road to Damascus" and made a miraculous conversion from zealous Pharisee persecutor to devoted follower of Christ, has been one of the church's most widely cited saints. While his influence on Christianity has been profound, N. T. Wright argues that Bible scholars and pastors have focused so much attention on Paul's letters and theology that they have too often overlooked the essence of the man's life and the extreme unlikelihood of what he achieved.

To Wright, "The problem is that Paul is central to any understanding of earliest Christianity, yet Paul was a Jew; for many generations Christians of all kinds have struggled to put this together." Wright contends that our knowledge of Paul and appreciation for his legacy cannot be complete without an understanding of his Jewish heritage. Giving us a thoughtful, in-depth exploration of the human and intellectual drama that shaped Paul, Wright provides greater clarity of the apostle's

writings, thoughts, and ideas and helps us see them in a fresh, innovative way.

[Paul](#) is a compelling modern biography that reveals the apostle's greater role in Christian history—as an inventor of new paradigms for how we understand Jesus and what he accomplished—and celebrates his stature as one of the most effective and influential intellectuals in human history.

For centuries, Paul, the apostle who "saw the light on the Road to Damascus" and changed dramatically from zealous Pharisee persecutor to devoted follower of Jesus, has been one of the church's most widely cited early teachers. Yet for leading New Testament scholar and Anglican bishop N. T. Wright, most Bible scholars and pastors have not fully grasped what Paul was actually doing and why.

In focusing on Paul's letters and theology, Wright argues, they have, in short, overlooked the essence of the man's life and the extreme unlikelihood of what he achieved. In response, Wright offers a new way of understanding one of the most famous Christian figures. Wright draws attention to Paul the man—the man who survived assassination attempts, imprisonments, and shipwrecks all while inventing new language and concepts for faithfully translating Jesus's story for the Gentile world.

In this pioneering new account, Wright celebrates Paul's humanity, arguing that this is the best context for understanding him and ultimately for appreciating how he invented new paradigms for how we understand Jesus. "The problem," Wright explains, "is that while Paul is central to any understanding of early Christianity, we cannot understand him without taking full account of the pre-Christian Jewish beliefs and hopes that he believed had been fulfilled in Jesus." Only when we consider Paul in this manner can we move on to understanding how he led the way for Christianity to conquer the Roman world.

Excerpt: The Apostle Paul is one of a handful of people from the ancient world whose words still have the capacity to leap-off the page and confront us. Whether we agree with him or not—whether we like him or not!—his letters are personal and passionate, sometimes tearful and sometimes teasing, often dense but never dull. But

who was he? What made him tick? And why did his seemingly erratic missionary career have such a profound influence on the world of ancient Greece and Rome and thereby on the world of our own day?

Any worthwhile answer must presuppose the detailed historical and theological study of his letters in debate with ongoing scholarship. I have tried to do this in *The Climax of the Covenant* (1991/1992), *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2013), the collection of essays entitled *Pauline Perspectives* (2013), and the survey of modern (largely Anglophone) research [Paul and His Recent Interpreters](#) [Fortress Press, 9780800699642]. But the biographer's questions are subtly different. We are searching for the man behind the texts.

Like most historians, I try to include all relevant evidence within as simple a framework as possible. I do not regard it a virtue to decide ahead of time against either the Pauline authorship of some of the letters or the historicity of the Acts of the Apostles (on the grounds, perhaps, that Luke was writing long after the events, inventing material to fit his theology). Each generation has to start the jigsaw with all the pieces on the table and to see if the pieces can be plausibly fitted together to create a *prima facie* case. In particular, I make two large assumptions: first, a South Galatian address for Galatians; second, an Ephesian imprisonment as the location of the Prison Letters. In the former I am following, among many others, Stephen Mitchell's [Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor, vol. 2, The Rise of the Church](#). In the latter I am indebted to many, including an older work by a St. Andrews predecessor, George S. Duncan's now classic, [1930] [Paul's Ephesian Ministry: A Reconstruction](#). I have found that these hypotheses make excellent sense of the historical, theological, and biographical data. References to primary sources are found in the notes at the end, but I have not usually cluttered things up with endless references to Acts itself.

Paul's multilingual ability doesn't mark him out in and of itself. Many children in many countries are functionally multilingual. In the longer perspective of history, in fact, it is those who know only one language who are the odd ones out. But the mature

Paul has something else of which fewer people, even in his world, could boast. He gives every impression of having swallowed the Bible whole. He moves with polished ease between Genesis and the Psalms, between Deuteronomy and Isaiah. He knows how the story works, its heights and depths, its twists and turns. He can make complex allusions with a flick of the pen and produce puns and other wordplays across the languages. The radical new angle of vision provided by the gospel of Jesus is a new angle on texts he already knows inside out. He has pretty certainly read other Jewish books of the time, books like the Wisdom of Solomon, quite possibly some of the philosophy of his near contemporary Philo. They too knew their Bibles extremely well. Saul matches them stride for stride and, arguably, outruns them.

What is more, whether Saul has read the non-Jewish philosophers of his day or the great traditions that go back to Plato and Aristotle, he knows the ideas. He has heard them on the street, discussed them with his friends. He knows the technical terms, the philosophical schemes that probe the mysteries of the universe and the inner workings of human beings, and the theories that hold the gods and the world at arm's length like the Epicureans or that draw them into a single whole, to pan, "the all," like the Stoics. It's unlikely that he has read Cicero, whose book *On the Nature of the Gods*, from roughly a century before his own mature work, discussed all the options then available to an educated Roman (this does not, of course, include a Jewish worldview). But if someone in the tentmaker's shop were to start expounding Cicero's ideas, Saul would know what the conversation was about. He would be able to engage such a person on his own terms. He is thus completely at home in the worlds of both Jewish story and non-Jewish philosophy. We may suspect that he, like some of his contemporaries, somewhat relishes the challenge of bringing them together.

Reading some of his letters, in fact, one might almost think that he had been a childhood friend of someone like the philosopher Epictetus, a down-to-earth thinker determined to get philosophy out of the classroom and into the street. He uses well-known rhetorical ploys. When he tells the Corinthians that human wisdom is useless, he sometimes sounds like a Cynic; when he talks about

virtue, a casual listener might, for a moment, mistake him for a Stoic. When he writes about the difference between the "inner human" and the "outer human," many to this day have supposed him to be some kind of Platonist—though what he says about resurrection and the renewal of creation then becomes a problem. The mature Paul would not have been afraid of giving impressions such as these. He believes, and says explicitly here and there, that the new wisdom unveiled in Israel's Messiah can take on the world and incorporate its finest insights into a different, larger frame. The "good news" of the Messiah opens up for him the vision of a whole new creation in which everything "true, attractive, and pleasing" will find a home.

But the messianic "good news" meant what it meant, first and foremost, within the Jewish world of the first century. Whole books could be written about every aspect of this, not least as it relates to the young Saul of Tarsus, but we must be brief. Saul grew up within a world of story and symbol: a single story, awaiting its divinely ordered fulfillment, and a set of symbols that brought that story into focus and enabled Jews to inhabit it. If we are going to understand him, to see who he really was, we have to grasp this and to realize that for him it wasn't just a set of ideas. It was as basic to his whole existence as the great musical story from Bach to Beethoven to Brahms is to a classically trained musician today. Only more so.

The story was the story of Israel as a whole, Israel as the children of Abraham, Israel as God's chosen people, chosen from the world but equally chosen for the world; Israel as the light to the Gentiles, the people through whom all nations would be blessed; Israel as the Passover people, the rescued-from-slavery people, the people with whom the One God had entered into covenant, a marriage bond in which separation might occur but could only ever be temporary. There are signs all across the Jewish writings of the period (roughly the last two centuries before Paul's day and the first two centuries afterward) that a great many Jews from widely different backgrounds saw their Bible not primarily as a compendium of rules and dogmas, but as a single great story rooted in Genesis and Exodus, in Abraham and Moses. Saul's Bible was not primarily a set of glittering fragments, snapshots of detached wisdom. It was a narrative

rooted in creation and covenant and stretching forward into the dark unknown.

It had become very dark indeed in the centuries leading up to Saul's day. Whether people read Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, whether they followed the line of thought through the books of Kings and Chronicles, or whether they simply read the Five Books of Moses, the "Torah" proper, from Genesis through to Deuteronomy, the message was the same. Israel was called to be different, summoned to worship the One God, but Israel had failed drastically and had been exiled to Babylon as a result. A covenantal separation had therefore taken place. Prophet after prophet said so. The One God had abandoned the Jerusalem Temple to its fate at the hands of foreigners.

Wherever you look in Israel's scriptures, the story is the same. Any Jew from the Babylonian exile onward who read the first three chapters of Genesis would see at a glance the quintessential Jewish story: humans were placed in a garden; they disobeyed instructions and were thrown out. And any Jew who read the last ten chapters of Deuteronomy would see it spelled out graphically:

worship the One God and do what he says, and the promised garden is yours; worship other gods, and you face exile. A great many Jews around the time of Paul—we have the evidence in book after book of the postbiblical Jewish writings—read those texts in that way too; they believed that the exile—in its theological and political meaning—was not yet over. Deuteronomy speaks of a great coming restoration.⁹ Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all echo this theme: the words of comfort in Isaiah 40-55, the promise of covenant renewal in Jeremiah 31, the assurance of cleansing and restoration in Ezekiel 36-37. Yes, some Jews (by no means all) had returned from Babylon. Yes, the Temple had been rebuilt. But this was not, it could not be, the restoration promised by the prophets and by Deuteronomy itself.

Through those long years of puzzlement, the complaint of the ("postexilic") books of Ezra and Nehemiah sounded out: "We are in our own land again, but we are slaves! Foreigners are ruling over us."⁹ And slaves, of course, need an Exodus. A new Exodus. The new Exodus promised by Isaiah. This was the hope: that the story at the heart of the

Five Books—slavery, rescue, divine presence, promised land—would spring to life once more as the answer both to the problem of covenantal rebellion in Deuteronomy 27-32 and to the parallel, and deeper, problem of human rebellion in Genesis 1-3. The former would be the key to the latter: when the covenant God did what he was going to do for Israel, then somehow—who knew how?—the effects would resonate around the whole world.

At the center of this longing for rescue, for the new Exodus, stands one text in particular that loomed large in the minds of eager, hopeful Jews like Saul of Tarsus. Daniel 9, picking up from Deuteronomy's promise of restoration, announces precisely that idea of an extended exile: the "seventy years" that Jeremiah said Israel would stay in exile have been stretched out to seventy times seven, almost half a millennium of waiting until the One God would restore his people at last, by finally dealing with the

"sins" that had caused the exile in the first place. The scheme of "seventy sevens" resonated with the scriptural promises of the jubilee—this would be the time when the ultimate debts would be forgiven. Devout Jews in the first century labored to work out when the 490 years would be up, often linking their interpretations of Daniel to the relevant passages in Deuteronomy. This was the long hope of Israel, the forward-looking narrative cherished by many who, like Saul of Tarsus, were soaked in the scriptures and eager for the long-delayed divine deliverance. And many of them believed that the time was drawing near. They knew enough chronology to do a rough calculation. And if the time was near, strict obedience to the Torah was all the more necessary.

The Torah loomed all the larger if one lived, as did the young Saul, outside the promised land and hence away from the Temple. The Torah, in fact, functioned as a movable Temple for the many Jews who were scattered around the wider world. But the Temple remained central, geographically and symbolically. It was the place where heaven and earth met, thus forming the signpost to the ultimate promise, the renewal and unity of heaven and earth, the new creation in which the One God would be personally present forever. We don't

know how often Saul traveled to the homeland with his parents for the great festivals. Luke describes Jesus, aged twelve, being taken from Nazareth to Jerusalem for Passover, and we know that tens of thousands of Jews gathered from all over, both for that festival and for others such as Pentecost, the feast of the giving of the Torah. It is thus quite probable that the young Saul acquired at an early age the sense that all roads, spiritually as well as geographically, led to the mountain where David had established his capital, the hill at the heart of Judaea where Solomon, David's son, the archetypal wise man, had built the first Temple. The Temple was like a cultural and theological magnet, drawing together not only heaven and earth, but the great scriptural stories and promises.

The Temple was therefore also the focal point of Israel's hope.

The One God, so the prophets had said, abandoned his house in Jerusalem because of the people's idolatry and sin. But successive prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Malachi) had promised that he would return one day. That list is significant, since the last two prophets named, Zechariah and Malachi, were writing after some of the exiles had returned from Babylon, after they had rebuilt the Temple and restarted the regular round of sacrificial worship. We will never understand how someone like the young Saul of Tarsus thought—never mind how he prayed!—until we grasp the strange fact that, though the Temple still held powerful memories of divine presence (as does Jerusalem's Western Wall to this day for the millions of Jews and indeed non Jews who go there to pray, though they do not think that the One God actually resides there now), there was a strong sense that the promise of ultimate divine return had not yet been fulfilled.

If this seems strange, as it does to some, consider this. Two of the greatest scenes in Israel's scriptures are moments when the divine glory filled the wilderness Tabernacle and then the Jerusalem Temple with a radiant presence and power." Isaiah had promised that this would happen once more, indicating that this would be the moment when Jerusalem would be redeemed at last and Israel's God would establish his kingdom in visible power and glory. At no point do any later Jewish

writers say that this or anything like it has actually happened. The closest you might come is the glorious double scene in Sirach 24 and 50, written around 200 BC. In the first, the figure of "Wisdom" comes from heaven to dwell in the Temple; in the second, the high priest himself appears to be an almost visible manifestation of Israel's God. But this rather obvious piece of propaganda for the aristocratic high-priesthood of the time cut little ice after the various crises that then followed. No, the point was that it hadn't happened yet. The God of Israel had said he would return, but had not yet done so.

Saul of Tarsus was brought up to believe that it would happen, perhaps very soon. Israel's God would indeed return in glory to establish his kingdom in visible global power. He was also taught that there were things Jews could be doing in the meantime to keep this promise and hope on track. It was vital for Jews to keep the Torah with rigorous attention to detail and to defend the Torah, and the Temple itself, against possible attacks and threats. Failure on these points would hold back the promise, would get in the way of the fulfillment of the great story. That is why Saul of Tarsus persecuted Jesus's early followers. And that is why, when Paul the Apostle returned to Jerusalem for the last time, there were riots.

All this, to pick up an earlier point, is many a mile from what we today mean by "religion." That is why I often put that word in quotation marks, to signal the danger of imagining that Saul of Tarsus, either as a young man or as a mature apostle, was "teaching a religion" in some modern sense. Today, "religion" for most Westerners designates a detached area of life, a kind of private hobby for those who like that sort of thing, separated by definition (and in some countries by law) from politics and public life, from science and technology. In Paul's day, "religion" meant almost exactly the opposite. The Latin word *religio* has to do with "binding" things together. Worship, prayer, sacrifice, and other public rituals were designed to hold the unseen inhabitants of a city (the gods and perhaps the ancestors) together with the visible ones, the living humans, thus providing a vital framework for ordinary life, for business, marriage, travel, and home life. (A distinction was made

between *religio*, official and authorized observance, and *superstitio*, unauthorized and perhaps subversive practice.)

The Jewish equivalent of this was clear. For Saul of Tarsus, the place where the invisible world ("heaven") and the visible world ("earth") were joined together was the Temple. If you couldn't get to the Temple, you could and should study and practice the Torah, and it would have the same effect. Temple and Torah, the two great symbols of Jewish life, pointed to the story in which devout Jews like Saul and his family believed themselves to be living: the great story of Israel and the world, which, they hoped, was at last reaching the point where God would reveal his glory in a fresh way. The One God would come back at last to set up his kingdom, to make the whole world one vast glory-filled Temple, and to enable all people—or at least his chosen people—to keep the Torah perfectly. Any who prayed or sang the Psalms regularly would find themselves thinking this, hoping this, praying this, day after day, month after month.

Surrounded by the bustling pagan city of Tarsus, the young Saul knew perfectly well what all this meant for a loyal Jew. It meant keeping oneself pure from idolatry and immorality. There were pagan temples and shrines on every corner, and Saul would have a fair idea of what went on there. Loyalty meant keeping the Jewish community pure from those things as well. At every stage of Israel's history, after all, the people of the One God had been tempted to compromise. The pressure was on to go with the wider world and to forget the covenant. Saul was brought up to resist this pressure. And that meant "zeal."

Which brings us at last to the biographical starting point that the later Paul mentions in his letters. "Zealous?" he says, "I persecuted the church!" "I advanced in *loudaïsmos* beyond many of my own age and people," he says, "I was extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions" Where did this "zeal" come from? What did it mean in practice? If this is what made the young Saul tick, what was the mechanism that kept that ticking clock running on time? And what did it mean, as he himself puts it in his first letter, to exchange this kind of "zeal" for a

very different kind? Addressing those questions brings us to the real starting point of this book.

[The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World](#) by Catherine Nixey [Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 9780544800885]

A bold new history of the rise of Christianity, showing how its radical followers ravaged vast swathes of classical culture, plunging the world into an era of dogma and intellectual darkness

In Harran, the locals refused to convert. They were dismembered, their limbs hung along the town's main street. In Alexandria, zealots pulled the elderly philosopher-mathematician Hypatia from her chariot and flayed her to death with shards of broken pottery. Not long before, their fellow Christians had invaded the city's greatest temple and razed it—smashing its world-famous statues and destroying all that was left of Alexandria's Great Library.

Today, we refer to Christianity's conquest of the West as a "triumph." But this victory entailed an orgy of destruction in which Jesus's followers attacked and suppressed classical culture, helping to pitch Western civilization into a thousand-year-long decline. Just one percent of Latin literature would survive the purge; countless antiquities, artworks, and ancient traditions were lost forever.

As Catherine Nixey reveals, evidence of early Christians' campaign of terror has been hiding in plain sight: in the palimpsests and shattered statues proudly displayed in churches and museums the world over. In [The Darkening Age](#), Nixey resurrects this lost history, offering a wrenching account of the rise of Christianity and its terrible cost.

Nixey offers a mea culpa deliberation to any cradle or converted Christian when too cozily tempted to rest easily in one's faith with its moral demands and our-club comforts. Her well-told, well-known tale to academics of the intolerant core of Christian creeds may help prick the conscience of both insiders and outsiders. Liberal Christians who wish to maintain ethical credibility will do well to

read her not-told-often-enough history of ancient pluralism assaulted by Christian exclusivism. Whether secular or traditional in orientation, it helps to recognize this problematic clash sacred certainties. To be suspicious of all dogmas, be they our own or of others is a word to the wise.

Censorship

"Safe spaces"; "trigger warnings" and "no-platforming" are becoming increasingly common in American universities. Their supporters say that this is to protect students from harm.

Precisely the same arguments were used by the Christians of the third and fourth centuries. Christians considered works of pagans to be wicked, dangerous and a source of heresies. The result of that anxious concern saw brilliant works of science, philosophy and literature scrubbed from the page. Cicero, Seneca, Archimedes... All lost. 90 per cent of all classical literature was lost in this period. 99 per cent of Latin.

People believe that censors come with big scissors and fierce expressions. They don't. They come with kindness in their hearts and concern in their breasts. They come not to harm you but to save you. And nothing is more dangerous.

Martyrdom and Suicide

Picture the scene. There is a festival in North Africa. People are eating, drinking and laughing. Suddenly, the party is interrupted by a group of ill-educated young men. They are viciously attacking the partygoers - the infidels. The men shout allegiance to their god as they do so.

And the words they use? Laudes deo. Praise the lord. This is not Isis, today. This is Christianity in the fourth century.

The idea that people will, to serve their god, kill and maim people who are just going about their daily lives shocks us. But Christians did this centuries ago. As Christianity gained power, North Africa was terrorised by rough, ill-educated young men who were determined to attack non-believers - and to die as martyrs.

Die a martyr and, it was said, you'd have a hundred times the rewards in heaven - and eternal fame on earth. They were, said one horrified

Christian a "death sect". Suicidal martyrs are not, whatever we may feel, a new phenomenon.

Statue Smashing

In 2015 the world looked on horrified as Isis troops entered Palmyra and started smashing the temples there.

They were not the first to do so. Christians got there first. 1700 years before Isis attacked this beautiful town, idolatrous Christians had done the same. One statue - a great statue of Athene - was attacked by both Isis and Christianity.

We present Christianity's conquest as a peaceful liberation. It was for some. For many it was nothing of the sort. As Christianity struggled for total control, temples were demolished, statues smashed, religious liberties removed. The "triumph" of Christianity involved the largest destruction of art that human history had ever seen.

Scientific Freedom

Earlier this year politicians in Texas considered passing a bill to protect science teachers who teach creationism. A 2014 Gallup poll found that 42 per cent of Americans believe that humans were created by God 10,000 years ago.

Ancient Roman philosophers would have been astonished. Almost two millennia ago they argued fiercely that there was no need to believe in any god, or in creation, because we were all made of atoms, just coming together and moving apart. Some went further: all animal species were, they said, created by a kind of proto-Darwinism and that each man should be free to follow whatever religion he chose.

Christianity disagreed. It destroyed the works of its most critical philosophers; cracked down on schools of thought that promulgated atomism and forbade discussion of religion in public. The effects of its hostility were far-reaching: in the centuries following Christianity's "triumph" 90 per cent of all classical literature was lost.

Religious Liberalism

The ancient Romans are, in Christian media, often presented as fierce martyr makers and religiously intolerant. Films such as *Quo Vadis* present them as brutal and bloodthirsty.

They were nothing of the sort. In three centuries of Roman rule there were fewer than 13 years of imperial persecution of Christians. Romans simply were not that interested in persecuting Christians.

The true persecutors were the Christians. Within a few years of Christians coming to power other forms of religion were outlawed. Within just over a hundred years Christians declared that there was not one single pagan left in the Roman empire. Not one. An entire empire converted in just over a hundred years. Their attacks on others continued for centuries.

Romans pleaded for clemency. "We see the same stars, the sky is shared by all, the same world surrounds us," begged one. "What does it matter what wisdom a person uses to seek for the truth?"

It mattered to the Christians. They annihilated paganism.

If this feels implausible, consider one simple fact that bears elegant witness to this. Today, there are 2 billion Christians in the world. There is not one single true pagan.

Halloween

Every year, as halloween approaches, there are articles from Christians anxious about whether they should take part; wondering if they should dress up as witches and demons. In a 2017 pamphlet Jehovah's Witnesses advocated ridding your house of books that contain supernatural themes.

They are in good company. In its earliest centuries, Christians feared that demons lurked everywhere - especially in other religions and "superstitions". In order to purge this impurity, Christians smashed ancient statues, burned books, demolished temples and searched homes for suspect volumes.

A desire to cleanse the world of demons led to catastrophic losses of classical culture. The largest destruction of art that human history had ever seen was conducted by the Christians in these early centuries. Philosophy that wasn't Christian was seen to be dangerous, demonic, a source of heresies. And so it, and other works, suffered. 90 per cent of all classical literature was lost. 99 per cent of all Latin.

The church fathers were delighted by these losses. They rejoiced in the idea that non-Christian philosophy had been "eradicated" and "suppressed".

Excerpt: The destroyers came from out of the desert. Palmyra must have been expecting them: for years, marauding bands of bearded, black-robed zealots, armed with little more than stones, iron bars and an iron sense of righteousness, had been terrorizing the east of the Roman Empire.

Their attacks were primitive, thuggish and very effective. These men moved in packs—later in swarms of as many as five hundred— and when they descended utter destruction followed. Their targets were the temples and the attacks could be astonishingly swift. Great stone columns that had stood for centuries collapsed in an afternoon; statues that had stood for half a millennium had their faces mutilated in a moment; temples that had seen the rise of the Roman Empire fell in a single day.

This was violent work, but it was by no means solemn. The zealots roared with laughter as they smashed the "evil," "idolatrous" statues; the faithful jeered as they tore down temples, stripped roofs and defaced tombs. Chants appeared, immortalizing these glorious moments. "Those shameful things," sang pilgrims, proudly; the "demons and idols ... our good Saviour trampled down all together." Zealotry rarely makes for good poetry.

In this atmosphere, Palmyra's temple of Athena* was an obvious target. The handsome building was an unapologetic celebration of all the believers loathed: a monumental rebuke to monotheism. Go through its great doors and it would have taken your eyes a moment, after the brightness of a Syrian sun, to adjust to the cool gloom within. As they did, you might have noticed that the air was heavy with the smoky tang of incense, or perhaps that what little light there was came from a scatter of lamps left by the faithful. Look up and, in their flickering glow, you would have seen the great figure of Athena herself.

The handsome, haughty profile of this statue might be far from Athena's native Athens, but it was instantly recognizable, with its straight Grecian

nose, its translucent marble skin and the plump, slightly sulky mouth. The statue's size—it was far taller than any man—might also have impressed. Though perhaps even more admirable than the physical scale was the scale of the imperial infrastructure and ambition that had brought this object here. The statue echoed others that stood on the Athenian Acropolis, well over a thousand miles away; this particular version had been made in a workshop hundreds of miles from Palmyra, then transported here at considerable difficulty and expense to create a little island of Greco-Roman culture by the sands of the Syrian desert.

Did they notice this, the destroyers, as they entered? Were they, even fleetingly, impressed by the sophistication of an empire that could quarry, sculpt then transport marble over such vast distances? Did they, even for a moment, admire the skill that could make a kissably soft-looking mouth out of hard marble? Did they, even for a second, wonder at its beauty?

It seems not. Because when the men entered the temple they took a weapon and smashed the back of Athena's head with a single blow so hard that it decapitated the goddess. The head fell to the floor, slicing off that nose, crushing the once-smooth cheeks. Athena's eyes, untouched, looked out over a now-disfigured face.

Mere decapitation wasn't enough. More blows fell, scalping Athena, striking the helmet from the goddess's head, smashing it into pieces. Further blows followed. The statue fell from its pedestal, then the arms and shoulders were chopped off. The body was left on its front in the dirt; the nearby altar was sliced off just above its base.

Only then does it seem that these men—these Christians—felt satisfied that their work was done. They melted out once again into the desert. Behind them the temple fell silent. The votive lamps, no longer tended, went out. On the floor, the head of Athena slowly started to be covered by the sands of the Syrian desert.

The "triumph" of Christianity had begun.

They must have been a melancholy party. In AD 532, a band of seven men set out from Athens,

taking with them little but works of philosophy. All were members of what had once been the most famous of Greece's philosophical schools, the Academy. The Academy's philosophers proudly traced their history back in an unbroken line — "a golden chain" as they called it—to Plato himself, almost a thousand years before. Now, that chain was about to be broken in the most dramatic way possible: these men were abandoning not just their school but the Roman Empire itself. Athens, the city that had seen the birth of Western philosophy, was now no longer a place for philosophers.

Their leader, Damascius, must have been some comfort to them as they set out on this trip into the unknown. By the standards of the time, he was old, elderly even—almost seventy when their journey began—but he was formidable. Damascius was a brilliant, densely subtle thinker who peppered his writings with mathematical similes — and he did not suffer fools gladly. An acerbic "who's who" he wrote on his fellow philosophers is full of crushing comments on anyone whose intelligence or courage he considered wanting. In life, he could be as immoderate as in his writings: he had once almost drowned in a river when, too impatient for a boatman to take him across, he had decided to swim instead and nearly been swept away.

Many of Damascius's greatest risks were run in the service of his beloved philosophy. He had already sheltered a wanted philosopher in his own home, embarked on perilous thousand-mile journeys into the unknown, and braved the risk of torture and arrest himself. No man, he felt, should do any less. "Men tend to bestow the name of virtue on a life of inactivity," he once wrote, with scorn. "But I do not agree ... the learned, who sit in their corner and philosophise at length in a grand manner about justice and moderation, utterly disgrace themselves if they are compelled to take some action."

This was no time for a philosopher to be philosophical. "The tyrant," as the philosophers put it, was in charge and had many alarming habits. In Damascius's own time, houses were entered and searched for books and objects deemed unacceptable. If any were found they would be removed and burned in triumphant bonfires in town squares. Discussion of religious matters in public had been branded a "damnable audacity" and

forbidden by law. Anyone who made sacrifices to the old gods could, the law said, be executed. Across the empire, ancient and beautiful temples had been attacked, their roofs stripped, their treasures melted down, their statues smashed. To ensure that their rules were kept, the government started to employ spies, officials and informers to report back on what went on in the streets and marketplaces of cities and behind closed doors in private homes. As one influential Christian speaker put it, his congregation should hunt down sinners and drive them into the way of salvation as relentlessly as a hunter pursues his prey into nets.'

The consequences of deviation from the rules could be severe and philosophy had become a dangerous pursuit. Damascius's own brother had been arrested and tortured to make him reveal the names of other philosophers, but had, as Damascius recorded with pride, "received in silence and with fortitude the many blows of the rod that landed on his back." Others in Damascius's circle of philosophers had been tortured, hung up by the wrists until they gave away the names of their fellow scholars. A fellow philosopher had, some years before, been flayed alive. Another had been beaten before a judge until the blood flowed down his back.

The savage "tyrant" was Christianity. From almost the very first years that a Christian emperor had ruled in Rome in AD 312, liberties had begun to be eroded. And then, in AD 529, a final blow had fallen. It was decreed that all those who labored "under the insanity of paganism" — in other words Damascius and his fellow philosophers— would no longer be allowed to teach. There was worse. It was also announced that anyone who had not yet been baptized was to come forward and make themselves known at the "holy churches" immediately, or face exile. And if anyone allowed themselves to be baptized, then slipped back into their old pagan ways, they would be executed.

For Damascius and his fellow philosophers, this was the end. They could not worship their old gods. They could not earn any money. Above all, they could not now teach philosophy. For a while, they remained in Athens and tried to eke out a living. In AD 532, they finally realized they could not. They had heard that in the East there was a king who

was himself a great philosopher. They decided that they would go there, despite the risks of such a journey. The Academy, the greatest and most famous school in the ancient world—perhaps ever—a school that could trace its history back almost a millennium, closed.

It is impossible to imagine how painful the journey through Athens would have been. As they went, they would have walked through the same streets and squares where their heroes—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle—had once walked and worked and argued. They would have seen in them a thousand reminders that those celebrated times were gone. The temples of Athens were closed and crumbling and many of the brilliant statues that had once stood in them had been defaced or removed. Even the Acropolis had not escaped: its great statue of Athena had been torn down.

Much of Damascius's writing has been lost, but occasional phrases remain; certainly enough to discern his feelings. His entire way of life, he wrote, was being "swept away by the torrent." The writings of another Greek author from some years earlier show similar despair. We are, he wrote, "men reduced to ashes ... for today everything is turned upside down." In another bleak epigram this same anguished poet asked: "Is it not true that we are dead and only seem to live, we Greeks ... Or are we alive and is life dead?"

When modern histories describe this period, this time when all the old religions died away and Christianity finally became pre-eminent, they tend to call it the "triumph of Christianity." It is worth remembering, however, the original Roman meaning of the word "triumph." A true Roman triumph wasn't merely about the victory of the winner. It was about the total and utter subjugation of the loser. In a true Roman triumph the losing side was paraded through the capital while the winning side looked on at an enemy whose soldiers had been slain, whose possessions had been despoiled and whose leaders had been humiliated.

A triumph was not merely a "victory" It was an annihilation.

Little of what is covered by this book is well known outside academic circles. Certainly it was not well known by me when I grew up in Wales, the

daughter of a former nun and a former monk. My childhood was, as you might expect, a fairly religious one. We went to church every Sunday, said grace before meals, and I said my prayers (or at any rate the list of requests which I considered to be the same thing) every night. When Catholic relatives arrived we play-acted not films but First Holy Communion and, at times, even actual communion. A terrible sin (and not a wonderful game, either), this was at least an opportunity to glean extra blackcurrant juice from adults.

So there was a lot of God, or at any rate of Catholicism, in my childhood. But despite having spent a combined twenty-six years inside monastic walls, my parents' faith was never dogmatic. If I asked about the origins of the world, I was more likely to be told about the Big Bang than about Genesis. If I asked where humans came from, I would have been told about evolution rather than Adam. I don't remember, as a child, ever questioning that God existed—but equally as a teenager I remember being fairly confident that He did not. What faith I had had died, and my parents either didn't notice or didn't mind. I suspect that, somewhere between monastery and world, their faith had died too.

What never, ever died in our family, however, was my parents' faith in the educative power of the Church. As children, both had been taught by monks and nuns; and as a monk and a nun they had both taught. They believed as an article of faith that the Church that had enlightened their minds was what had enlightened, in distant history, the whole of Europe. It was the Church, they told me, that had kept alive the Latin and Greek of the classical world in the benighted Middle Ages, until it could be picked up again by the wider world in the Renaissance. On holidays, we would visit museums and libraries where the same point was made. As a young child, I looked at the glowing gold of the illuminated manuscripts and believed in a more metaphorical illumination in ages of intellectual darkness.

And, in a way, my parents were right to believe this, for it is true. Monasteries did preserve a lot of classical knowledge.

But it is far from the whole truth. In fact, this appealing narrative has almost entirely obscured an earlier, less glorious story. For before it preserved, the Church destroyed. In a spasm of destruction never seen before—and one that appalled many non-Christians watching it—during the fourth and fifth centuries, the Christian Church demolished, vandalized and melted down a simply staggering quantity of art. Classical statues were knocked from their plinths, defaced, defiled and torn limb from limb. Temples were razed to their foundations and mutilated. A temple widely considered to be the most magnificent in the entire empire was leveled. Many of the Parthenon sculptures were attacked, faces were mutilated, hands and limbs were hacked off, and gods were decapitated. Some of the finest statues on the whole building were almost certainly smashed off then ground into rubble that was then used to build churches. Books—which were often stored in temples—suffered terribly. The remains of the greatest library in the ancient world, a library that had once held perhaps 700,000 volumes, were destroyed in this way by Christians. It was over a millennium before any other library would even come close to its holdings. Works by censored philosophers were forbidden and bonfires blazed across the empire as outlawed books went up in flames.

Dramatic though all this was, far more destruction was achieved through sheer neglect. In their silent copying-houses the monks preserved much, but they lost far more. The atmosphere could be viciously hostile to non-Christian authors. In the silence in which monks worked, gestures were used to request certain books: outstretched palms and the mimed turning of pages signified that a monk wished a psalter to be passed over to him, and so on. Pagan books were requested by making a gagging gesture.

Unsurprisingly, the works of these despised authors suffered. At a time in which parchment was scarce, many ancient writers were simply erased, scrubbed away so that their pages could be reused for more elevated themes. Palimpsests—manuscripts in which one manuscript has been scraped (psao) again (palin)—provide glimpses of the moments at which these ancient works vanished. A last copy of

Cicero's *De re publica* was written over by Augustine on the Psalms. A biographical work by Seneca disappeared beneath yet another Old Testament. A codex of Sallust's histories was scrubbed away to make room for more St. Jerome. Other ancient texts were lost through ignorance. Despised and ignored, over the years, they simply crumbled into dust, food for bookworms but not for thought. The work of Democritus, one of the greatest Greek philosophers and the father of atomic theory, was entirely lost. Only one percent of Latin literature survived the centuries. Ninety-nine percent was lost. One can achieve a great deal by the blunt weapons of indifference and sheer stupidity.

The violent assaults of this period were not the preserve of cranks and eccentrics. Attacks against the monuments of the "mad," "damnable" and "insane" pagans were encouraged and led by men at the very heart of the Catholic Church." The great St. Augustine himself declared to a congregation in Carthage "that all superstition of pagans and heathens should be annihilated is what God wants, God commands, God proclaims!" St. Martin, still one of the most popular French saints, rampaged across the Gaulish countryside leveling temples and dismaying locals as he went. In Egypt, St. Theophilus razed one of the most beautiful buildings in the ancient world. In Italy, St. Benedict overturned a shrine to Apollo. In Syria, ruthless bands of monks terrorized the countryside, smashing down statues and tearing the roofs from temples.

The attacks didn't stop at culture. Everything from the food on one's plate (which should be plain and certainly not involve spices), through to what one got up to in bed (which should be likewise plain, and unspicy), began, for the first time, to come under the control of religion. Male homosexuality was outlawed; hair-plucking was despised, as too were makeup, music, suggestive dancing, rich food, purple bedsheets, silk clothes ... The list went on.

Achieving this was not a simple matter. While the omniscient God had no trouble seeing not only into men's hearts but into their homes, Christian priests had a little more difficulty in doing the same. A solution was found: St. John Chrysostom encouraged his congregations to spy on each other.

Enter each other's homes, he said. Pry into each other's affairs. Shun those who don't comply. Then report all sinners to him and he would punish them accordingly. And if you didn't report them then he would punish you too. "Just as hunters chase wild animals ... not from one direction but from everywhere, and cast them into the net, so too together let's chase those who've become wild animals and cast them immediately into the net of salvation, we from this side, you from that." Fervent Christians went into people's houses and searched for books, statues and paintings that were considered demonic. This kind of obsessive attention was not cruelty. On the contrary: to restrain, to attack, to compel, even to beat a sinner was—if you turned them back to the path of righteousness—to save them. As Augustine, the master of the pious paradox, put it: "Oh, merciful savagery."

The results of all of this were shocking and, to non-Christians, terrifying. Townspeople rushed to watch as internationally famous temples were destroyed. Intellectuals looked on in despair as volumes of supposedly unchristian books — often in reality texts on the liberal arts—went up in flames. Art lovers watched in horror as some of the greatest sculptures in the ancient world were smashed by people too stupid to appreciate them—and certainly too stupid to recreate them. The Christians could often not even destroy effectively: many statues on many temples were saved simply by virtue of being too high for them, with their primitive ladders and hammers, to reach.

I had originally conceived of this book as a travelogue: it would be interesting, I thought, to follow Damascius as he zigzagged across the Mediterranean—a pagan St. Paul. Syria, Damascus, Baghdad, parts of Egypt and the southern border of Turkey, all places that he had traveled to, were by no means easy to reach but they were, just about, achievable. However, in the years between coming up with that idea, and writing this book, the reality of doing so became impossible.

Since then, and as I write, the Syrian civil war has left parts of Syria under the control of a new Islamic caliphate. In 2014, within certain areas of Syria, music was banned and books were burned.

The British Foreign Office advised against all travel to the north of the Sinai Peninsula. In 2015, Islamic State militants started bulldozing the ancient Assyrian city of Nim-rud, just south of Mosul in Iraq, because it was "idolatrous." Images went around the world showing Islamic militants toppling statues around three millennia old from their plinths, then taking hammers to them. "False idols" must be destroyed. In Palmyra, the remnants of the great statue of Athena that had been carefully repaired by archaeologists was attacked yet again. Once again, Athena was beheaded; once again, her arm was sheared off.

My imagined journey had become impossible. As a result, this book has become a sort of historical travelogue instead. It travels throughout the Roman Empire, pausing at certain places and certain times that are significant. As with any travelogue, each of the places I have focused on is a personal choice and, in a sense, an arguable one. I have chosen Palmyra as a beginning, as it was in the east of the empire, in the mid-380s, that sporadic violence against the old gods and their temples escalated into something far more serious. But equally I could have chosen an attack on an earlier temple, or a later one. That is why it is a beginning, not the beginning. I have chosen Athens in the years around AD 529 as an ending—but again, I could equally have chosen a city farther east.

This is a book about the Christian assault on the classical world. The Christian assault was not the only one—fire, flood, invasion and time itself all played their part—but this book focuses on Christianity's assault in particular. This is not to say that the Church did preserve things: it did. But the story of Christianity's good works in this period has been told again and again; such books proliferate in libraries and bookshops. The history and the sufferings of those whom Christianity defeated have not been. This book continues them.

The area covered is vast and so this is a piecemeal history that drifts through geography and time. It makes no apology for that. The period covered is too long for a linear crawl through the

past and the resulting narrative would be, quite simply, too dull. This is also narrative history: I have tried to give a sense of what it felt like to stand before an ancient temple, what it smelled like to enter one; of how pleasing the afternoon light was as it fell through the steam in an ancient bathhouse. Again, I make no apology for that, either. This approach has its problems—who can really know what an ancient temple smelled like, without visiting one? But not to try to recreate the world is an untruthfulness of another kind: the ancients did not move through a world delineated merely by clean historical periods and battle dates. They lived in a world where the billowing smoke of sacrifices filled the streets on feast days; where people defecated behind statues in the center of Rome; where the light glistened on the wet, naked bodies of young "nymphs" in theaters. Both dates—and bodies—are essential to understanding people of this period.

Any attempt to write about ancient history is fraught with difficulty. Hilary Mantel once said that "history is not the past ... It is what is left in the sieve when the centuries have run through it." Late antiquity offers slimmer pickings in the sieve than most. The little that does remain there is therefore often hotly contested, and some of it has been argued over by scholars for centuries. Something as simple-sounding as an edict can attract years of disagreement between those who consider it seminal and those who relegate it to the status of *la mere lettre*. I have footnoted some of the most significant controversies but not every one: it would have been impossible—not to mention unreadable.

What remains—whether quarreled over or not—should be treated with caution. As with all ancient history, the writers I quote had limited viewpoints and their own agendas. When St. John Chrysostom gloated that the writings of the Greeks had been obliterated, he was more voicing a hope than stating a fact. When St. Martin's biographer wrote glowingly of how Martin had violently burned and demolished temples throughout Gaul, the aim was less to report than to inspire. Propaganda, we would call such writings now. Every point these authors make is arguable, every writer I quote is fallible. They were, in short, human—and we should

read them with caution. But we should still read them, as their tales are still worth telling.

My narrative opens in Egypt, as monasticism is born, then moves to Rome as this new religion is beginning to make an appearance there. It then travels to northern Turkey, to Bithynia, where the very first record of the Christians by a non-Christian was written. It goes to Alexandria in Egypt, where some of the worst desecration of all took place; and it goes far into the deserts of Syria, where some of the strangest players in this story existed: monks who, for the love of God, lived out their entire lives standing on pillars, or in trees, or in cages. And it travels, in the end, to Athens, the city where Western philosophy may be said to have really begun and where, in AD 529, it ended.

The destruction chronicled in this book is immense—and yet it has been all but forgotten by the modern world. One of the most influential Church historians would describe the moment when Christianity took control as the moment at which all oppression ceased, a time when "men who once dared not look up greeted each other with smiling faces and shining eyes." Later historians would join in a chorus of agreement. Why would the Romans not have been happy to convert? They were, runs this argument, sensible people and had never really believed their own religion anyway, with its undignified priapic Jupiters and lustful Venuses. No, runs this argument: the Romans had been Christians-in-waiting, ready and willing to give up their absurd and confusing polytheistic rituals as soon as a sensible (for which read "monotheistic") religion appeared on the scene. As Samuel Johnson would put it, pithy as ever: "The heathens were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up."

He was wrong. Many converted happily to Christianity, it is true. But many did not. Many Romans and Greeks did not smile as they saw their religious liberties removed, their books burned, their temples destroyed and their ancient statues shattered by thugs with hammers. This book tells their story; it is a book that unashamedly mourns the largest destruction of art that human history had ever seen. It is a book about the tragedies behind the "triumph" of Christianity.

A note on vocabulary: I have tried to avoid using the word "pagan" throughout, except when conveying the thoughts or deeds of a Christian protagonist. It was a pejorative and insulting word and was not one that any non-Christian at the time would have willingly used of themselves. It was also a Christian innovation: before Christianity's ascendancy few people would have thought to describe themselves by their religion at all. After Christianity, the world became split, forevermore, along religious boundaries; and words appeared to demarcate these divisions. One of the most common was "pagan." Initially this word had been used to refer to a civilian rather than a soldier. After Christianity, the soldiers in question were not Roman legionaries but those who had enlisted in Christ's army. Later, Christian writers concocted false, unflattering etymologies for it: they said it was related to the word pages, to the "peasants" and the field. It was not; but such slurs stuck and "paganism" acquired an unappealing whiff of the rustic and the backward — a taint it carries to this day.

I have also, where possible, generally avoided ascribing modern nationalities to ancient characters and have instead described them by the language they chiefly wrote in. Thus the orator Libanius, though he was born and lived in Syria, I describe not as "Syrian" but as Greek. This was a cosmopolitan world where anyone, anywhere from Alexandria to Athens, might consider themselves to be a "Hellene" — a Greek — and I have tried to reflect that.

I have, at times, for sheer ease of reading, used the word "religion" to refer to the broad spectrum of cults worshipped by Greco-Roman society prior to the introduction of Christianization. This word has its problems—not least the fact that it implies a more centralized and coherent structure than what, in practice, existed. It is, however, more elegant than many of the cumbersome alternatives.

One final note: many, many good people are impelled by their Christian faith to do many, many good things. I know because I am an almost daily beneficiary of such goodness myself. This book is not intended as an attack on these people and I hope they will not see it as such. But it is undeniable that there have been—that there still are—those

who use monotheism and its weapons to terrible ends. Christianity is a greater and a stronger religion when it admits this — and challenges it.

[The Last Pagan Emperor: Julian the Apostate and the War against Christianity](#) by H. C. Teitler
[Oxford University Press, 9780190626501]

Flavius Claudius Julianus was the last pagan to sit on the Roman imperial throne (361-363). Born in Constantinople in 331 or 332, Julian was raised as a Christian, but apostatized, and during his short reign tried to revive paganism, which, after the conversion to Christianity of his uncle Constantine the Great early in the fourth century, began losing ground at an accelerating pace. Having become an orphan when he was still very young, Julian was taken care of by his cousin Constantius II, one of Constantine's sons, who permitted him to study rhetoric and philosophy and even made him co-emperor in 355. But the relations between Julian and Constantius were strained from the beginning, and it was only Constantius' sudden death in 361 which prevented an impending civil war.

As sole emperor, Julian restored the worship of the traditional gods. He opened pagan temples again, reintroduced animal sacrifices, and propagated paganism through both the spoken and the written word. In his treatise *Against the Galilaeans* he sharply criticised the religion of the followers of Jesus whom he disparagingly called 'Galilaeans'. He put his words into action and issued laws which were displeasing to Christians--the most notorious being his School Edict. This provoked the anger of the Christians, who reacted fiercely, and accused Julian of being a persecutor like his predecessors Nero, Decius, and Diocletian. Violent conflicts between pagans and Christians made themselves felt all over the empire. It is disputed whether or not Julian himself was behind such outbursts. Accusations against the Apostate continued to be uttered even after the emperor's early death. In this book, the feasibility of such charges is examined.

Excerpt: Flavius Claudius Iulianus, better known as Julian the Apostate, died in the night of 26-27 June 363 CE. He had governed the Roman Empire for under twenty months when he was wounded near modern Baghdad by a cavalry spear that pierced

his ribs and lodged in the lower part of his liver. The young emperor, who had been born in Constantinople in 331 or 332, died a few hours later.'

It is practically certain that the fatal weapon had been thrown by an enemy, a cavalryman in the army of the Persian king Sapor II, against whom Julian had started a war earlier in 363. But not everyone believed this. According to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who took part in Julian's Persian expedition as an army officer, there were rumors that the spear came from the emperor's own ranks. Another contemporary, Libanius, professor of rhetoric and, like Ammianus, a sympathizer and admirer of Julian, goes one step further and suggests that a Christian was responsible for the death of the emperor. Though probably not true, this theory is not far fetched: Julian was hated by almost all his Christian subjects, whom he contemptuously called 'Galilaeans.' These 'Galilaeans' were unable to stomach the fact that the emperor, despite his Christian upbringing, had tried to breathe new life into the cults of the old pagan gods ever since his accession to the throne in 361. They feared that the Apostate would put a stop to the progress of Christianity, which, after the conversion of Julian's uncle Constantine in the beginning of the fourth century, had steadily gained support.

There were more rumors going around about Julian's death. The 'dagger-thrust legend' of the pagan Libanius was eagerly adopted by the Christian Sozomen, albeit that this church historian, who lived in the fifth century, gave the story a twist: Sozomen is full of praise for the man who threw the spear. He does not call him a traitor or a cowardly murderer, but a brave tyrannicide. The church historian Socrates, one of Sozomen's predecessors, cites somebody from Julian's inner circle who had written an epic poem about the emperor in which Julian was killed by a demon. Others do not speak of demons, but of angels or saints—on various reliefs and paintings, artists have Julian portrayed while he is being stabbed by Saint Mercury, resembling the dragon killed by Saint Michael or Saint George. Some Christians alleged that Julian exclaimed on his deathbed, 'You have won, Galilaean,' while collecting the blood that gushed

out of his wound and throwing it heavenward. Ammianus Marcellinus and Libanius, on the other hand, both pagans, let their idolized emperor die à la the famous Athenian philosopher Socrates, talking on his deathbed with friends about the immortality of the soul.'

Accounts about Julian's life differ as markedly as those about his death. If we may believe the Cappadocian church father Gregory of Nazianzus, it was obvious to anyone who set eyes on Julian that he was no good. He, Gregory, at any rate, had realized that Julian was a monster the moment he saw him—that had been in Athens when both were students: Julian's bloated neck, his shaking shoulders, that jumpy look in his eyes, that nervous and uncontrolled laughter, all this (and still more; Gregory's description is longer than my paraphrase) was crafted to make anyone immediately recognize him for what he was, a fiend. The portrait Ammianus Marcellinus sketches is kinder: 'He was of middle height, his hair was smooth as if it had been combed, and he wore a bristly beard trimmed to a point. He had fine, flashing eyes, the sign of a lively intelligence, well-marked eyebrows, a straight nose, and a rather large mouth with a pendulous lower lip. His neck was thick and somewhat bent, his shoulders large and broad. From head to foot he was perfectly built, which made him strong and a good runner.

The image Gregory and Ammianus present of Julian's appearance was determined by their view on his inner self. Gregory was no friend of Julian. In two invectives the Christian bishop pulls the emperor to pieces and criticizes everything he had ever done or yearned to do. Small wonder that his description of Julian's looks is not very flattering and probably a bit of a caricature. Yet, as is to be expected from a caricature, parts of his portrayal are recognizable. Compare, for instance, the plump neck on some coins

of the Apostate (of whom statues and busts have also survived). Ammianus' view of the emperor was more balanced. The historian made Julian the central figure in Books 15-25 of his *Res Gestae* (History) and more than once expresses his admiration for him, without glossing over his shortcomings. He himself saw in Julian the personification of the four cardinal virtues, but

Ammianus also relates that others branded Julian a 'chattering mole,' 'more a goat than a man,' an 'ape in purple.' And Ammianus totally disapproved of Julian's School Edict, which forbade Christian teachers of rhetoric and literature to practice their profession unless they renounced their faith. 'This measure is cruel and should be buried under eternal silence' was his crushing comment.'

Soon after Julian's early death, his school law was revoked, or at least modified. His other attempts to restore the cults of the gods and to save what in his eyes was the true Hellenic civilization equally failed. This emperor's short period in office was only a small cloud that would soon pass over, according to the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius. But the indignation engendered by Julian's reign echoed long into the future. In voicing their resentment, people often played fast and loose with the facts. Julian was accused of crimes that he simply cannot have committed. For example, he allegedly tortured and killed Christians in Rome, although he never in his life visited the eternal city. While the reality was that he fought against the Persians in Mesopotamia, he supposedly ordered in Gaul the execution of a certain Elophius, who, after his decapitation, walked many kilometers with his head in his hands to what would be his final resting place. It is also reported that Julian had been made Pope by Satan, after which he secretly tried to undermine the Catholic Church. Exposed and deposed by his cardinals, he continued his destructive actions guided by Satan, until he perished by the sword of Cardinal Mercury. Needless to say, this too is pure fiction.

There are few Roman emperors whose life and work are buried so densely beneath the creation of legends as Julian's, the emperor, who, in the words of one of his modern biographers, 'is without question one of antiquity's most enigmatic and compelling figures.' In this book, which focuses on one aspect of Julian's reign, I pay attention to facts as well as fiction. I try to answer the question whether under Julian the Christians were persecuted and, if so, on what scale; here one should distinguish between persecutions started by Julian himself and those that were perpetrated in his name but without his consent or knowledge. I am also interested in the impact made by the—

supposed—persecutions under Julian on later generations, which, if we believe the *Passio Pimenii* ('Sufferings of Pimenius'), cost thousands and thousands of lives all over the Roman Empire.'

I have written this book with the use of various sources, first of all Julian's own works. No Roman emperor handed down to posterity more written works than he did. His letters especially are an invaluable source of information. These texts, written in Julian's mother tongue, Greek (but, to quote Ammianus, 'he knew Latin well enough to be able to discourse in it'), are complemented by coins, laws, and inscriptions on stone. Ammianus Marcellinus proves a fairly reliable guide, and the letters and orations of Libanius, a pagan like Ammianus, provide us with many details we would otherwise not have known.'

Almost without exception Christian writers were unfavorably disposed toward the Apostate. This applies to Gregory of Nazianzus as well as to his younger contemporary John Chrysostom, who became bishop of Constantinople and whose body of works is vast. It is also true of the church historians Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Rufinus, all of whom followed in the footsteps of Constantine the Great's contemporary Eusebius of Caesarea, the first author of a church history. And it applies, a fortiori, to the writers of *passiones*, which inform us about the martyrs who

Julian's emergence as the sole survivor of a political dynasty soaked in blood and traces his journey from an aristocratic Christian childhood to his initiation into pagan cults. This is a biography of the Emperor Julian, nephew of Constantine who ruled Rome for a short period from 361 to 363 ACE. Perhaps best known for his attempt to hold back Christianity and bring back to the centre the old religion of the Graeco-Roman world, there was, however, a lot more to Julian than just his religious policy. Murdoch's biography brings back to life Julian in his many facets through his easy to read and sometimes racy prose. Though not an academic text and perhaps not really adding substantially to the scholarship on Julian, this is nevertheless an enjoyable read.

Briefly, Julian was born into the family of Constantine and though brought up as a Christian, grew attached to the old religion though his study of the Greek and Roman classics. His entire family was murdered by Constantine's successor Constantius in a bid to eliminate rivals. Julian threw himself into scholarly pursuits perhaps to escape the attention of Constantius and to avoid being seen as a threat. He became an accomplished scholar but eventually was selected by Constantius to take up an administrative post in Gaul. Here he proved himself an able ruler, reforming the tax system. Though not having had military training, he showed that he was an effective military commander, defeating German invaders in 357 CE. Eventually, a revolt propelled him to challenge Constantius as Emperor but before the two could fight it out, Constantius died and Julian becomes Emperor. He attempts in the end unsuccessfully to restore to primacy the old religion. His reforms include the emulation of Christian organisational skills (where Christians excelled) and charitable giving, but in the end his attempt to hold back Christianity fails. He died on a disastrous (for the Romans) campaign against Persia.

Murdoch deals with his subject sympathetically. Julian was one of those rare rulers who though

deeply immersed in scholarship, was able to turn his intellectual training into success in the practical affairs of government. Even in our own times, such leaders are rare. Apart from Churchill and Nehru, few twentieth century leaders (not counting Marxist theoreticians such as Lenin, Stalin and Mao) have joined to their political successes, scholarly or literary achievements.

Julian, as depicted by Murdoch, also stands out as an able ruler of Rome in very difficult times. It is indeed noteworthy that the era produced some of the most capable rulers of Rome, such as Constantine, Julian, Valentinian and Theodosius. By contrast, some of the rulers of Rome during the Golden Age of the First Century ACE were at best mediocre and in the case of Caligula, Nero and Domitian, plain crazy. Perhaps, sub par rulers can stay in power in good times and when the state is stable without doing much damage, but difficult times require able rulers.

Biography as a genre is easily criticised as placing too much emphasis on the works of individuals rather than the broader processes and trends that shape and change societies. Good biography however will be more than the story of an individual and will be a canvass on which to study the bigger things at play. In this, Murdoch's biography is not wanting, capturing the essence of Julian and his times. The big picture story was the rise of Christianity against a backdrop of Roman decline. However, this not an academic book and some of the other reviews criticise the author's journalistic style. GW Bowersock's "Julian the Apostate" is an excellent academic biography for those who are interested - but taking a more traditional (and hostile) view of Julian. One may both admire the courage of an individual who swims against the tide - or condemn the same individual for lack of wisdom in doing so. Murdoch does the former if Bowersock takes the latter position.

Christian writers not unnaturally are hostile to Julian. However, in their writings and condemnations, one can sometimes sense a secret

admiration. Such feelings for an enemy such as Julian are perhaps not that surprising, given his undoubted intelligence and ability. Indeed, the legacy of Julian despite being an enemy of Christianity has come down to us through Christian monks over the centuries carefully preserving, copying and handing down the record, including many of Julian's own letters. This perhaps might be the the most telling tribute to Julian.

The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings

provides a definitive anthology of early Christian texts, from c. 100 to 650 CE. Its six volumes reflect the cultural, intellectual and linguistic diversity of early Christianity and are organized thematically on the topics of God, practice, Christ, community, reading and creation. The series expands the pool of source material to include not only Greek and Latin writings, but also Syriac and Coptic texts. Additionally, the series rejects a theologically normative view by juxtaposing texts that were important in antiquity but later deemed 'heretical', with orthodox texts. The translations are accompanied by introductions, notes, suggestions for further reading and scriptural indices. The second volume is focused on the topic of practice, including texts on education, advice, forming communities and instructing congregations. It will be an invaluable resource for students, academic researchers in early Christian studies, history of Christianity, theology, religious studies and late antique Roman history.

The literary legacy of the early Christians is vast and spans multiple linguistic traditions. Early Christians used the written word in many ways: they sent letters, staged dialogues, reported revelations, gave advice, defended themselves, accused others, preached homilies, wrote histories, sang hymns, hammered out creeds, interpreted texts, and legislated penances — just to list the most common examples. They did these things in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic; while countless Christians would have used other languages, such as Armenian, these four are the medium of the vast majority of our

surviving texts. For each text that has survived, there is a unique story. Some became part of educational curricula for Christians in medieval Byzantium, Basra, and Bologna; some were recited or sung liturgically; some were read in private devotions; some lay at the core of later theological debates such as the European Reformations in the sixteenth century or the Ressourcement movement in twentieth-century Catholicism; some suffered a literary death, being buried in the sands of Egypt only to be discovered again, quite by accident, in the past century. The question of how these works have been received over the centuries is undoubtedly important, but their later interpreters and interpretations ought not to overshadow their original significance and context.

The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings offers a representative sample of this diverse literature in six thematic volumes: God, Practice, Christ, Creation, Community, and Reading. While no series of this kind can be comprehensive, these themes allow the reader to understand early Christianity in its full intellectual, practical, ritual, and communal diversity. The theme and the selection of texts are thoroughly discussed in each volume's respective introduction, but certain principles have guided the construction of all six volumes. Our goal has been neither to narrate the establishment of orthodox or normative Christianity as this has been traditionally understood nor to champion its replacement by another form of Christianity. Instead, we have opted to let each text speak with its own historical voice and authority, while aiming to expand the number and range of early Christian texts available to English speakers. Because of this, many of these texts are translated into English here for the first time, while all others have been translated anew. We have combined magisterial works with neglected ones in order to show the diversity and interconnectedness of Christianity in its formative period. We are neither reproducing a canon of classics nor creating a new one. We make no claims that the included works are aesthetically or intellectually superior to other texts we have excluded. Some well-known classics have been omitted for simply that reason: they are readily accessible and widely read. Others are too lengthy and do not bear excerpting well. In some cases, we have judged that attention to a single

work by an author has led to an unfortunate neglect of other works of equal or greater value by the same author. In such cases, we are taking the opportunity to cast our spotlight on the latter. In sum, by no means have we felt constrained by previous lists of "must-reads" in our own selections.

We have sought to produce translations that are literal — faithful to the original language's meaning and, when possible, syntax. If a meaningful term appears in the original language, we have aimed to capture it in the translation. At the same time, we have aimed to produce intelligible and attractive English prose. At times the two goals have conflicted and prudential judgments have been made; as part of a team of translators, we are fortunate that we have not had to make such decisions alone. Every translation that appears in our volumes has gone through a rigorous multi-stage editorial process to ensure accuracy as well as readability. We hope that this painstaking collaborative process ensures the reliability and consistency of our translations. As a team, we have come to see the value — and indeed the necessity — of such collaborative work for the academic study of early Christianity's rich library of texts.

What did monotheism mean for early Christians? When Paul tackled the issue of whether followers of Christ could in good conscience eat meat sacrificed to images of pagan gods, he conceded that "there are many gods and many lords." Yet, he immediately pivoted: "But for us there is one God, the Father from whom are all things ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things." "One God," but also "one Lord"; "one God," but also "many gods and many lords." Paul's reasoning ought to signal that belief in a single, unique God was perhaps more complicated than it might seem to us today. <>

[The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings: Volume 1, God](#) edited by Andrew Radde-Gallwitz [Cambridge University Press, 9781107062030]

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Excerpt: While the affirmation that God is one might appear stark and simple, exploring this conviction led to some of the most beautiful, most influential, and most intellectually exacting writing of the early Christian world. Christians wrestled with the meaning of their faith in various literary forms: creeds, homilies, letters, poems, hymns, and polemical treatises. This volume presents a wide selection of this literature as an aid for those interested in how Christians applied their intellectual and literary talents to the problems centering on God's nature and unity. The documents collected here were written ca. 150—570. The following outline is meant to guide the reader by setting context for the readings presented in this volume and drawing connections among them. Specific introductions are provided for each text at the heading of each translation. What appears here is necessarily condensed; for fuller surveys of the early Christian doctrine of God, see the Suggestions for Further Reading at the end of the volume. No anthology on such a vast topic can cover everything, and the selections here will not satisfy all readers. The aim has been to include a representative sampling of various traditions of thought, broad enough to give the reader a sense of important debates and approaches, yet focused enough that the texts can "talk to" each other. The reader will encounter authors both well known (the towering Augustine of Hippo, for instance)

and more obscure (the fourth-century Basil of Ancyra, or the sixth-century John Philoponus) in a shared conversation. In one case - Athanasius's *On the Synods* - a text has been chosen both because of its intrinsic theological interest and because it cites many important documents. Some famous texts appear here in excerpted form: Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* and Origen's *On First Principles*. In most cases, however, we have presented texts in their entirety (though instructors using this volume in a classroom will of course make selections in accordance with their needs). In cases where excerpts of a text are presented, the implicit suggestion from the editor is that the entire text is relevant to the volume's topic, even though it was impracticable to present the work in its entirety in

this volume. We have not aimed to pick out short sections on our theme from large works on other topics.

The works selected cover over four hundred years. This wide span can be divided into three periods: from ca. 150-300, 300-400, and 400-ca. 570. Here, then, is a selective overview of the three sections of the volume.

Part I: The Emergence of Christian Theology (ca. 150-300)

We hear of "teachers" within Christian communities from the faith's earliest documents. It is often hard to tell what these people taught and what form their instruction took. In the mid-second century, however, there was a sudden explosion of teaching literature. Figures such as Marcion of Sinope, Valentinus, Ptolemy, and Justin Martyr - Greek-speaking Christians in the city of Rome produced writings that contained speculation about the unity and nature of God. For instance, Marcion, writing probably in the 140s, reasoned that there is a fundamental contradiction between the Creator and Law-Giver of Jewish scripture and God as proclaimed by Jesus Christ. Marcion's ideas produced a strong reaction. His opponents read him as advocating a new God, and anti-Marcionite writings emerged from a diverse range of figures such as Justin and Ptolemy in Rome, Irenaeus in Lyons, and Tertullian in Carthage. Despite important differences among these thinkers, they perceived a problem with contrasting the God of the Law and the God of Jesus Christ.

These anti-Marcionite writings set the tone for subsequent tradition. Biblical interpretation and theological reflection became inextricably linked. Hence Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, for instance, begins with a technical division of parts of the Mosaic Law and then proceeds to the topic of the divine and human author(s) of these parts, which in turn provokes a discussion of the divine attributes. (It must be admitted that Ptolemy's text does not respond to Marcion by name, even though it reacts against a position that some scholars have identified with Marcion). Ptolemy, Justin, Tertullian, and others share a Graeco-Roman educational culture in which teachers were masters of texts. The influence of classical *paideia* on Christianity can be

seen in the rhetorical and philosophical sophistication that marks the texts in this volume.

At the same time as offering a different reading of the scriptures, Marcion's opponents were forced to offer alternative conceptions of the nature and unity of God. It is unclear exactly what Marcion thought on many points - distinguishing his theology from the polemical distortions of his opponents is a difficult task. He is often accused of thinking of the Creator God as stern and jealous, at best just and at worst cruel and wicked. By contrast, the God proclaimed by Jesus, Marcion reasoned, is loving, forgiving, and benevolent. Anti-Marcionite authors developed sophisticated accounts of the unity of God's goodness and justice. They also introduced certain technical and highly influential ideas such as unbegottenness or ingeneracy (which denies that God came into being in any way), immutability (which denies that God changes), simplicity (which denies that God is composed of parts), and eternity (which denies any kind of temporal sequence, even an everlasting one, in God). There were various ways of handling these concepts, but beginning in the second century they become the stock in trade of early Christian writing about God. Again, we must bear in mind that Christians were writing within a broader culture. It is no coincidence that the dominant philosophical school at this time was Platonism, whose teachers also endorsed divine immutability, simplicity, and eternity. Yet, while the influence of Platonism on many of the authors in the volume is unambiguous, Christians used Platonist theology selectively and furtively, adapting it to their own ends with little or no comment on their philosophical sources.

Valentinus and his disciple Ptolemy were perhaps more influential than Marcion himself. The Valentinian school made many notable contributions. They most likely offered the first commentaries on the texts modern Christians know as the New Testament, as well as developing their own accounts of the origin of the world. It used to be that scholars knew these accounts only through hostile witnesses, but, thanks to the discovery of the library at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945, we have access to many primary sources, albeit in Coptic translations of Greek originals. One such text is the Gospel of Truth, a document of

Valentinian origin, which reveals the tragic origins of the material cosmos in a divine error as well as the role of Jesus Christ as revealer of the "Father of the entirety."

Around 180, Irenaeus of Lyons condemned such speculation in a five-volume work *Against Heresies*, inaugurating a long tradition of combative heresiological literature. Irenaeus's literary motif would provide a model for subsequent authors to follow: he first cited or paraphrased his opponents' views, with the aim of exposing what he perceived to be their error to all readers, and then proceeded to refute them, point by point. For Irenaeus, the Valentinians were mystifying what was plain: like Marcion, who had posited a God "beyond" the Creator, the Valentinians were guilty of inventing a whole group of divine beings, the so-called "Pleroma" or "entirety." Hence, in Irenaeus's eyes, they obscured the very thing they wished to promote: the redemptive and revealing work of Jesus Christ.

Irenaeus measured doctrinal claims against what he called the "rule of faith" or "rule of truth" — a short summary of Christian belief meant to function as a norm for doctrinal speculation and the interpretation of scripture. It was not an absolutely fixed document (its precise wording varies even within Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*), but like Paul's "one God, one Lord" formula, it provided a baseline from which further inquiry could proceed. The rule affirmed, most basically, the unity of God, the Creator, and the unity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who appeared to fulfill the divine economy in his incarnation, death, and resurrection. Subsequent authors such as Tertullian and Origen cite their own versions of the rule of faith in their doctrinal works.

Naturally, simply citing such a standard did not establish doctrinal uniformity. One group known to scholarship as the Monarchians emerged in the late second century, placing the emphasis on the unity of God. To them, the Father and the Son were really just the same — as Jesus proclaimed, "I and the Father, we are one." There could not be a stronger response to the Marcionite and Valentinian tendency to separate Jesus from the Creator, but the idea of equating Father and Son went too far for many. Hippolytus, for instance, agreed with the

Monarchians that the Son or Word of God is always active in the world, but, Hippolytus argues, the Word of God is messenger and mediator of the Father, not the Father himself. For Hippolytus, there was a harmony between the two, but it was to him crucial that people see that they are distinct persons (*prosōpa*), or else one must maintain that Jesus prayed to himself or that the Creator died on the cross — which are absurdities for Hippolytus.

In the period before Constantine, no Christian writer was more prolific than Origen, who was active in Alexandria before moving to Caesarea in Palestine as a result of a dispute with his bishop, where he served as a teacher in the church until his death around 255. Among his achievements was to pen *On First Principles*, a point-by-point treatment of the contents of what Origen calls the "ecclesiastical proclamation" — in some ways a fuller version of the rule of faith. Here Origen addresses the incorporeal nature of God as well as the relation of the Son and Spirit to the Father. He addressed such questions by working in detail through scriptural imagery — for instance, of the Son as the "Wisdom" of God or the "image" of the Father. This method of scrutinizing biblical texts for their doctrinal implications would profoundly influence fourth-century theologians of all parties during the controversies that would emerge after Constantine's conversion to Christianity.

Part II: Creeds and Controversies (300-400)

Circumstances changed greatly for Christians in the fourth century. In the wake of Constantine's conversion, new controversies and forms of writing emerged. Of particular importance is the rise of the creed, a genre that shaped the way Christians expressed their ideas about God. The idea of a creed has an obvious precedent in earlier "rules of faith." New practices emerged that helped to refine this tradition. Beginning in the third century, we see records of ecclesiastical investigation of accused heretics by bishops. It appears that in such contexts, persons accused of teaching false doctrine were asked to assent to a creed put forth by an authoritative figure. Eventually, a practice developed in which the accused produced his own creed for inspection. Thus, around 318, we find Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, subject to an

accusation of heresy by his bishop Alexander, and producing a creed intended to serve as his self-defense. Such creeds were written by many authors of the fourth century, from those such as Arius and Eunomius who have come down in subsequent tradition as heretics to those such as Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa who are remembered as orthodox. All of these were caught up in the accusations of heresy that swirled in all directions. Each party was convinced that it represented apostolic truth, and to fit into any such group required defending oneself in its terms.

This tense situation was fostered not solely by local dust-ups but also by regional and imperial meetings of Christian bishops. These synods often met at the behest of Christian emperors who viewed themselves as having a duty to promote the church and intervene in disputes among bishops. In 325 Constantine summoned bishops from the entire empire to the city of Nicaea. There, the bishops secured the condemnation of Arius by drawing up a creed. It followed the typical pattern: a statement of faith in the Father and the Son followed by anathemas — statements that cursed "heretics" and their theological positions and thereby defined the church's confessional boundaries. Of course, Nicaea did not end the controversies; even Arius was readmitted to communion by Constantine just two years later. Over the next decades many councils were held, and we are fortunate to have a catalogue of their creeds from Athanasius, who judged them inferior to Nicaea and indicative of malicious scheming by Arius's partisans. In this camp Athanasius included Constantius, Constantine's son, who summoned various councils between 351 and 361 with the intent of definitively ending the debates and replacing the ambiguous and hotly disputed Nicene Creed.

Bishops staked out various positions during these years. Athanasius promoted the Nicene confession that the Son is "same-in-substance" with the Father. Others, such as Basil of Ancyra, preferred to use the phrase "like-in-substance," which led to their title Homoiousians. Still others, who became known as Homoians, preferred to speak of the Son merely as "like" the Father. Homoian Christianity received imperial support under Constantius and later

Valens (364-378). The parties weren't immutably fixed. One reason Athanasius wrote *On the Synods* in 359 was to promote a rapprochement with the Homoiousians — and, in fact, there is evidence for Homoiousians embracing Nicaea in the subsequent decade, whether or not this is to be chalked up to Athanasius's influence or to their perception of a common foe.

Neither Athanasius nor Constantius was able to overcome divisions. Not only were bishops split on old issues; new controversies emerged as well. The creeds produced during the Constantinian dynasty focused almost exclusively on the Son's relationship to the Father. As the debate raged on through the 360s and 370s, attention turned increasingly to the Holy Spirit's divinity and therefore to the Trinity properly speaking. Some viewed both the Son and the Holy Spirit as created beings. Others accepted that the Son is uncreated and divine, but rejected the idea that the Spirit shares in the uncreated, divine power. The latter group came to be known as the Pneumatomachians — "those who fight against the Spirit." This group accused Trinitarian Christians such as Gregory of Nyssa of blasphemy for worshiping the Spirit alongside Father and Son. At the Council of Constantinople in 381 the Spirit's divinity was affirmed more explicitly than before — though perhaps not as straightforwardly as Gregory of Nazianzus, who served very briefly as the Council's president, would have liked.

Fourth-century Trinitarian theology appears in a surprising range of genres: Ephrem's hymns and commentaries, Gregory of Nazianzus's poetry, and Basil of Caesarea's letters. Often the literature takes the form of treatises playing the game of forensic rhetoric — theological arguments cast as courtroom debates with accusations, objections, and responses. We see this in the writings of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Eunomius, and, in Part III, Augustine. Such texts often offer a representation of an opponent's thought — either through direct citation or through imagined objections — which the author then refutes. The result is a body of literature that, at its best, goes beyond petty polemic and explores the doctrine of God with subtlety and self-conscious scrutiny.

The quest for precision led authors to expound upon a wide range of technical vocabulary: power,

activity, substance, nature, subsistence (hypostasis), and person. Eunomius viewed the substances of Father, Son, and Spirit as different. By contrast, the pro-Nicene writers viewed God as one in power and substance, but three in subsistence, simultaneously fighting what they perceived as an "Arian" subordinationism that would view the Son and Spirit as created beings and a "Sabellian" confusion of persons that would collapse them into one. According to all parties in the debates, Christians know who God is through what they believe God has done. So, understanding God's nature is a matter of understanding God's activity and the power it displays. At issue was whether Father, Son, and Spirit share all activities or whether some are merely delegated to Son and Spirit as the Father's servants. Do all three work inseparably in the creation of the world? Were all three active together in the life of Christ? Do all three administer gifts of grace to believers? If God is a perfectly simple unity, does this affirmation imply an indivisible Trinity or a solitary Father, distinguished from Son and Spirit?

With the accession of Theodosius in 378, imperial weight swung in favor of the Nicene confession, which was by then widely interpreted as teaching an inseparable Trinity and not merely a Son who is of the same substance as the Father. Theodosius summoned a large council in Constantinople in 381, which issued a creed that expanded on Nicaea, in particular its confession of the Spirit's divinity. Imperial legislation was directed against both heretics and pagans. Two years later Theodosius summoned leaders of the various doctrinal parties to Constantinople. Their task was to defend their doctrine by producing a brief creedal statement. From this "Council of the Heresies" we have Eunomius's Confession of Faith, which states his oft-maligned doctrine in plain terms. Although Eunomius was unable to persuade Theodosius of his own orthodoxy, his doctrine continued to attract followers for decades. The major episcopal sees, however, were firmly in control of those sympathetic with the Nicene—Constantinopolitan consensus, and this would remain true throughout late antiquity.

Part III: Doctrinal Inheritance and Philosophical Exploration (400—ca. 570)

As the fifth century dawned, new controversies arose over the legacy of Origen, the ascetic theology of Pelagius, and the unity of Christ, but this did not prevent major thinkers from addressing the question of Trinitarian unity. Augustine of Hippo in the West and Cyril of Alexandria in the East both left behind memorable reflections on the inseparable activity of the three persons. In Augustine's case, the matter was prompted by living representatives of an "Arian" creed; in Cyril's case, the Trinitarian issues arose in the midst of polemic against his fellow pro-Nicene Nestorius over the unity of Christ's humanity and divinity. Both Augustine and Cyril were active and creative in their reception of the creeds of the older generation. In Sermon 52, Augustine not only defends the doctrine of the inseparable Trinity, but also sketches some of the speculative themes of his *On the Trinity*, a work that would become classic in later Latin Christianity. He movingly exhorted his audience to follow him as he looked for three powers in the human soul that work inseparably — memory, intellect, and will — while reminding them that even with such an analogy, the Trinity remained incomprehensible for humans in this life.

Augustine engages, then, in an examination of what human language can do in the investigation of the hidden things of God, while also acknowledging its infinite shortcomings. Perhaps the classic statement of the dialectic of affirmation and denial in theology is Pseudo-Dionysius's *On the Mystical Theology*. This work was written sometime in the late fifth or early sixth century by an unknown figure pseudonymously labeling himself as the Dionysius converted by Paul on the Athenian Areopagus (Acts 17:34). As a putative "Athenian," Pseudo-Dionysius unites the pagan Neoplatonic tradition of "negative" or "apophatic" theology with Christian precedents in the Greek fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, and Syrian monastic traditions. In the foundational text of Christian mystical theology, Pseudo-Dionysius bids "Timothy," his addressee, to pray not for knowledge, but for "union, insofar as it is attainable" with the divine, who resides not in light, but in darkness, not in words, but in silence.

Moving to early sixth-century Italy, we see Boethius, another Christian intellectual with profound links to Neoplatonic tradition, especially with the tradition of commentary on Aristotle's logical works. Most famous for his *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius also wrote a series of works on Christian doctrine, including *On the Holy Trinity*, in which he grapples with the issue of how to affirm the Trinity, which he understands in Augustinian terms, without proclaiming three gods. He brings the full panoply of Aristotelian logic to bear on the task. Shortly thereafter, in Alexandria, the Christian Neoplatonist John Philoponus drew on the same tradition, though with quite different conclusions. John rejected the notion of the divine nature as a universal, and was condemned for tritheism. Basil of Caesarea's notion that the divine substance is single, while the three subsistences are distinct, was not congenial to John, and his notion of the three persons as three distinct substances was judged harshly.

The basic affirmations of early Christians were springboards to an amazing array of cultural production. There is both continuity and discontinuity across the more than four hundred years represented in this volume: old questions resurface even as new directions are taken. In the end, we present this volume not as a tale of the making of orthodoxy, but as an invitation to the reader to feel the burden and beauty of early Christian doctrinal literature and the questions that prompted it. <>

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The texts in this volume have been selected to represent the history of practice in early Christianity. When we speak of "early Christianity," we mean the political, cultural, and religious traditions from the first six centuries of this era that draw their importance from the life or teachings of Jesus, whose followers claimed him as Christ, the Son of God. Because Christianity now looks back to this early period as the time when its most essential ideas and practices were established, understanding it is important for understanding the Christian religion as a whole. Yet it is important to

remember that early Christianity was not characterized by uniformity. Over time, great developments happened that make the beginnings of the movement inspired by Jesus seem quite different from the imperial style of Christianity enacted in the era of Theodosius at the end of the fourth century, or even that of Justinian in the sixth. For example, the earliest extant documents to mention Jesus are the letters of the first-century teacher and writer, Paul. But taken in the context of their own time, Paul's letters are easily classed as Jewish texts that inform others about a Jewish teacher whose presence sheds new light on the lessons and history recorded in the Septuagint and its teachings about humanity. There is no evidence that Paul, nor any of the early followers of Jesus, would have understood themselves as starting something called "Christianity." It is only over the course of a long period of time that the movement expanded and developed a sense of itself as a new religious tradition. So, what is termed "early Christianity" and may seem like a single entity was in fact an emerging tradition, with all the complexity and disorganization that growing movements experience.

This volume focuses on the practices that developed during the first six centuries of that movement — what early Christians did. The evidence we have with which to reconstruct early Christian actions comes mostly in the form of texts. This is the case, at least in part, because of the historical position of Christianity. Archeological sites, objects, buildings, and inscriptions that can represent the growing material culture of Christianity do survive, especially from after the legitimization of Christianity in the fourth century. But a much larger part of the heritage preserved from the early Christian period are texts. This is also a result of the fact that for Christians, the interpretation of existing texts and the production of new ones was itself an important practice. We often think of texts as something opposite to actions, but the reproduction, curation, and use of texts was a labor Christians took on as a religious activity, one which held pride of place even in Christianity's beginnings.

To have as accurate a sense of the Christian past as possible, it is important to keep in mind two

limits that are peculiar to textual evidence. First, texts are created for reasons that pertain to their own eras and environments. None of the texts included here was created for the purpose of revealing to twenty-first-century students of Christianity the character of early Christian practice. Consequently, they require the same patient analysis and understanding of genre and form that other primary sources require, if they are to be used effectively as evidence of the past. Second, texts from antiquity have survived because a centuries-long process of copying and transmission has delivered them to the present day. As a result of the selective forces inherent in such a process, the character of texts that we have may be more representative of those who preserved them from antiquity than it is of antiquity itself. These caveats, though important, are small in comparison to the bigger challenge of understanding what a religious community practices simply by consulting documents — imagine trying to reconstruct the daily life of a household from just the books on its shelves! Even with these impediments, a skillful reader can learn quite a bit about the goals, concerns, and hopes of those early Christians whose writings we do possess. While some aspects of early Christian practice are not accessible to us, many are.

In this volume, readers will encounter evidence of a wide range of cultural, ritual, intellectual, and bodily activities — ways of living that came to define the growing and changing tradition of Christianity. Much of our early evidence shows Christian leaders taking the role of teachers of texts, helping other Christians to read them and, through interpretation, to understand the nature of the world, of humanity, and of God. Christians with advanced knowledge gave individualized advice, often through letters in response to requests for guidance about the best Christian ways of life. Later, Christian writers and speakers offered this kind of guidance to entire communities of Christians whom they sought to teach about moral behavior and the importance of community standards. Such writings often tell us as much about what Christians were not to do as what they did do. Eventually, it became the duty of the leaders of Christian communities to help Christians participate in the special rituals that were rooted in important events

in the life of Jesus. Starting in the fourth century, we have a number of texts that record the training Christian leaders gave to those who were preparing to participate in structured ritual events such as baptism and the Eucharistic meal. Though the activities that the texts in this volume record — reading and writing, teaching and learning, gathering and being initiated — may not seem as striking as some more dramatic Christian practices such as extreme fasting or martyrdom, they are arguably the basic building blocks of Christian culture.

Most of the texts in this volume were chosen because they illustrate features of early Christian practice that would become important in later Christian tradition. But many of these texts show such practices in the earliest moments that we know them to exist. So, readers must be careful not to assume too much from a single text and indeed, as historically minded readers, we have to exercise a type of conservatism with respect to the sources we have. For example, consider the place of Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived in the middle of the fourth century and whose teaching about how to participate in the rituals of the Christian community is included in part W of this volume. One way to read his mystagogical lectures is to see Cyril fulfilling the office of bishop and doing what bishops had always done, namely, training his congregation in the actions of rituals such as baptism and Eucharist and teaching them the meaning of those rituals. To see him that way, however, imports a continuity to Christian tradition that is impossible to reconstruct from the available evidence. Because Cyril's is the earliest example of this type of instruction, we cannot assume that he was simply enacting a duty that had long been imagined for bishops. It is perhaps safer to see Cyril as a constructor of the role of bishop as ritual teacher and leader of Christian initiation than it is to assume that he represents a continuous tradition that somehow was not preserved in the historical record.

A second example of this sort of conservative approach to reading can be drawn from early Christian Egypt. The fourth- and fifth-century Shenoute of Atripe is often spoken of as an early Christian ascetic because his works were preserved

in the White Monastery, an institution which claims him as one of its earliest leaders; some of his writings are, in fact, rules for an organized residential community of Christians. Yet to read Shenoute's sermons, like the two included in this volume, is to recognize that while he did lead a substantial monastic community, Shenoute was also the most important Christian leader of the village nearby and the surrounding countryside. So, to tag him with the label "ascetic" might suggest that he was removed from a more standard style of Christianity expressed in non-ascetic congregations in towns and villages, in which marriages and biological families were important. If such a style of Christian community existed near Shenoute during his lifetime, we know little about it. It is safer simply to understand Shenoute's life and works as representative of Christianity for fourth- and fifth-century Upper Egypt, rather than to interpret his life and impact as being less than what it seems by seeing it through the specialized lens of a later label such as "asceticism" or "monasticism." Because of the distorting effects that such interpretative frames can have, this volume attempts to avoid imposing them on the texts presented here, so that readers can make judgments for themselves about what these texts can tell us about early Christian practice.

Such judgments require evidence, and to facilitate the reader's exploration of and engagement with the practices of the early Christian period, we have included a wide range of texts, representative of different places, habits, linguistic communities, and theological commitments. Though we have grouped the texts under four themes, the pieces in this volume can be read profitably in other groupings, by comparing, say, Clement's advice in *The Instructor* to that given by Athanasius in his *Letter to Amoun* in order to trace the evolution of early Christian leadership in Alexandria, or by comparing the *Teachings of Silvanus* to John Chrysostom's instructions on baptism in order to tease out the common threads of philosophical education that they share. Moreover, some texts that have had pride of place in reconstructions of early Christian practice have been left out of the volume. We did not include the texts known commonly as the "church orders," like the *Didache* or the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, because the

authors, contexts, and dates of composition for these texts are very difficult to establish. We do, nevertheless, encourage teachers to make use of whatever other texts they find helpful alongside those published in this volume.

The first group of texts included in this volume are explicitly educational, adopting either the form of literature used in ancient schools or the metaphors of teaching and learning. The third-century author Clement of Alexandria, for example, draws on the well-known role of the instructor, a guide and guard for young pupils, as he explains the role of the Word in a Christian's development. Other texts draw on genres that had been long used to pass on wisdom and moral teaching. In a text like the *Teachings of Silvanus*, we can see the fluidity of ancient educational forms: while this version of the text is certainly Christian, as it presents Christ as the vehicle for the wisdom it offers, much of what it contains is common with other collections of wise guidance about life. Ongoing Christian uses of educational genres are visible in the fourth-century writer Methodius's *Symposium*, a dialogue in which many young women speak on abstract topics of Christian morality and wisdom; in this volume, we visit the speeches of two of these women, Thallousa and Agathe. From such texts, it becomes clear that the paired roles of teacher and student and the forms of literature so central to ancient schooling were also important to the development of early Christianity.

The second group of texts in this volume are documents of advice given by more advanced Christians to less advanced ones. They are occasional guidance, most of them given in response to concerned requests. The examples of this type of guidance range broadly across many topics, from how to fight demons to how to deal with one's unruly body, or how to quiet one's passions to allow the mind to return to its natural state. Taken as a group, such letters and documents are evidence of the comprehensive nature of late ancient Christian practice. Christianity was, for these writers, a tradition that aspired to be useful in all kinds of situations, from the very personal to the communal. While most of these texts offer advice about action — detailing what it is proper and right to do — none of them sees actions as an

end in themselves. Instead, they base their judgments about what is proper on their unique understandings of God, the world, and the Christian's place in it. So, though these are not explicitly theological treatises, they can be read for information far richer than details of what one should or should not do. We have put them together here to show the continuity of concerns and responses to concerns that these writers share, regardless of their later classifications as bishops, monks, ascetics, or heretics. Further, we want to demonstrate that theirs is a Christianity that accommodates various levels of advancement, in which teachers introduce new lessons when the students become ready.

The third section of the volume groups texts that offer more general standards of behavior, namely, directions given for groups instead of personalized guidance. Some of these texts are expressed in the form of rules: statements of what is correct and what is incorrect. Others were first given as sermons to a community, but give similar directions about correct and incorrect behavior. Still others are case-by-case directions for how to deal with specific problems. In all we can see how the character of the community and its boundaries are shaped. While important imperial councils such as Nicaea or Chalcedon are often considered the prime historical sites of the definition of Christianity, these more narrowly focused documents show the ordinary and basic establishment of the foundational structures of Christianity: the idea of who is a Christian, what standards his behavior should follow, and how the community should respond to difficulty.

The final section of texts includes explicit instructions for ritual. The texts presented here are a selection from the authors whose works have traditionally funded historical reconstructions of the development of Christian liturgy. Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Narsai all delivered series of lectures in which they introduce the actions of ritual such as baptism or the Eucharist to their listeners. In addition to providing instruction about how to act during rituals, these texts also teach Christians how to think during rituals. In part, this additional content is visible in the metaphors the instructors offer: in turn,

participating in Christian rituals is like becoming a citizen of a city, or fighting a battle in an arena full of spectators. These metaphors reveal how Christians framed their rituals, what importance they gave them, and to what extent they expected participation in organized rituals to govern the rest of their lives. Moreover, as these early Christian instructors explain the rituals, they also offer explanations of their causes and origins, and in these explanations lies quite a great deal of theological and cosmological detail. Thus we can discern what Christians were taught to do and to think during the execution of a ritual. We can even make out the underlying metaphysical assumptions teachers made about the place of humanity and its potential for contact with the divine.

Indeed, what is true of these ritual instructions is true of all the texts in this volume: though they reveal the details of many different early Christian practices, they also reveal much more. We hope that readers use them to explore the ancient Christian past, understanding that there is no account of a community's religious actions that does not also describe, implicitly or explicitly, that community's perspective on the world, its ideas about the divine, and its hopes and fears for humanity. <>

[Catherine of Siena](#) by André Vauchez [Paulist Press, 9780809153411]

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) has been a doctor of the church since 1970. History recalls that she was outspoken, as well as being a mystic, visionary, and prophet. This is a portrait of a driven woman who never ceased giving her life for her faith and the well-being of her fellow man. What results is a real-life portrait of a woman who experienced monumental crises such as the black plague, the Hundred Year War, internecine fighting in Italy, and papal exile in Avignon. This tertiary Dominican, who did not know how to read or write, became the confidant and critic of the powerful: princes, kings, bishops, and popes. Suzanne Noffke writes:

This is a book I would love to have written! André Vauchez brings to his task a remarkable comprehension of the life and thought of Catherine of Siena, weaving together the strands of content and context to present a vivid portrait of this complex

woman. I know of no other published commentary that so effectively taps into the multiple sources of our knowledge of her.

Vachez begins with a review of Catherine's life, and then proceeds with an account of her journey to canonization and the depiction of her through the Middle Ages. The heart of the work, however, is to be found in chapter 4, which deals with her personality and her mission within the Church and the Dominican order both during and after her lifetime.

One of the strengths of this study is that the author does not evade the problematic aspects of his subject, such as her sometimes naïve understanding of ecclesiastical politics or her often abrasive manner. Yet he manages to show, above all, her genuine greatness as a woman, as a believer, and as an active participant in the life of her Church and her world.

This work will be enlightening to those who already know Catherine quite intimately as well as to those who are meeting her for the first time.

Excerpt:

Catherine of Siena (1347-80) is one of the great figures of religious history in the Middle Ages—and surely, one of the most astonishing. Indeed, this laywoman, born into rather modest circumstances, who had not had the benefit of a formal education, was proclaimed a saint by the Catholic Church in 1461 and a Doctor of the Church in 1970! During her lifetime, her contemporaries had especially been struck by her severe asceticism and by the zeal she deployed to get the papacy to return from Avignon to Rome and to persuade its leaders of the urgency to reform the Church and its religious orders. After her death, her disciples collected her letters—383 of them have come down to us that she had written, in Italian, to the most varied of recipients, from popes and kings to simple artisans—and they circulated the treatise, titled *The Dialogue*, in which she had noted the conversations that she had had with God during her visions. Catherine of Siena's chief originality rests in the fact that she was a mystic who did not hesitate to engage in politics and that she exercised an authority of the prophetic type in Church and society at a time when women were generally restricted to domestic spaces and excluded from

power. And if her interventions in the unfolding of historical events in which she became involved were hardly crowned with success, she nevertheless exerted a profound influence upon the spiritual life of her time and contributed to the elaboration of a new model of female spirituality that would know a greater success in the centuries that followed.

We can, therefore, wonder why Catherine of Siena is not better known today, outside of the Dominican order, with which she was closely associated, and the circle of specialists in the religious history of the Middle Ages. The reason for this is probably because her personality can appear, at first glance, unattractive to modern sensibilities.

In the preface of the first historical biography devoted to her, which appeared in France in 1919, its author, the Danish Catholic writer Johannes Jorgensen, wrote, "To be honest, I have to admit that I had much less of an attraction for Catherine of Siena than I did for Francis of Assisi. There is, in the boisterous nature of the Sienese, a kind of overpowering spirit, an element of tyranny that put me off." Similarly, in 1948, as fine a scholar of medieval mysticism as was the Frenchman Louis Canet, he began his study of the spiritual experience of the saint with the following comment: "Catherine of Siena is not particularly pleasant. The spirit, the imagination, the grace which gives Theresa of Avila so much of her charm are not to be found in Catherine. It's not that she lacks spirit but that her spirit is acerbic!" I subscribe all the more to these reactions since I, too, have shared them. Although the testimony of her disciples shows us to what degree they were beholden to her influence, the way in which Catherine always put herself forward ends up getting tiresome, whereas her lack of understanding with respect to certain realities of her day and her naiveté in the realm of politics and religion stir up within the most sympathetic of readers stupefaction and sometimes unease.

One must, nevertheless, move beyond this first impression and not let oneself get sidetracked by her personality, as impulsive as it was imperious. Catherine of Siena deserves, first of all, to hold our attention because she is the first woman in the Middle Ages on whom we possess a rather abundant documentation, starting with her own

writings. Then, she has been the victim, throughout the centuries, of misunderstandings and hasty judgments that often impede us from understanding her. Thus, one attributes to her the merit—or the demerit, depending on one's perspective—of having persuaded the pope in Avignon to return to Rome: something that is debatable, as we will see. Or else, one has even focused—almost with a kind of voyeurism—on her "mystical states" (ecstasies, stigmatization, levitations), which she herself rarely spoke about in her writings and which constituted only the most dramatic part of her private religious experience. Today, these aspects of her life are not those that are the most interesting; and they sometimes impede us from grasping what really was the true grandeur of this exceptional woman.

This book is not the first to attempt this. It fits into a stream of studies since the 1970s and 1980s that have restored some respectability to Catherine of Siena beyond the realm of spirituality, especially in Italy and in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Historians like Odile Redon, Sofia Boesch Gajano, Caroline Walker Bynum, Rudolph Bell, Antonio Volpato, and Gabriella Zarri; philosophers like Dominique de Courcelles; and female theologians like Giuliana Cavallini have all been interested in her from the perspective of the history of women and of female religiosity. Psychoanalysts as well, such as Ginette Rimbault and Caroline Eliacheff, have studied her. Their works—and those more recently of Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, Thomas Luongo, and Sonia Porzi—have profoundly renewed the way we approach this thoroughly original personality whose influence has not ceased to make itself felt and continues to do so. Moreover, the publication of new English translations of her works now makes them more readily available.⁴ All this scholarly activity—which is finally giving back to Catherine of Siena the place she deserves— is what the present volume would like to synthesize, by placing her life and her work within the history of holiness and the religious culture of the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

Catherine of Siena has been the object of rather different assessments, both during and after her lifetime. For many, she is a saint inasmuch as she lived with intensity and in obedience to the Church

her vocation of a consecrated laywoman. For others, she is above all else a great mystic whose inner experience and knowledge of divine mysteries puts her on the same level as a Theresa of Avila. And for others still, she was the first woman who dared to get involved at the highest level in the affairs of the Church and in the politics of her time. There is some truth in each one of these assessments and the foregoing pages have allowed us to glimpse the complexity of the figure of Catherine and the characteristics of her personality that made her disagreeable to some of her contemporaries. But if one tries not to harmonize (which would be very difficult) but rather to prioritize these divergent points of view, it is imperative for us to distinguish the essential from the ancillary and to try to rediscover the internal coherence of the personality.

It is certain that over the course of her brief life Catherine exhibited a sincere but sometimes disorganized zeal on behalf of the Church of her day. Because of her tendency to give a purely moral response to political and religious problems that resulted from many factors other than simply self-love or greed, she does not seem always to have understood the actual stakes in the conflicts in which she found herself involved. For her, to go to war against the pope was equivalent to being confederates of the devil, and to oppose the clergy for political reasons meant placing oneself outside the Church. Catherine never had a concept of the independence of the aims of earthly society. But it is important to emphasize that she had probably been the first person in the Middle Ages—along with Saint Louis in the thirteenth century, though he was a ruler—to try to establish a link between mysticism and politics and connect private revelations to activities by all leaders within the Church and society in order that justice might prevail. Certainly, her idea of the common good, and the means that one could use in order to achieve it, was influenced by the notions of the clergy of her day, especially those of the Dominicans, who had been a part of her life since adolescence. For her, the responsibility and the decision-making power in this domain had to be reserved to the governing elites. Nor does she seem to have been very sensitive to the wretched conditions of life for the poor of her day, other

than the sick, as her indifference regarding the revolt of the Ciompi in Florence in 1378 shows. The same thing could be said about her hostility toward the popular movements that appeared one after another in Siena beginning in 1367. However, she did not get involved in politics in order that she might have her ideas prevail in matters of government but in order to affirm the primacy of the spiritual in all situations. Her desire to see the powerful of the world remain faithful to the demands of the gospel in their behavior caused her to be regarded in a negative light by all the parties to a conflict. By urging the leaders of the Italian cities to respect the clergy and to obey the papacy, she alienated almost all of them. And because she reminded Popes Gregory XI and Urban VI that they could not limit themselves to a policy based only on military force and pressure, she succeeded in exasperating them and found herself in a no-man's-land, reduced to powerlessness.

Catherine of Siena has often been presented, especially in our own time, as a model of lay holiness. Here, however, there is a considerable risk of being anachronistic because her spirituality is founded on a total disdain of the world. Her life was built upon a rupture with her own family and with all "carnal" affections. When one of her disciples wrote to ask her whom he ought to marry among three choices he had available, she curtly answered him that she had no advice to give him in this area and that it would be better if he did not marry at all, since he would then be freer to serve God. Not that Catherine was in principle against marriage; but, like Saint Paul, whom she admired a great deal, she reckoned that "in these times which are the last" and in the critical situation in which the Church found itself, there were better things to do. It can be argued that she had not embraced the contemplative life and had preferred to remain in the world to fight the forces of evil. But, in her letters, she does affirm her conviction — several times—that the monastic state is superior to the penitential life that she had chosen, as it is "more certain and more perfect" in its practice of obedience. Thus, she wrote to the Mantellata Daniela d'Orvieto, "I regret, miserable poor woman that I am, to never have followed this teaching [= on the monastic life]. I did exactly the

opposite and, I admit, I have not infrequently judged my neighbor [= those who have made this choice]." Catherine appears here to be at the crux of those contradictions that make it so difficult to label her—which people have often tried to do. On the one hand, she absorbs the discourse that was traditional and predominant in medieval spirituality about the superiority of the contemplative vis-à-vis the active life, while underlining the inherent contradiction between her choice of a "semireligious" state of life and the ideal of obedience to a rule, which in her eyes constituted the greater virtue. She acted in the world while at the same time judging it negatively and without taking into consideration the positive values that could be found there. We also know that she expended a great deal of effort to found a monastery in Belcaro, near Siena, thereby following the example of Birgitta of Sweden, who had founded the monastery of Vadstena in Sweden and the order of the Holy Savior, whose rule she had succeeded in getting Pope Urban V to approve. Perhaps Catherine might have had a similar ambition, but the brevity of her life impeded her realizing her intentions in this area.

But, at the same time, as she was waxing eloquent about monasticism, Catherine did persevere until her death in her status as a penitent, living autonomously in the midst of the world and always in motion, which allowed her to act more freely and more efficaciously on behalf of the Church and its reform. She believed herself to be God's messenger charged with warning and counseling humanity about its salvation; but she did not seek to be imitated in this way of life or to insist that this was the only way to accomplish these goals.' Moreover, her itinerant prophesying remained an exceptional vocation and, as such, enjoyed no canonical status in the Church, even though its legitimacy was acknowledged by theologians. Catherine wanted to remind her contemporaries—in good times as well as in bad—of the requirements of their divine filiation in all its radicalness, while tempering the acerbic tone that this discourse could have with a great care for "discretion," that is to say, discernment and prudence.

In the last analysis, one can only understand Catherine of Siena by considering what she was and what she did, rather than what she said—because her words often remain germane only to specific situations or are somewhat ambiguous. Through her activity, she inaugurated a new season in the history of the West in which a certain number of women—thanks to a convergence of elements—could make remarkable inroads into many domains. Along with her near-contemporary Birgitta of Sweden, she opened the door to a kind of "female Catholicism," to borrow the expression of Jean Delumeau, which, true enough, belongs to another period of our history. This opportunity would be expanded in the fifteenth century with the female Dominican mystics whom we mentioned previously, but also with the great Poor Clare abbesses such as Caterina Vigri († 1463), foundress of the monastery of Corpus Christi in Bologna, and Colette of Corbie († 1446), who was instrumental—in France and in the Low Countries—in a reform of both female and male Franciscan convents. It is not too far-fetched to add here Joan of Arc († 1431), a simple peasant girl become leader of armies who was considered during her lifetime to be a prophetess and was burned at the stake as a sorceress and fortune-teller. Or, in the realm of writers, we might even mention Christine de Pizan († 1430): an Italian originally from Tuscany who lived in France during the worst moments of the Hundred Years War and was one of the first female writers in the French language, just as Catherine had been a half-century earlier in Italian. This emergence of women in religious and cultural life is connected to the profound crisis over institutions and authority. With the Great Schism and the conciliar crisis, between 1378 and 1450, the Church and the papacy were profoundly shaken. In France as in Italy, the incessant wars, added to the recurring ravages of the plague, had created upheaval in society. After the death of Charles V, the French monarchy, weakened by political crises and military defeats vis-à-vis England, lost its prominence in Europe; and the University of Paris lost its authority within Christianity after its internal conflicts and political compromises. Everything seemed to be happening as if the established powers—both lay as well as ecclesiastical—had become incapable of resolving the problems with which they were being

confronted and were no longer managing to cope with uncontrollable outbursts of violence.

Thanks to this generalized crisis and so many conflicts with uncertain outcomes, women at this time succeeded in playing a role that normally had not been recognized as theirs to exercise in the Church and society of the time—and they even, in some cases, replaced the male authorities who were not up to the task. Numerous "inspired" visionaries—who were often mystics as well—called for reforms, inaugurated new forms of religious life, and endeavored to coax the authorities and the people away from their inertia by giving the example—like Catherine of Siena and Joan of Arc—of an indomitable courage and of the most thoroughgoing self-denial. The message of these women had nothing revolutionary about it and it is even hard to characterize it as antiestablishment. The role consisted less in innovating than in reminding their contemporaries of the fundamental truths that had been forgotten: God is love and Christ died for our sins; the pope fully exercises his role only when he resides in Rome (of which he is its bishop) and if he involves himself in the reform of the Church; and France can only be governed by a French king who has received his anointing in Reims, and so forth. These passionately delivered statements—even if they took the form of insistent supplications rather than demands—correspond to the very definition of biblical prophecy: a memory that desires—with the good and the true as its goal—to reestablish an order disrupted by sin and to illuminate truths that had been forgotten or overshadowed. The messages transmitted by these women verbally and in writing—in Catherine's case—are undoubtedly traditional. They were happy to remind each one of his or her calling by asking each one to fully take responsibility for it. But the behavior of these women and their way of intervening in history are innovative, as they did not hesitate to abandon the private sphere to enter the public arena and to turn upside down, to their advantage, the relationship of their dependence upon the powers of this world and the learned—that normally had been theirs. Within this brave cohort of women whose influence left its mark upon the last years of the Middle Ages, Catherine is but one figure among many. But she is the only one whose reputation has extended across the centuries

and has never stopped exerting an influence upon people.

Around the end of the fifteenth century, after an upheaval that had lasted more than half a century, institutions—and therefore, men—regained the upper hand; and the claim of these women to have found God within their hearts and to speak in his name began to appear suspect. The parenthesis of a Church in which the word of women had been taken into consideration did not take long to be closed once again. We then witness the ecclesiastical hierarchy and theologians—who sought to structure what was a new and disturbing phenomenon for them—once again taking back these private revelations under their own purview. Thus, we see the proliferation of various treatises, such as, those by Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson, that were devoted to the discernment of spirits (*discretio spirituum*) and thus would facilitate the distinction between true and false visionaries.⁴ Soon the Inquisition itself became interested in the mystics and, later, in the Spanish beatas. Finally, the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17) condemned wholesale not only the eschatological preaching of "pseudoprophets" who were announcing that numerous evils were imminent, but also the overly vigorous reformers "who were scandalously railing against the bishops, prelates, and other superiors as well as their behaviors." In this sense, it can be said that the canonization of Catherine of Siena by Pius II in 1461 signaled the beginning of the end of an era. The goal of the papacy was to promote an exemplary figure of a Christian in whose life had been harmoniously expressed an intensely lived mysticism, a profound attachment to the sacraments, and a firm ecclesiastical and theological control. This image is not false but, as I have tried to show in this volume, it takes account of only a part of the rich personality and aspirations of the Mantellata of Siena.

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Updates the 1954 classic biography, [Catherine of Siena](#) by Sigrid Undset [Ignatius Press, 9781586174088] Sigrid Undset's [Catherine of Siena](#) is critically acclaimed as one of the best biographies of this well known, and amazing fourteenth-century saint. Known for her historical fiction, which won her the Nobel Prize for literature in 1928, Undset based this factual work on primary sources, her own experiences living in Italy, and her profound understanding of the human heart.

One of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century, Undset was no stranger to hagiography. Her meticulous research of medieval times, which

bore such fruit in her multi-volume masterworks: Kristin Lavransdatter series and The Master of Hestviken series, acquainted her with some of the holy men and women produced by the Age of Faith. Their exemplary lives left a deep impression upon the author, an impression Undset credited as one of her reasons for converting to Catholicism in 1924.

Catherine of Siena was a favorite saint for Undset, who also was a Third Order Dominican. An extraordinarily active, intelligent, and courageous woman, Catherine at an early age devoted herself to the love of God. The intensity of her prayer, sacrifice, and service to the poor won her a reputation for holiness and wisdom, and she was called upon to make peace between warring nobles. Believing that peace in Italy could be achieved only if the Pope, then living in France, returned to Rome, Catherine boldly traveled to Avignon to meet with Pope Gregory XI. With sensitivity to the zealous love of God and man that permeated the life of Saint Catherine, Undset presents a most moving and memorable portrait of one of the most exemplar women saints.

The best central text is [Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue](#) by Catherine of Siena and edited, translation and introduction by Suzanne Noffke [Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press, 9780809122332], [The Prayers of Catherine of Siena: 2nd Edition](#) by Suzanne Noffke [iUniverse, 9780595180608] The collected prayers of Catherine of Siena provide a uniquely intimate point of access to the spirituality and theology of this fourteenth-century Italian mystic and reformer. Here we can sit in on and learn from the spontaneous prayer of one who was amazingly honest before her God and in the face of the people and situations she encountered in her daily life. The prayers are rendered in sense lines to facilitate meditative reading. This new edition of the only complete English translation of Catherine's Prayers brings fresh insight through expanded annotation, relating the content of the prayers particularly to the broader contexts of her thought. The translation is based on the critical edition of the original by Giuliana Cavallini.

[The Letters of Catherine of Siena](#), translated by Suzanne Noffke, 4 Volumes: [Volume 1](#), [Volume 2](#),

[Volume 3](#) & [Volume 4](#) (Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies, 2000-2008). English readers are fortunate to have at their disposition the magisterial translation in four volumes of Catherine's letters done by Sr. Suzanne Noffke, OP.

[Catherine of Siena: Vision Through a Distant Eye](#) by Suzanne Noffke [Authors Choice Press, 9780595391103] In her own time, Catherine of Siena was reputed to be a genuinely holy woman and because of this reputation, her voice was listened to where few women's voices would have gained an audience in the fourteenth century. Because she was also the first woman to write and be published in any of the emerging Italian dialects, she provides an early feminine perspective on and interpretation of the events, culture, and spirituality of her time. Her era much like our own is an epoch of crisis and transition for church and society. This is the woman whose vision and voice this study evokes in view of feeding our own twentieth-first-century insight and speaking. The essays in Part One address various aspects of Catherine's vision in her theology and spirituality. Part Two provides resources for further exploration of Catherine's person and thought, of her world, and of what others have written of her in English, including an extensive annotated bibliography of works in English up to the date of the original publication of this book in 1996.

The most extensive collection of studies of her status and sanctity for modern concerns is [Catherine of Siena: Essays on Her Life and Thought](#) edited by Thomas McDermott O.P [New Priory Press, 9781623110369] that consists of six classic essays on the life and thought of St. Catherine of Siena (1347-80), Dominican mystic and Doctor of the Church as of 1970. These essays that include several which appear here in English for the first time, are: Thomas Deman, O.P., "Theology in the Life of St. Catherine of Siena"; Thomas McDermott, O.P., "Catherine of Siena: Doctor of Communion"; Maria Francesca Carnea, "Freedom and Politics in St. Catherine of Siena"; Yves Congar, O.P., "The Holy Spirit in the Prayers of St. Catherine of Siena"; Michael J. Houser, "Processio Castellano. An excerpt from the testimony of Fra Bartolomeo

Dominici”; Antoine Lemonnyer, O.P., “The Spiritual Life in the Teaching of St. Catherine of Siena.”

Chronology of Catherine's Life

1347 Probable date of the birth of Catherine Benincasa.
 1348 Black Death in Italy and the West.
 1352-1362 Catherine sees Christ appearing to her above the church of San Domenico in Siena.
 1362 Urban V, pope in Avignon.
 1364 (ca.) Catherine joins a group of Mantellate, that is, of lay penitents attached to the Dominican convent in Siena. She becomes noted for her piety and her care of the sick.
 1367 Urban V returns to Rome.
 1368 Mystical marriage of Catherine and Christ.
 1370 Urban V returns to Avignon, where he dies on December 10.
 1371-1378 Gregory XI, pope in Avignon. First letters from Catherine to papal legates in Italy and to other ecclesiastical dignitaries on behalf of the reform of the Church and the crusade. Birth and development of the famiglia, a group of devout laity and clerics who accompany Catherine until the end of her life.
 1373 Death of Saint Birgitta of Sweden (July 25). Her spiritual director, Alphonse Pecha, takes an interest in Catherine and seeks to make her the spokesperson of the reform movement in Italy.
 1374 Catherine is called to the general chapter of the Dominican order in Florence, where her orthodoxy is acknowledged. Raymond of Capua is charged with becoming her spiritual director and accompanying her on her journeys. Beginning of the preaching of the Dialogues
 1375 The papacy turns to Catherine and Raymond of Capua to oppose the uprising in Florence, which established a Tuscan League in political opposition to the papacy. Missions to Pisa (during which time she received the stigmata) and to Lucca. In Siena, she is present at the execution of Niccolò di Toldo and becomes aware of the salvific

mission that God has entrusted to her. First known letter (of the fifteen that are extant) to Gregory XI.

1376 Sojourn of Catherine in Avignon, where she pleads for peace between the Holy See and the Florentines; but her efforts are disavowed by the latter. She exhorts the pope to return to Rome as quickly as possible and to organize a crusade against the Turks. Gregory XI issues an interdict against Florence and, on September 13, leaves for Rome.

1377 Gregory XI enters Rome on January 17; Catherine is not present, being occupied with the foundation of the monastery of Saint Mary of the Angels in Belcaro, near Siena. Massacre in Cesena by papal troops. Catherine writes letters pleading with the pope to work for peace and love within his Papal States and to administer them better. Raymond of Capua leaves her, having been named prior of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, the Dominican convent in Rome.

1378 Catherine is commissioned by Gregory XI as his legate to the government of Florence, but negotiations drag on. Gregory dies on March 24. His successor, the Italian Urban VI (1378-89), is elected in April and makes peace with Florence in the Treaty of Tivoli on July 28. In the fall, Catherine finishes *The Dialogue*, her great spiritual and mystical treatise. In September 1378, the cardinals who were engaged in a struggle against Urban VI elect a new pope, Clement VII, during a conclave at Fondi. Catherine runs to the support of Urban VI, goes to Rome, and undertakes a flurry of correspondence with the sovereigns and political authorities of Europe and Italy to demand that they support the one whom she considers to be the only legitimate pope.

1379 Urban VI takes control of Rome and Clement sets up his court in Avignon; the beginning of the Great Western Schism. Catherine tries to organize a "council of holy ones" in Rome, a gathering of the most respected personalities on spiritual matters in the Church; but it founders, despite the support of Urban VI.

1380 Catherine's health deteriorates, and she becomes more and more disappointed in Urban VI, who continues to delay in engaging in the reform of the Church that he had been recommending. Having completely ceased eating, she dies in terrible pain on April 29; and she is buried in Rome in the cemetery of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

[Catherine of Siena: Passion for the Truth--](#)

[Compassion for Humanity](#) by Mary O'Driscoll [New City Press, 978-1565482357] is an accessible anthology of Catherine's letters, prayers, and The Dialogue is ideal for students of medieval spirituality, mysticism and theology, as well as anyone interested in prayer and the spiritual life. The texts are attractively translated and show an exceptional sensitivity and affection for Catherine of Siena's gifts as grounded in love. [Catherine of Siena: Spiritual Development in Her Life and Teaching](#) by Thomas McDermott [Paulist Press, 9780809145478] represents a thorough study of the saint. Although much fine Catherinian scholarship has been produced over the years, her thought has occasionally been viewed as opaque, dense, and perhaps even too deeply mysterious for a lay modern contemporary. Indeed, Catherine's profound images of the scaloni, the Christ-bridge and other metaphors can seem confusing. In this study, McDermott's singular accomplishment is to make her thought and teachings available to all. In some sense, he comes across as a modern day Blessed Raymond of Capua, O.P., who was Catherine's confessor, biographer, and friend. McDermott clearly understands and appreciates the thought of his Dominican sister Catherine. He masterfully weaves together a variety of Catherine's complex theological notions into clear, concise and accessible concepts. McDermott's book allows us to better grasp how Catherine understood God, and in the process, manages to enrich our own understanding of a socially engaged conscience.

Excerpt:

Stages of Ascent on the Scaloni Generali

Dialogue 56-86, a major part of the Dialogue, pertains generally to the stages of ascent on the Christ-bridge via the scaloni particulars for those

following the way of perfect charity. This will be examined at length in this chapter. By comparison, it is only in Dialogue 54 where we find any mention of the "stages" of ascent for those going the way of common charity via the scaloni generali:

When these three powers of the soul are gathered together, I am in their midst by grace. And as soon as you are filled with my love and love of your neighbor, you will find yourself in the company of the multitude of solid virtues. Then your soul's appetite is ready to be thirsty—thirsty for virtue and my honor and the salvation of souls. Every other thirst is now exhausted and dead, and you [go] securely, without any [servile] fear. You have climbed the first [scalone], that of [affection] (affetto). Once [affection] is stripped of selfish love, you rise above yourself and above passing things. What you decide to keep, you love and hold not apart from me but with me, that is, with true holy fear and love of virtue.

Then you find that you have climbed the second [scalone]. This is the enlightenment of the [intellect] (intelletto), which sees itself reflected in the warmhearted (cordiale) love I have shown you in Christ crucified, as in a mirror. Then you find peace and quiet, for memory is filled with my love and no longer empty....

After you have climbed you find that you are gathered together.

We note several things in this text. While the first two scaloni are mentioned explicitly, there is at best only an allusion to the third: reference to finding "peace and quiet" that, as we will see later in this chapter when we consider the stages of spiritual development for those on the scaloni particolari, is a characteristic of those who are going on the scaloni particolari and who reach the third stage where they receive the kiss of Christ's mouth. We also note that in this text there is no mention of states, "imperfect, perfect, most perfect," "feet, opened side, mouth," or "servant, friend, child." Catherine uses these images only for the scaloni particolari.

Does this omission of any explicit reference to the third scalone suggest that the spiritual development of those on the scaloni generali bears resemblance

to those who have reached only the first and second stages ("perfect") of spiritual development?

Why is Catherine's description of the "stages" for those on the *scaloni generali*, found only in Dialogue 54, so sparse and incomplete? The most likely answer is simply that her subsequent much-longer treatment on the spiritual stages of those on the *scaloni particolari* (Dialogue 56-86) also applies, to some extent, to everyone.

That Catherine's teaching on the *scaloni particolari* and thus the three stages pertains, more or less, to those who are also on the *scaloni generali* is, if true, of great importance because it clears away any doubt that Catherine intended a major portion of the Dialogue for everyone and not just for a minority of consecrated persons and some zealous "friends" of God like herself. The following facts confirm this position:

"The Bridge" is in answer to Catherine's third petition for God's providence over the whole world. It is unlikely, then, that she intended the major part of thirty-one chapters (56-86), the very core of the Dialogue, for only a select few.

We see in Dialogue 61, in the midst of Catherine's teaching on the *scaloni particolari*, a teaching that is applied explicitly to both those in common and perfect charity. Here the eternal Father speaks of three manifestations (*manifestazioni*) of himself to souls in which the first manifestation is of the Word's affection and charity "in two ways" according to whether one is following the way of common charity or, by implication, the way of perfect charity:

This charity manifests itself in two ways. One is general, for ordinary people (*gente comune*), that is those who stay in common charity. It is manifested, I say, in them [as they] see and experience (*provando*) my charity in the many and different benefits they receive from me. The other way is particular to those who are made friends, [and is] added (*agionto*) to the manifestation of common charity, in which they taste, know, experience and feel him through feeling (*sentimento*) in their souls."

This text suggests that the difference between the experience of those in common charity and those in

perfect charity is one of degree or something that is merely added and thus is not fundamentally different.

In Dialogue 57, after Catherine has begun her teaching on the *scaloni particolari*, she says that the first and second stages apply to "many":

Then that soul, restless with burning desire and gazing into God's gracious mirror, saw how people took different ways for different motives to get to their goal. She saw many who began to climb when they felt the grip of [servile] fear, that is, fear of personal suffering. And many by responding to that first call reached the second. But few seemed to reach the greatest perfection.

Admittedly, it is ambiguous whether "many" refers only to those God has called to follow the perfect way or to everyone. It is more likely that "many" refers to all those going on the Christ-bridge, including those on the *scaloni generali*. This text also supports our position that those on the *scaloni generali* experience stages of spiritual development that are similar to the first and second stages of the *scaloni particolari*.

We note that Catherine never says in any way that the two ways of common charity and perfect charity are absolutely separate, irreversible calls from the Lord. She does, however, imply that the way in which one goes is a response to God's general invitation according to one's desire, which, through the exercise of our free will, we can increase.

References to common charity and perfect charity are completely absent in "Tears," the second most important source on stages of spiritual development in the Dialogue after "The Bridge." Surprisingly, those on the *scaloni generali* in "Tears" are even able to reach the unitive stage!

What tongue could describe the marvel of this final unitive stage and the many fruits the soul receives when its powers are so filled? This is that sweet gathering together that I told you about when I spoke of change" (*la prima mutazione*). Several movements can be discerned in the above passage. First, there is a crisis: the suffering caused by one's sins and the fear of future punishment. Second, this prompts one to "remove the cloud" that previously

blocked one's understanding. Third, with servile fear one makes one's way out of the river and onto the shore. Fourth, there one vomits out the poison of sin, implying repentance and sacramental confession: "I send a prod of conscience (uno stimolo di coscienza) to rouse these people to open their mouths and vomit out the filth of their sins in holy confession." Fifth, then one gets up and goes toward the bridge. Fear has caused the soul "to sweep the house clean of deadly sin" but fear cannot fill it; only love and virtue can do that.

Servile fear is not enough to bring one to eternal life. One's tears at this stage are "heartfelt but sensual; that is, although they have not yet come to perfect hatred for sin as an offense against me, they do get up with heartfelt sorrow because of the punishment that must follow upon the sin they have committed."

The gradual process of going from servile fear to love and virtue involves the replacement of defective knowledge with true knowledge of self and God, as we see in "Tears": "When the soul begins to practice virtue, she begins to lose this fear.... So she rises up in love to know herself and my goodness to her, and she begins to hope in mercy." The more one sees the truth about oneself and God's love, servile fear gradually gives way to holy fear (timore santo), which contains the first "glimmer" of love.

Some people turn back before getting to the bridge. They are the lukewarm who have gone sluggishly, with tiepidezza, toward their goal. The winds of prosperity (disordered pleasures) or adversity blow them back into the river for various reasons: disordered love of things and people, fear, discouragement, complacency, impatience, the inability to persevere during times of suffering: "All this happens to them because the root of selfishness (amore proprio) has never been dug out of them."

[A Pope Francis Lexicon](#) by Cindy Wooden and Joshua J McElwee [Liturgical Press, 9780814645215]

A Pope Francis Lexicon is a collection of over fifty essays by an impressive set of insightful contributors from around the globe, each writing on a specific word that has become important in the ministry of Pope Francis. Writers such as Sr. Simone

Campbell, Cardinal Blase Cupich, Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, Fr. James Martin, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby, and Carolyn Woo explore the Pope's use of words like joy, clericalism, money, family, and tears. Together, they reveal what Francis's use of these words says about him, his ministry and priorities, and their significance to the church, the world, and the lives of individual Christians. The entire collection is introduced by a foreword by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians worldwide, and a preface by one of Francis's closest advisors, Cardinal Seán O'Malley.

This is no set of encyclopedia entries. It's a reflective, inspiring, and often heartfelt book that offers engaging answers to the question "What is this surprising Pope up to?"

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Excerpt: This delightful "anthology," a Greek word that denotes a charming selection of engaging reflections, is a compilation of fragrant offerings to a prominent religious leader.

This volume is a collection of reflections on key words in the message and ministry of our beloved brother, Pope Francis. Words, however, are much more than conventional remarks; they are far more important than ordinary utterances. Words are the intrinsic expression of life, our most intimate reflection of divinity, the very identity of God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Indeed, we are judged by every word that comes from our lips (Matt 12:36). Words can heal or crush (Prov 12:6), prove productive or destructive (Prov 8:21), generate benevolence and edification (Eph 4:29) or else bitterness and imprecation (Rom 3:14). Most of all, we should "be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (1 Pet 3:15).

In our encounters and exchanges with our brother, the Bishop of Rome, we have experienced the profound sacredness of words. We remember and recognize that words either build bridges or build walls. Therefore, together, we have sought to promulgate a dialogue of love and a dialogue of truth, "living the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

Of course, while words may express and describe human affections, they can never adequately exhaust or define the human heart. However, they reveal glimpses into the world of another human being; they present insights into their interests and concerns. If we pay attention to the frequency with which we repeat and accentuate particular words, we will observe the patterns and passions that shape our life.

This is why we were not surprised to see the terms selected in this volume as characteristic and suggestive of the fundamental principles prioritized and personalized by Pope Francis:

- his ministry is devoted to Jesus and the church as the Body of Christ, while exposing clerical abuse and encouraging accountability;

- he strives to relate the sacraments of the church to the life of the world, such as baptism to tears;
- within the church as institution, he wishes to decrease clericalism and increase collegiality, while addressing indifference and advocating discernment;
- in his church's relations with others, he promotes dialogue and ecumenism, as well as encounter and embrace;
- in the global community, he discerns the intricate connection between capitalism and creation, persecution and refugees; and
- he cares about family, women, children, and grandparents.

Above all, we were struck by the specific virtues that form the contours of his message and witness:

- dignity and justice,
- mercy and hope, but above all
- love and joy.

This book transcends mere words. It is a splendid mosaic of colorful, engaging elements that unveil the sympathetic and compassionate man we have come to know as Pope Francis.

I have always liked the story about the Jesuit and the Franciscan who are walking down the street one day when suddenly they are accosted by a young man who says to them: "Fathers, can you tell me what novena I should make to acquire a BMW?" The Franciscan said: "What is a BMW?" And the Jesuit said: "What's a novena?"

We have a pope who defies these categories as he melds the Jesuit and the Franciscan into one. But I believe that Pope Francis is the quintessential Ignatian Jesuit. We have a pope who has embraced the vocation of being a follower of "Ignatius who wants to be a saint like St. Francis." Our pope is thoroughly Jesuit, thoroughly Ignatian, right down to the fascination with St. Francis. During the first year of his pontificate in an interview for *Civiltà Cattolica*, Jesuit Fr. Antonio Spadaro asked Pope Francis why he became a Jesuit. The pope said that three things about the Jesuits that attracted him were: the missionary spirit, community

and discipline—including how they manage their time.

It is quite obvious that Pope Francis exhibits these characteristics in spades. He is truly living his Jesuit vocation with an intense missionary zeal, a love for community, a community for mission, and the disciplined life that does not waste anything, especially not time. Shortly before his ordination, the thirty-two-year-old Jorge Bergoglio wrote a short "credo," and he has shared that even now he keeps that document close at hand, as a reminder of his core convictions. It is a clear indication of the habit of self-reflection so deeply ingrained by his Jesuit formation.

Pope Francis embraces the introspection that is so central to Jesuit spirituality. The practice of the examen undertaken individually wherever and whenever the circumstances permitted was Ignatius's plan to keep the Jesuits recollected in God, to keep them focused despite their activist lifestyles. Reflecting this spiritual focus in his address to the Brazilian bishops at World Youth Day in 2013, the Holy Father asked: "Unless we train ministers capable of warming peoples' hearts, of walking with them in the night, of dialoguing with their hopes and disappointments, of mending their brokenness, what joy can we have for our present and future?"

Pope Francis reminds us that God's heart has a special place for the poor. He is most eloquent in his advocacy on behalf of the poor, reminding all of us of our obligation to help them by programs of promotion and assistance, as well as by working to resolve the structural causes of poverty. In *Evangelii Gaudium* the Holy Father presents one of his most impassioned pleas on behalf of the poor by emphasizing the importance of providing them with pastoral care as he states: "I want to say with regret that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them His friendship, His blessing, His Word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential

option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care."

Pope Francis has also shared that Catholicism is not a "catalogue of prohibitions." He urges us to be positive, to emphasize the things that unite us, not those which divide us, to prioritize the connection between people and the path we walk together, observing that after focusing on what brings us together then the work of addressing the differences becomes easier. The Holy Father also advises us that every form of catechesis should attend to the "way of beauty," showing others that to follow Christ is not only right and true but is also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties.

Pope Francis understands that the words we use to speak about the people of God and the work of the church are of great importance and can often make the difference between a person being open to hearing more, to considering a life of faith; or turning away feeling rejected, dismissed or relegated as unworthy. Beginning with the spiritual reflection that all our gifts, talents and achievements are gifts from God, the Holy Father has given us a vocabulary of care, concern, inclusion and service. With the help of God and one another may we take these teachings to heart and go forward as missionary disciples for Christ.

[Mosaics in the Medieval World: From Late Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century](#) by Liz James [Cambridge University Press, 9781107011984]

In this book, Liz James offers a comprehensive history of wall mosaics produced in the European and Islamic Middle Ages. Considering a wide range of issues, including style and iconography, technique and material, function and patronage, she examines mosaics within their historical context. She asks why the mosaic was such a popular medium and considers how mosaics work as historical 'documents' that tell us about attitudes and beliefs in the medieval world. The book is divided into two sections. Part I explores the technical aspects of mosaics, including glass production, labour and materials, and costs. In Part II, James provides a chronological history of mosaics, charting the low and high points of mosaic

art up until its abrupt end in the late Middle Ages. Written in a clear and engaging style, her "book will serve as an essential resource for scholars and students of medieval mosaics.

Mosaics Matter

In the middle of a golden hemisphere, a crucified Christ hangs against a black cross filled with doves and rising out of a mass of acanthus leaves. This central image is almost concealed in a wealth of vine scrolling that curls its way across the vault in ordered, rhythmic rows, five across and five down. Buried in these vines are other plants, animals, birds and even figures: four seated Church Fathers, pens in hand; men feeding birds; little putti climbing the tendrils or riding dolphins. Either side of the cross stand Mary and St John the Evangelist, seemingly held in place by thorny tendrils. Above the cross, a hand bearing a wreath descends amid fluffy red and blue clouds from a tightly stretched canopy crowned by a small gold cross and then a monogram, the Chi-Rho for Christ, with the letters Alpha and Omega, signalling his role as the beginning and the end of all things. Along the bottom, deer drink from water flowing from the acanthus at the foot of the cross, a woman feeds hens, a man herds cattle. Below them twelve sheep emerge, six and six, from the building-filled, jewel-encrusted cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem, making for a centrally positioned Lamb. The whole image is framed by an inscription, gold letters on a blue background, that hails the Church itself as the True Vine. Above and to each side are further mosaics on the triumphal arch: prophets; Saints Peter and Paul conversing with Saints Laurence and Clement; and at the centre, a majestic Christ in glory, amid yet more blue and red clouds and flanked by the symbols of his evangelists, blesses the church, the image and those below.

This mosaic in the apse of the church of S. Clemente in Rome is one of the largest and most spectacular, complicated and visually stunning works of art that survive from the Middle Ages, yet what we understand for certain about it could be written on a postcard. It is likely to have been installed in the early twelfth century when the church was built; it was presumably a part of the patronage of the church's builder, one Cardinal Anastasius, of whom little more is known. Its artist or artists have never

been identified; where the materials for its manufacture, glass, stone, mother-of-pearl, came from is unknown; how it was put together is a mystery. Even the meanings of the elaborate, multifaceted, intertwined images are a matter of debate. What this mosaic is doing in this church at this point in time, and why, we can only speculate.

It is these conjectures that provide the basis for this book: how and where mosaics were made, why they might have been made, the materials, time and costs involved, and what people in the medieval world saw in them. Mosaics are the most beautiful, elaborate, complex and probably supremely expensive form of wall and vault decoration used in the medieval world. They survive from churches, mosques and palaces across the Mediterranean world from Spain, Italy and Greece in the west, to Syria and Israel in the east, taking in the Ukraine and Georgia to the north and Egypt to the south. And they are big, monumental art on a vast scale. But the stories of medieval wall mosaics are patchy and relatively little discussed. Considering their scale, they have played a comparatively minor part in the history of medieval art; considering their value and their costs, an even smaller role in our understanding of the medieval world. In this book, I have aimed to treat mosaics as indicators of history, woven in as a part of history, rather than passive illustrations of the past. As this book argues, they are a source material in themselves, employing a visual language that spoke powerfully and influentially to the world in which they existed. Their eloquence lay not only in the identity of the image, but also in what it was made from, where it was, who caused it to be made, how it was understood and perceived. My view has been that mosaics mattered in the medieval world, not just as an art form but also as a very visible and often hugely public demonstration of piety, authority, prestige and money. Whilst the mosaics of major religious foundations such as Old St Peter's in Rome, the Great Mosque in Damascus or Hagia Sophia in Constantinople reveal political and dogmatic power games, the mosaics found in lesser buildings such as the diminutive church of Hosios David in Thessaloniki with its anonymous patron or the small Oratory at Germigny-des-Prés can also speak to the same effect.

To explore the use and potential of the medium, this book comes at mosaics from two angles. One is the technical aspect, the actual mosaic and what we can say about that; the other is a consideration of the place of mosaic, and of specific mosaics, in the society in which they were made. Part I explores what we know or can deduce about the actual physical making of mosaics from the mosaics themselves.¹ What do we know about the glass that mosaics were made from? What do we know about the logistics of mosaic-making? How much did mosaics cost? Do we know anything about their makers? It turns out that we know a surprising amount about both the technology used in making the materials for mosaics and, the procedures for making them. This not only tells us about the sources and dispersal of materials and methods of construction but also informs the way we perceive and respond to them. But the relationships between centres of production in terms of materials, styles, techniques, iconography and artists are far less clear cut and therefore more interesting and complex than is often assumed. One goal of Part I is to establish just how expensive mosaic was as a medium and consequently to offer some clues as to the level of resources that a patron needed to install a mosaic. By and large, mosaic really was costly in the Middle Ages, and that suggests that it was also prestigious.

Part II looks at mosaics across a long-time span, c. 300 to c. 1500, in an attempt to bring the range of mosaics together in one place and to see what a survey history, with all the drawbacks inherent in such a broad-brush study which smooths out so much detail, might indicate about the use of the medium. I have divided the time span into century or double century blocks, as a way of structuring this huge body of material, though it is an arrangement that provides its own problems because some mosaics are undated and others straddle more than one century. What this synthesis does show, however, is the astonishingly wide spread of mosaics across the Mediterranean world. It makes it apparent that there was more mosaic than has hitherto been realised. Part II also treats mosaics as products of cognitive choices made for a multitude of reasons relating in part to the socio-political contexts of the worlds in which their patrons operated. The basic question I have sought to answer in this section is:

why did people choose mosaic for this building here and now? Mosaic was not the only medium employed in the medieval world to decorate walls and ceilings — paint, textiles, sculpture were some of the alternatives available — so what was special about mosaic?

So I will consider mosaics as snapshots of moments where people made deliberate choices about commissioning art, about spending money and about making public statements. What do these instances tell us? What statements were being made? Why did popes, caliphs and emperors choose in some instances to commission mosaic? And what of the humbler patrons? And what might all that suggest about networks between people, about trade and communications, about conflicts of ideas and beliefs, about appropriation and reuse? The messages given by mosaics are not just those of the patrons, though this is where I have tended to focus. We should also ask, even if we cannot answer, how mosaics may have been received by their audiences, how they fitted into their buildings and cities, and we should recognise that the messages of mosaics changed over time, even to the point of becoming irrelevant and the mosaic destroyed.

The book seeks to decipher these questions in a context in which little is known about medieval wall mosaics. No contracts exist for mosaic-making until the fourteenth century, when such documents survive about the making of the façade mosaic at Orvieto Cathedral in Italy; almost no mosaics (at least until the twelfth century and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem) are signed or associated with any artists; and written sources may identify a patron or state in whose reign (imperial, papal or caliphal) a mosaic was made, but are rarely more precise. No source tells us how mosaics were made or where the materials came from or what they cost; no medieval author really gives us much information on how mosaics were received by their audiences; no patron has left us an explanation of why he or she commissioned this mosaic looking like this. In the case of the church at Daphni in Greece, where one of the most beautiful and full programmes of mosaic decoration survives, there is no information about the dedication of the church (perhaps to the Mother of God), its function (it may

have been a monastery), its patron (all we know is that he or she could afford to build a church and decorate it with mosaics), its artist (no idea) or even the date of the mosaics (the church itself may be eleventh century in terms of the architecture; the mosaics have been dated widely between the tenth and twelfth centuries). All that we know about mosaics tends to be concentrated within the mosaic itself

But why is so little known about mosaics? There are various reasons. Most surviving mosaics are on the walls of churches, and for many of those churches full surveys do not exist. There are, for example, some very thorough studies of the mosaics of Torcello, of the church of San Marco in Venice, of the mosaics of twelfth-century Sicily, and there is an excellent study of the mosaics of the Eufasian Basilica in Poreč. There is a very good book-length study of Nea Moni on Chios, an admirable slim guide to Hosios Loukas, but next to nothing since about 1899 on Daphni. Many more of these individual studies are needed. There are also some broader surveys of mosaics covering a wider time period, including mosaics from Thessaloniki, Rome and Ravenna, but again these tend to consider these mosaics in relative isolation, as mosaics in Ravenna, rather than in the context of surviving sixth-century mosaics more widely. Often as well studies of mosaics can be somewhat detached from their physical settings, with emphasis placed on their appearance and meaning rather than on pragmatic information about size, surface area and relative proportions of materials. The physical nature of wall mosaics has not always been presented as the fundamental part of understanding a mosaic that it is. Only detailed study from the scaffold really allows for cogent remarks about style and also about the making of the mosaics, and such work other than at Ravenna is in short supply. Analysing the setting of mosaics, and so recording appearance, restorations, possible patterns and sequencing of laying demands both scaffolding and specialised knowledge. And mosaics seem to fall into so many cracks: are they a part of the building's fabric (and hence architecture) or of its fixtures and fittings (and so decoration)? Are they Byzantine or Western medieval or Islamic? Are they a major or a minor art form, an art or a craft?

Another fundamental problem with many wall mosaics is that of their dating. Not many mosaics have an absolute date that can be accepted without question. A reasonable number are dated on the supposition that they were installed at the time the building they grace was built, though this is not always the case, and understanding the dating of a building is not always as straightforward as it might be. For example, the Church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki is dated by three inscriptions within it that claim it was constructed through the patronage of Patriarch Niphon (1310-14); dendrochronology suggested that the church was built all of a piece and dated it to 1329 or just after, some fifteen years after Niphon's removal from office. On one level, at least the dates are in the same century, but, on another, this has caused considerable debate because the mosaics in the church strongly resemble those in the Church of the Chora in Constantinople, built between 1316 and 1321: should the Salonikan mosaics therefore be dated before or after those of the Chora, a question with implications for understanding mosaicists working in the fourteenth century? In the case of S. Marco in Venice, the church itself was built in the eleventh century, but a very good case can be made that the mosaics were installed over a long period from then on, down into the present day in fact. Some mosaics are associated by texts with particular patrons, especially imperial or papal patrons, and so can, presumably, be dated to that patron's lifetime or time as pope or emperor; patrons are sometimes identified within the mosaics themselves and consequently we suppose that the mosaic reflects an act of patronage from a living person — but this need not always have been the case, as the thirteenth-century apse mosaic of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome warns us. This was the commission of Pope Nicholas IV, who is depicted in the mosaic, but it was almost certainly completed after his death. But critically, many mosaics are undated and there is no consensus as to their date. So, for example, the stunningly beautiful and lavish mosaic programme of the Rotunda in Thessaloniki has been dated to several points between the fourth and seventh centuries, with a general feeling that it might be fourth century; a small, slightly scruffy mosaic from Durrës in Albania has been

dated to the fifth century on the basis of its style and the eighth to eleventh centuries on the basis of the sequencing of layers of plaster, paint and mosaic on the wall.

Another basic problem is that we do not have much sense of the extent and spread of mosaic as a medium in the medieval world. This book looks to counteract that by providing a series of maps that plot the growth and spread of mosaics over time. The lists and details of the mosaics plotted on the maps are drawn from my database of medieval wall and vault mosaics.¹ At the point at which I am writing now, it tracks over 380 mosaics for which physical evidence survives. These can be supplemented by a number of additional mosaics mentioned by textual sources (though these have not been mapped here). But the data presented here is inevitably incomplete. I have had to make decisions about where to date many mosaics. Some mosaics will have been missed, and there is no way of knowing how the number of the mosaics recorded in the database relates to the total number made. Certainly what survives is not all there was; this is the tip of an iceberg whose overall size is unknown. Chance of survival is another factor. Many more mosaics survive on walls from Western medieval Europe than from Byzantium (from Italy than from Asia Minor), and that owes something to the use and continued existence of churches in the two regions. On the other hand, much more archaeological data, in the form of scattered tesserae or mosaic fragments, is available for wall mosaics from the eastern part of the Mediterranean than from the western, and this may well reflect the emphases of Christian archaeologists in the Holy Land. In other words, this book inevitably makes assumptions based on incomplete data and the preserved material presents the trap of the norm: the belief that, because it survives, it represents the usual rather than the exceptional, and that patterns and developments can and should be traced between mosaics. As will become apparent, scholars have often drawn on what survives to create patterns of meaning, and material that does not fit into their theories has been overlooked or omitted. My belief is that we have lost too much to be able to draw many telling connections between surviving mosaics across the Mediterranean world. Consequently, I

have looked instead to understand each mosaic in its own terms, at a local level, within its own building and society, rather than to make relationships and create narratives and answers where none might exist. Nevertheless, at times the temptation has been too great and I have also created a general narrative in which mosaic as a medium stood for something in the medieval world.

Where this leaves us in the study of mosaics is with an awareness that too much has rested on a set of presumptions about the medium as a Byzantine one, leading to definitions about style, iconography, artists, quality and dating that need to be reassessed, and debates in which major mosaics like S. Clemente rarely feature. Whilst medieval mosaics may well be 'Byzantine' in all or any of these aspects, the question that has to be asked is whether there is any evidence to support a particular mosaic or set of mosaics being defined as 'Byzantine'. Medieval mosaics are more eclectic in their appearance than such a definition would suggest and we need to consider them in their terms not ours, whether their patrons and audiences saw differences of styles and how they understood them.

In many ways, regarding mosaics in terms of their style is a dead end, partly because the assumptions long made about the centrality of Byzantine artists and the quality of their work are based on suppositions that have no basis in fact (and on hypotheses that were perhaps made tentatively and then were hardened into fact), but partly because of the way such ideas of style can only be studied through photography, which moves it away from any attempt to understand how the mosaics could have been seen and understood in their own time. Instead, it is time to consider understanding of mosaic as an art form from a different route, reflecting on technique, craftsmanship, materials, how artists learned and travelled, the realities of trade and networking in terms of the availability of materials and also in terms of the movement of visual ideas. On this foundation then, in Part II, I move to look at the development and spread of mosaic in the western and eastern Mediterranean.

But Part II is not a gazetteer of sites with mosaics, though it does offer a survey of these. Rather, in surveying medieval mosaics between the fourth and

fifteenth centuries, it makes a case for continuous traditions of mosaic-making in a variety of places in the Mediterranean world, including in Italy. It sketches a place for mosaic as a medium in a changing world, one that in the fourth and fifth centuries was one of regional variations within what was still in so many ways one empire, but one that changed over the subsequent years to become several distinctive, separate domains: the Byzantine Empire itself; the Islamic world of the eastern Mediterranean; the evolving states and kingdoms in Italy. It will also take the discussion of mosaics into issues of function. In describing a mosaic as 'Byzantine' or 'Roman' or 'Venetian' or 'Muslim', my interest is less in the ethnic identity of its artist or its stylistic qualities or even its quality, than in its location, a shift from what it looks like to what it might say in a particular place at a particular time. Here, a 'Byzantine' mosaic is a mosaic in the territory making up the Byzantine Empire and a 'Roman' one is a mosaic in Rome. Such a mosaic may contain visual elements that speak to us of art from the Byzantine Empire or iconographies that remind us of images used in the Orthodox Church but the question I have chosen to tackle is what those elements said in the milieu in which they were placed. How did a 'Roman' mosaic, such as that of S. Clemente, speak to its Roman patrons and audiences? My view in this book is that medieval art and the influences on it were fluid and varied, just as the meanings of that art were multiple and even contradictory. The medieval world was one of great versatility, one that could support happily the co-existence of non-complementary styles, and one where the great cities were not isolated but part of a wide commercial and intellectual network and shared many aspects of their visual culture. In this world, other elements of medieval art — Western medieval, Balkan, Islamic — surely also affected the appearance of 'Roman' mosaics. And in Rome itself, because of what survives, we can see something that may well have been true in other cities where mosaic was employed: that what already existed, older works of mosaic (and indeed of art) were also fundamental points of reference.

The complex nature of patronage is another theme of the book. Patrons and artists made choices, both practical and ideological. So, for example, the use

of mosaics by popes in Rome was a different use to that required by emperors in Byzantium or by the City Council in Venice, though similarities are apparent because of the ways in which mosaics were made and the things that people chose to have depicted in the medium. All patrons of mosaic had their own reasons for funding mosaics and although they may all have looked to other areas of the Mediterranean world for inspiration, each patron was also almost certainly sharply aware of other local patrons and their commissions, in whatever media. Consequently, the deliberate use of mosaic, ahead of any other medium, was a crucial part of the message. Artistic imitation in terms of styles and iconographies is connected to status, for it testifies to the esteem accorded to a pre-existing monument, whether that esteem was based on antiquity, distinguished patronage, material or artistic quality, or anything else. To establish a visual connection with a model was like forging a bond with a distinguished person: it produced authority and prestige and claimed a privileged relationship. My argument is that this is what the choice of mosaic itself as a medium achieved, and that when the medium lost its effectiveness in this way then it withered, becoming an eccentric choice. We should see mosaic not as a statement of Byzantine superiority but as a medium that speaks to relationships across the Mediterranean worlds, a medium employed in both common and different ways and at different times by Western Catholic Christians, by Eastern Christians and by Muslims, because it meant something to them. So this book asks about the political, religious and cultural meanings implicit in mosaic as well as in mosaics.

Making Wall Mosaics Part I

Part I deals with the making of wall and vault mosaics. It falls into four chapters which cover the different production stages, from the making of glass and of mosaics to what we can deduce about artists and costs, and what can be said about the value of mosaics. These are all aspects of mosaic-making that matter, because the appearance of a mosaic was governed not only by the artist's skill and choices but also by the materials the artist had available to work with. If a particular colour could not be made or bought, or if the supply ran short, then it could not be used in a mosaic. So much of

what is actually on the wall was governed by this very simple rule of thumb.

Relatively little has previously been said about where the materials for mosaics came from.¹ The assumption, usually unspoken, is that glass tesserae came from the supposed home of mosaics, Byzantium, and were exported elsewhere. In the case of S. Marco in Venice, for example, it has been proposed that the tesserae used in the thirteenth-century mosaics of S. Marco were plundered from Constantinople after the Venetian-led Fourth Crusade which sacked the city in 1204.² But little is known about the Byzantine glass industry, to the point that it was once described as a 'medieval mystery'.³ There is no real evidence (yet) for a Constantinopolitan tradition of glass-making and of tessera manufacture. Where, in fact, was glass made in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages? Was it a readily accessible material? Were there changes in its manufacture (changing locations; changing technologies; changing costs) that might relate to patterns in the spread and quantity of wall mosaics? Were there ever detectable shortfalls in glass production, especially of coloured glass, which would have had a significant effect on the production of mosaics? These questions about glass production need nuancing still further: How was glass coloured for tesserae, where and by whom? When and where was the coloured glass cut to size? These questions are central to our understanding of wall mosaics: without the glass, the mosaics could not be made; the technologies of colouring glass affected the very appearance of the mosaic. If we can answer these questions, then we can begin to unpick issues of costs and distribution of materials, of how easy it might have been to obtain the materials needed to put up a wall mosaic, and so to understand some of the reasons for the geographical and temporal extent and distribution of wall mosaics.

The book opens with the making of glass itself, since this was the fundamental material of wall mosaics. It examines the different stages of making and colouring glass in order to get a picture of how easy or difficult, cheap or costly it was to make tesserae. The findings of a steadily increasing technical and scientific literature on the making of Roman and medieval glass, including tesserae,

provide a significant model for interpreting the workings of the glass industries in these periods, and have revealed a whole network of unsuspected connections. This data is now fundamental to our understanding of the questions I raised above, and forms the backbone of the opening chapter on making glass.

The making of glass leads to the consideration of the making of mosaics. In contrast to what is known about the glass for mosaics, much more has been written about how mosaics got onto the wall: the best of this work comes from those who have been able to note details and practices from the vantage point of scaffolds set up against mosaics. This section pulls together the observations and thoughts of conservators, art historians and contemporary mosaicists in order to create a narrative of the processes involved in putting a mosaic up. I have also sought to set this material into the context of the logistics that might have been required to make sure that the most effective sequence of events was followed.

Discussion of these logistics opens the way to considering what it might be possible to reconstruct of two elements: the people responsible for mosaics; and the costs involved. Medieval artists were largely anonymous, but nevertheless it is still possible to think about how to put people onto scaffolds, even if the individuals remain unknown. In fact, by the fourteenth century, we know more names than we have previously realised. As for prices, building on Janet DeLaine's fundamental work on reconstructing the building of the Baths of Caracalla, I have produced some calculations that offer ball-park figures for what the glass in a medieval mosaic might have cost.

Moving from costs to value, this first part of the book concludes with a look at what people — patrons and audiences alike — might have prized in mosaics in the Middle Ages. It considers why patrons wanted mosaics and what mosaic offered that other monumental art forms (painting, textiles and sculpture, for example) could not. It addresses how medieval viewers appreciated the medium.

These four chapters are limited by a shortage of surviving primary and secondary material. Often the same paragraph moves from the second to the

sixth to the thirteenth centuries, because nothing survives to bridge these gaps. However, it is worth underlining that I do not mean to imply by this that things were always the same: we do not know and can only extrapolate.

Mosaics by Century Part II

Part II of this book shifts from the general to the particular. Having considered how mosaics may have been made, I turn to look at where and when this happened and to suggest some reasons why. This section of the book is ordered by century and so progresses in a linear fashion from the fourth to the fourteenth century. This is a structure that presents its own problems, foremost that of having to decide into which century to place every mosaic. However, because I wanted to explore the distribution of mosaics across the medieval world and to consider mosaics in Constantinople alongside those in Rome or Damascus, this seemed the best way to organise the material.

'Where' is a relatively straightforward element since, by and large, wall mosaics survive in situ, either on the wall or in pieces on the floor, or their original location is well established (as with the panel from the Oratory of Pope John VII now in the Church of S. Maria in Cosmedin). There are a few exceptions to this. For example, a single panel showing St Sebastian now in the church of St Peter in Vinculi in Rome is not in its original location and we have no idea of where that was, other than that it was probably in Rome. However, what I have sought to do with 'where' is bring together medieval mosaics and record and map their distribution by century. These maps open the way to seeing mosaics in a wide Mediterranean context and, as we shall see, throw up some interesting distribution patterns over the centuries.

'When' is problematic, since it involves placing a mosaic in a particular century and so giving it what looks like a firm date. Of surviving wall mosaics, some can be dated with relative certainty to a specific period — the reign of a pope, for example — through the image shown (a portrait of the donor, usually put up by said individual), through inscriptions on the mosaic contemporary with it, or through written sources. Others are dated by association, through the presumption that they were put in place at the same time as the building

was constructed. We cannot automatically assume that this was invariably the case, however: at Livadia on Cyprus, the building may be twelfth century but the mosaic is said to be earlier; at S. Marco in Venice, mosaics have been installed and repaired throughout the history of the building; at S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, the apse mosaic postdates the building by eight centuries. Finally, many mosaics are dated through analysis of their style and their iconography, and this is the most contentious, leading to wide differences. The mosaics of the Rotunda in Thessaloniki, for one, have been dated to anywhere from the fourth to the eighth centuries. All dating methods offer some scope for confusion and inaccuracy and so dating is most reliable when a combination can be employed. Even then, however, this can lead to no more firm a dating than to a particular century.

Of the 380 or more mosaics still on the wall that are mentioned in this book, less than half have some form of agreed date, whether that is as specific as a year or as broad as a single century. Table 6 lists those examples of surviving mosaics where I think that the dating is possibly most secure, bold indicating the most likely and italics those where the evidence for date is more tendentious.

The table aims to highlight those mosaics where a definitive date seems acceptable. But what it also shows is that several well-known mosaics are conspicuous by their absence because they are not conclusively dated. These include the Rotunda in Thessaloniki, S. Pudenziana in Rome (perhaps fourth or perhaps fifth century), the narthex and vestibule panels in Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (which may be ninth or tenth century), the three Cypriot mosaics of the Mother of God at Lythrankomi, Kiti and Livadia, and the mosaics at Daphni. At S. Marco in Venice, the mosaics were installed over a period from the construction of the current church in the eleventh century to more or less the present (if repairs are included) and disentangling them one from another is an awful task, founded on the detailed analysis of style and iconography.

Using style and iconography to date a mosaic is problematic for a variety of reasons. First, I do not believe that we understand enough about techniques of mosaic-making to really be sure what the differences in the appearances of mosaics tell

us. Second, style too often becomes a circular tool. If a mosaic is dated to a century on comparison with the style of other mosaics also dated by style, as is often the case, then the whole edifice is based on a rocky foundation. In the case of the eleventh-century mosaics at Daphni for example, these are dated on the basis of the dating of the church (done through stylistic analysis of the architecture) in the first instance and hence the presumption of the two being constructed contemporaneously. Then comparisons with other mosaics from the same presumed time period are employed to enable a closer dating. This has led to the Daphni mosaics being located at different points in the eleventh and even twelfth centuries, depending on the reading of their association with other eleventh-century mosaics and works of art. This argument also depends, to an extent, on an implicit assumption that 'mosaic gets better': if the Daphni mosaics, notably the awesome Pantokrator in the dome, are perceived as examples of high-quality mosaic work and 'better' than those at say Hosios Loukas, then they are said to be later. Iconography can be used in the same way.

The three churches with mosaics still in situ on Cyprus, Lythrankomi, Kiti and Livadia, are dated in part through their depictions of the Mother of God: the argument is that they must be sixth century or later because this is when such iconography took off, though that too is not a given. They are also given a terminus post quem in the form of the Arab raids on Cyprus in the seventh century: supposedly they cannot postdate these because Cyprus fell into decline as a result of Arab incursions. However, recent research suggests a different picture for Cyprus, removing this check, so where does that leave the date of these three mosaics? Iconography too is as problematic as style if it assumes a progressive and teleological development of images. One patron's use of a certain type of image in 410, say, is no guarantee of what another patron might choose the next year or a hundred years later. Discussion of iconographies sees changes almost as surprising and remarkable, but one might equally well see variation as the norm, suited to the specific church and patron.

Because I felt it useful to map the extent of wall mosaics, I was obliged to make some decisions

about dating them. I have not tried to redate mosaics: that would require a different sort of book. Rather, where the date is uncertain or contested, I have indicated this in my discussion of the mosaic. On the maps, however, I have been forced to make a decision and so, in every case where a mosaic is dated across centuries, I have deliberately chosen to map it at its earliest plausible date. So, for example, with the Rotunda in Thessaloniki (fourth to eighth century), I have put it into the chapter and map dealing with fourth-century mosaics. However, I have noted this in the Appendix, which lists the sites located on each map. This is not entirely satisfactory but it seemed a consistent solution, and I do not think that it affects my overall conclusions about the scale and distribution of mosaics in any major distorting fashion.

The maps in each chapter bring together the where and when. They are meant to be neither definitive nor conclusive. They are a snapshot of the wall and vault mosaics for which physical evidence survives that have been recorded in the Database of Medieval Wall and Vault Mosaics as of April 2016. I am sure more mosaics will be added to this database and these may, in the future, affect ideas about the distribution of mosaics. However, the numbers in the database and the spread that they indicate suggest to me that a great many new mosaics will have to be added really to alter the patterns of high and low numbers and general distributions that are now apparent. The material evidence for the wall and vault mosaics in the database varies from the presence of the mosaic on its original wall to the discovery of a scatter of tesserae found on a site and felt by the discoverer to indicate the presence of wall mosaic. It is perfectly possible under this last heading that material has been included that is irrelevant. I would justify this by underlining a point I made in the Introduction to the book as a whole: what we have is not all there was. There was more wall mosaic than that which survives. Evidence for some of this mosaic exists in written texts, for example, recording it in some form or other. I have not used this material in the maps: it can be complicated, unclear and uncertain, and so I chose rather to use it instead in my discussion only. I should also make it clear that the maps record NEW mosaics each

century. They do not show what was already in existence or highlight what was destroyed. The risk is that we forget that mosaics, century by century, were made not in a vacuum but in the context of already existing mosaics. All of these caveats aside, I think the task worthwhile for what the maps do show about the quantities of mosaic surviving, the apparent peaks and troughs in its manufacture, and the patterns of its distribution.

The maps highlight just how patchy the survival of mosaics is. In Istanbul, for example, of the over five hundred churches that were once in Byzantine Constantinople, about thirty now survive. Of these, some seventeen offer some physical evidence of having possessed mosaics. In Rome, in contrast, physical evidence of mosaics survives from at least thirty-three churches.

Of course, this disparity is unsurprising since Rome has remained a Christian city since the fourth century, but it is worth remarking on how many mosaics survive from Rome and what that might imply (the issue of how many mosaics from Rome have been destroyed since the Middle Ages is another story). Rome tends to get overlooked in art historical discussions of 500-1100 and its wall mosaics very rarely get much discussion. Where they do, they suffer more than any other art form from that fundamental assumption about mosaic art as Byzantine, coupled with the belief that Roman art was the descendant of an implicitly distinct and superior East and that Rome was a somewhat passive recipient of Byzantine imagery. But Rome was rather more than that. It was a major city throughout the Middle Ages, a city of importance to both Latin and Greek cultures, a place where two Christian worlds met and communicated. Its mosaics - almost all those that survive were papal commissions - need to be understood in the context of Roman political, religious and cultural history, as well as Roman art history. And they need to be interpreted more widely in their medieval context. Just why did mosaic continue to be used in Rome throughout the medieval period? And how was it seen and understood in Rome? As Byzantine? Or as Roman? Or even Christian? The relationship between Byzantine, Western (often Roman) and Islamic mosaics is one that runs throughout this book.

The final issue I aim to consider in this second part of the book is the 'why' of these mosaics. I have been keen to situate them as works of art that someone paid for, for a reason, and to suggest that they have a historical importance. Art does not illustrate history: it is a part of the historical record and carries as much weight and significance as any written text. Because the bulk of surviving mosaics were the result of the patronage of wealthy and powerful people, much of the thrust of my discussion has been about the significance of mosaics and of mosaic itself when used by rulers and popes. I have tried to ask why a particular mosaic is in a particular place (rather than anywhere else), for example. To this end, I have spent less time on the iconography and the different interpretations of that iconography than perhaps I should have done. What the image means in terms of what it shows is the most frequently discussed aspect of mosaics and I could not do justice to that side of each mosaic without making this book at least four times as long. What my focus on new mosaics, century by century, also does is ignore how the meanings of the old mosaics almost certainly changed over time as images were interpreted and reinterpreted by their audiences, becoming more or less relevant in various ways. It is easy to smooth out the accretions and modifications made over time in buildings and to mosaics, and to forget that the old mosaics were still there playing a part in people's views and uses of mosaics. St Peter's is typical of this. Between the fourth and the fifteenth centuries, its mosaics were installed, extended, refurbished, changed, repaired and removed on countless occasions, altered to suit liturgical and artistic changes, described by historians and artists with varying degrees of reliability. But throughout all of this, the mosaics almost certainly continued to be influential and to affect the making of new mosaics in Rome, and almost certainly elsewhere.

A further point to which not as much attention is paid as it should be is the relationship between mosaics and other forms of monumental art, notably wall painting. Maria Andaloro and Serena Romano's *Corpus of medieval art in Rome* allows a few tentative figures to be extrapolated. In the volume dealing with 312-468, there are forty-eight entries, of which sixteen are mosaics; for the

volume covering 1050-1198, there are sixty-two entries in all, but only seven mosaics, and for 1198-1287, sixty-nine entries but eight mosaics. These figures suggest that mosaic was never a hugely popular and widely used art form — but one might expect that, because of the costs involved. It is an area that needs much more exploration, but this book is already too long.

My aim has been to integrate mosaics into a broader discussion of medieval Europe and to show that understanding art adds a greater dimension to our understanding of the past. Rather than discuss the 'history' and leave the art out, perhaps giving it a chapter of its own, I have sought to integrate the two, putting the mosaics at the centre of the history. Mosaic as an artistic medium was a strand that spread across the Mediterranean, used in both Christian and Muslim East and West. An awareness of the geographical and temporal extent and distribution of wall mosaics does contribute to an understanding of issues around manufacturing and trade in the Mediterranean world but it also says things about other contacts, artistic, political and religious alike. I have already discussed in some detail the problems with the idea that all mosaic came from Byzantium. This next part of the book essentially marshals evidence for saying that that was not the case but in so doing, it shows that mosaic itself as a medium, the simple fact of its use, tells us something about the significance of mosaics, in conceptual terms. We shall see mosaic valued as a sign of Romanness, of being a part of the world of the Roman Empire, and as a sign of Christianity. In the Western Christian world, especially in papal Rome, it became something representative of the Early Christian, apostolic world, and, more widely, its use served as a way of evoking an Early Christian heritage. In the Eastern Roman Empire, it remained a symbol of the Roman nature of that Empire. Its use outside the territories of 'old Rome', in the Islamic world for example, or by the Rus', was perhaps a borrowing and a translation of these Christian and Roman (and even Byzantine) glories into other faiths and other cultures. The very medium became a message in itself. This idea of exploring the medieval world and its self-definitions through its different religious communities is not a new one; in the political sphere, for example, it is something of a

commonplace. However, it is not a concept that has been used as widely in considering the material world, and mosaics are a case in point.

The discussions in each chapter in this next section are ostensibly structured around a particular theme. Many of these themes are relevant to more than one century and I have tried to keep them running through the narrative as a whole, but I have also sought to highlight specific topics at particular points. I open with a discussion about where wall mosaics might have come from and why they might have been adopted as an important part of the decoration of Christian religious buildings. I move to consider issues around the developing iconographies of wall mosaics, where I have taken the view that the inconsistent survival of mosaics throughout the medieval world means that we should understand each mosaic as a type, not a prototype. I consider the roles played by powerful patrons in the use of mosaic, why it was considered suitable for use in the ways in which it was used, why it was adopted in the Islamic world of the seventh and eighth centuries, what the messages of the medium as medium might have been to audiences in the Christian and Muslim worlds alike, whether it offered any sort of 'universal' or even 'universalising' language or whether what we see in mosaics reflects local and individual choices and circumstances (my answer, of course, falling somewhere between these two positions). And finally, and briefly, I consider the question of why mosaic ceased to be used, why it seems to have fallen from favour.

Questions of how and why art moves seem particularly pertinent for wall mosaics. The glass from which they were made forms one area of discussion. Eva Hoffman made the case for the existence of broader cultural mechanisms than cross-cultural exchange, ones through which objects extended beyond themselves, a common visual language across cultural and religious boundaries in which an object could make sense. She saw that objects could be made from selections of recognisable repertoires of images that had both specific contexts and meanings but a broader Mediterranean currency. I would say that mosaics hold a place in this model, especially if we replace 'object' with 'medium'. Mosaic itself, the very stuff

from which these images were made, had a currency, not a monolithic place, not seen in the same way by everyone in all places at all times, but with different levels of meanings and significance, appropriated and used by Romans, Byzantines, Latins, Normans, Venetians, Umayyads, Fatimids, Rus', so many of the different cultures of the medieval Mediterranean world, but valued and esteemed by all of them.

[T&T Clark Companion to Atonement](#) edited by Adam J. Johnson [Bloomsbury Companions, T&T Clark, 9780567565532]

The [T&T Clark Companion to Atonement](#) establishes a vision for the doctrine of the atonement as a unified yet extraordinarily rich event calling for the church's full appropriation. Most edited volumes on this doctrine focus on one aspect of the work of Christ (for example, Girard, Feminist thought, Penal Substitution or divine violence). The Companion is unique in that every essay seeks to both appropriate and stimulate the church's understanding of the manifold nature of Christ's death and resurrection.

The essays are divided into four main sections: 1) dogmatic location, 2) chapters on the Old and New Testaments, 3) major theologians and 4) contemporary developments. The first set of essays explore the inter-relationship between the atonement and other Christian doctrines (for example Trinity, Christology and Pneumatology), opening up yet further avenues of inquiry. Essays on key theologians eschew reductionism, striving to bring out the nuances and breadth of the contribution. The same is true of the biblical essays. The final section explores more recent developments within the doctrine (for example the work of Rene Girard, and the ongoing reflection on "Holy Saturday").

The book is comprised of 18 major essays, and an A-Z section containing shorter dictionary-length entries on a much broader range of topics. The result is a combination of in-depth analysis and breadth of scope, making this a benchmark work for further studies in the doctrine.

According to René Girard, society is constantly on the brink of self-destruction. Our inclination to imitate others ("mimetic desire"), good and natural in and of itself, easily mutates into envy, for the "imitation of the neighbor's desires engenders rivalry" and the rapid escalation of hostility, in which we perceive that our neighbor can possess the object of her desire (whether tangible or not) only at our own expense or loss. Such conflicts constantly threaten to tear society apart in a pattern of violence and revenge. Moreover, they tend to be opportunistic: at advanced stages they "are easily drawn to another scandal whose power of mimetic attraction is superior to theirs," such that one scandal is substituted for a new and more powerful and prestigious one, until finally "the most polarizing scandal remains alone on the stage ... when the whole community is mobilized against one and the same individual". This process of mimetic substitution is a vital one for the survival of the community, such that the crisis of war of "all against all" is transformed "into a war of all against one".

At this climactic point, Satan reveals his astonishing power of "expelling himself and bringing order back into human communities" (34). At the very height of mimetic conflict, and "in order to prevent the destruction of his kingdom, Satan makes out of his disorder itself, at its highest heat, a means of expelling himself: he "persuades the entire community, which has become unanimous, that this guilt [of a single, random and indefensible victim] is real" (35). By expelling and destroying this sacrificial victim or "scapegoat," "the crowd finds itself emptied of hostility and without an enemy ... Provisionally, at least, this community no longer experiences either hatred or resentment toward anyone or anything; it feels purified of all its tensions, or all its divisions, of everything fragmenting it". Satan restores the semblance of peace to the community, so that his reign can continue. So while rivalry and conflict naturally escalate, Satan diffuses them by casting himself out, by uniting the mass against an innocent victim (or one "suitable to receive the blame for society's ills, regardless of their actual innocence", because their murder will not demand an act of reprisal by another segment of that society), such that the tension of rivalry is temporarily gathered together and expelled by the community—a "sacrificial

theory of social cohesion," as Hunsinger calls it. In this way the community "sleep[s] the sleep of the just," and Satan forestalls "the total destruction of his kingdom". The community, finding that the scapegoated victim actually achieved the miracle of peace, divinizes the victim and celebrates the event in the form of sacrifices, thereby "regulating a 'sacrificial crisis' that recurs periodically" (Balthasar, 303).

This cycle, while present in every culture, is likewise veiled in every culture, such that one never finds a conscious understanding or exposure of this reality. Only through exploring and reading between the lines in the poets of ancient cultures was Girard able to piece together this thesis. The exception is the Bible: though this is true to a certain extent in the Old Testament, according to Girard this mimetic cycle is explicitly and resoundingly revealed in the New Testament in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Only here do we find the perspective of the victim, and the questions: (1) is the victim in fact guilty? (2) Who will throw the first stone? And more importantly still, only in the resurrection are we confronted with the undeniable fact that Jesus was an innocent victim and that in the community which followed him the cycle of mimetic violence was not only confronted and exposed but reversed (The role of the resurrection in *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* also suggests the development in Girard's thought. While previously it was thought that Girard's was a closed system that denied a historical resurrection, this no longer seems to be the case. This is the atonement Jesus Christ accomplishes: fully casting out Satan by rendering the cycle impotent through exposure. With the irrefutable vindication of a single victim, the question is unleashed upon the world of whether each and every victim might not be innocent, such that the power of Satan's mimetic cycle collapses.

At first glance, there is much to critique in Girard's thesis. He ravages the Old Testament, admitting that much of it speaks of a God wholly unlike the Christian God (a good reading of Irenaeus would be helpful here!). His position ultimately offers no real solution to the problem of sin, for in unveiling Satan he admits that in so doing, and as Satan can no longer "expel" himself, he now unleashes himself fully—"these mechanisms continue in our world

usually as only a trace, but occasionally they can also reappear in forms more virulent than ever and on an enormous scale". Within atonement studies, it seems evident that Girard's position is merely a demythologized and exemplarist account of Christus victor in which the work of Christ amounts to little more than what it teaches or inspires in us. Finally, one might argue that his work ultimately stems from his literary/cultural studies (Girard, [Violence and the Sacred](#)), with only a thin theological veneer attached, and one focused almost exclusively on the theological anthropology at that. But while these criticisms are significant, they are ultimately shallow, missing the power of Girard's thesis and touch on points which are accidental to his argument and could in principle be altered.

The key to appropriating Girard's thought lies in appreciating the limits he sets for his project: "the present book can define itself as ... an apology of Christianity rooted in what amounts to a Gospel-inspired breakthrough in the field of social science, not of theology". While he does occasionally make slightly bolder statements, the gist of Girard's project lies in developing the anthropological insight of the gospel in such a way that is not at all antagonistic toward but rather inseparable from its theological point a project he explicitly roots in the double nature of Jesus Christ. The question we ought to ask, given Girard's aim, is not whether he advances an account of the work of Christ which is in and of itself sufficient or orthodox, but rather whether Girard has uncovered a significant aspect of the work of Christ which belongs in a fuller account. The answer to this much more charitable question is yes, and the key, once again, has to do with anthropology.

There are a number of aspects of our sin of sin, which necessarily correspond to the aspects of Christ's reconciliation. One of these "moments" operates at the social level of reality—sin against neighbors and the reconciliation thereof. There is every reason to charitably presuppose that Girard's anthropological insight into the gospel may in fact bring some clarity to Scripture's witness to this specific moment, and in doing so, open our eyes to the other moments that relate to it. The key for future development lies in bringing this

anthropological insight within the sphere of a more properly theological vision, rather than burdening Girard's contribution with the need to single-handedly offer a sufficient account of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Atonement: The Shape and State of the Doctrine by Adam J. Johnson

The doctrine of the atonement is the church's act of worship, an act of faith seeking to understand and expound the manifold ways in which the whole life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God and Messiah of Israel, was the chosen and effective means of the triune God to bring about the reconciliation and fulfillment of all things which God had made (in heaven, earth and below the earth) through a restored relation to himself, veiled now and made fully manifest in the Eschaton.

The goal of this doctrine is to understand and expound: the sanctified intellect's joyful act of worship,' as the church and its members seek to understand the God who revealed himself in his saving act, by means of God's chosen witness to that act, Holy Scripture. Developing this doctrine is thus first and foremost an act of submission, of learning, recognizing, and understanding the witness we have received, for its origin lies in the decision and act of God, who does not merely seek to save his creatures, but to be known and worshipped by them as he is, as the Savior.

Only in a secondary and derivative way does the doctrine of the atonement dwell upon and respond to the challenges and heresies of its day. Biblical, theological, philosophical, religious, ethical, and other critiques have their vital role to play in the development and formation of doctrine (not least in holding it accountable to its true vocation). But as the church's calling and freedom to develop doctrine stems from the being and act of God, such critiques and questions play at most a significant ministerial role in holding the church accountable to its primary calling: joyful and rigorous reflection upon and development of the scriptural testimony to the saving work of the Lord Jesus. This is all the more true, given that the church's primary end endures beyond all conflict and error, joining the angels in their never-ending privilege of worship, singing "blessed is the lamb who was slain" (Rev. 5:12) in ever new stanzas and choruses (Ps. 96:1).

But this call to worship is a great and demanding task, for Christ's work is a complex and multidimensional act by an equally complex agent—the work of the triune God in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah of Israel. In this most central event in the history of creation, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit employ the ever-abundant resources of the divine life for our sakes, each divine person of the one Godhead fully active in this life and work of the eternal Son born of Jewish flesh.⁴ Above all it is the presence and activity of this God which gives the life and work of the man Jesus its abundant meaning, for by making himself the means of our salvation, God has enacted the simple yet abundant riches of the divine life for our salvation,⁵ such that it is the meaning and significance of the divine life itself which is the source, means, and end of salvation.⁶ God, who is the source, means, and end of creation, is likewise the one from whom, by whom, and for whom our salvation derives (Col. 1:16-20; Heb. 2:10). At every point Christ's work derives its nature and character from the heart and will of the triune God, particularly the doctrines of the Trinity, divine attributes, and election.

But at the same time this act of God takes up within it the significance with which God has freely endowed his creation, particularly his covenantal partners, humankind. As an Israelite, Jesus lives both a fully human life and a specifically Jewish one, participating in the history of God and his chosen people as the Messiah of his people and the rightful heir of the garden temple that was to be humankind's from the beginning. Everything that it means for God to be God, and everything that it means for humankind to be God's unique and image-bearing creature in covenantal fellowship, is at play in informing the complex event that is the life and work of Jesus Christ.

This complexity on the part of the primary agent (both theologically and anthropologically) is fitted to the task at hand. The mission of Jesus involves overcoming the reality and consequences of sin while simultaneously bringing to completion God's creative purposes: a cosmic work of redemption, restoration, and fulfillment that includes individual guilt but far transcends it. The disarray of the heavenly powers (Eph. 6:12), and the groaning of

the earth (Rom. 8:22), our burden of shame (Jer. 3:25), guilt (Is. 53:10), ignorance (Acts 17:30), and death (Rom. 5:12), the disastrous consequences of our misdirected worship (Rom. 1:18-32), the personal and social realities and consequences of our treason against God's kingdom (Amos 2:6-12), all these and more come to a head in the work of Christ, in whom God deals with them once and for all. But this negative dimension, which overcomes sin by bearing and doing away with it, is but the first movement of a far greater plan, wherein Christ recapitulates, or sums up and fulfills in himself the plan of God for his treasured creation. It is in Christ that we find life as it was meant to be, properly ordered toward God and his purposes. It is in him that the Old Testament covenants and promises are fulfilled, that the plan for creation disdained by Adam and Eve is brought to its proper end. It is in and through him that creation is reordered, restored, and made "very good" (Gen. 1:31) once more, never again to be threatened.

A work of such proportions includes all the horror of the cross, while extending beyond it to the resurrection—the reestablishment of Christ (and in him, all creation) within the life and fellowship of God, seated at God's right hand (Acts 2:33). And from this central movement (from cross to the empty tomb) the work of Christ reaches out to encompass the whole life, ascension, and second coming of Christ." For it is only by means of this whole life, willed and accomplished by the one God, Father, incarnate Son, and Holy Spirit, that the fullness of sin could be overcome, and more importantly, that the whole of God's plan for creation could be completed by the same one who made it in the first place. This is, after all, a work of at-one-ment: of making creation one with God, a oneness in the intimacy of relationship, in the fulfillment of God's purposes for his creatures, and a oneness impermeable to the threat of sin and death. Nothing less than the whole work of Christ, centering on the death and resurrection, but extending far beyond it, could bring about such a comprehensive and multifaceted work of one-making.

The doctrine of the atonement aims at giving a complete and balanced account of the work of Christ, for it is within the context of the Creator

making himself the means in Jesus Christ to realizing his sweeping creative purposes in the face of sin that more specific questions, controversies, and doctrinal development find their place. The alternative is disastrous, wherein near-sighted and myopic contemporary trends dictate the terms for theological discussion. As in building the soaring cathedrals of days gone by, only a proper foundation, structure, balance, and proportion within the doctrine will provide the architectural qualities necessary to accommodate the pressing concerns of the day, while making room for ongoing thought and worship in the years to come. While questions such as those regarding divine violence, the role of metaphor, the extent of the atonement, and the viability of competing theories of the atonement are significant and warrant sustained reflection, it is only as we attend to the shape and trajectory of the whole of the doctrine of Christ's reconciling work that we are equipped to tap into the deepest resources for answering, refraining, or rejecting these questions.

Of course, we can think of doctrine in terms of a set of (formal or informal) topics under which we have a variety of relevant questions and answers. Much better, however, to think of doctrine in terms of a structural entity. To build on the image of a cathedral, doctrine has its foundational features that support the whole edifice. Built upon this foundation are the walls and buttresses, which define the shape of the whole, sometimes apparently standing on their own, and in other instances working only in tension and harmony with other elements, as when the arches, columns, and domes work together to constitute the whole. But structure alone is insufficient, for it is the delightful sense of harmony and proportion that distinguishes a functional space from an architectural wonder fit to cultivate worship for centuries.

Polemic theology has its place, but at best it is a vital though limited and ultimately passing task of the church. Much more important is the emphasis upon the foundation, parts, relations, and proportions of the doctrine, which constitute the essential and proper task of theology: the work of the church knowing and worship its beginning and end, the triune God. It is precisely this emphasis upon the shape and structure of the atonement that

provides that depth and perspective which sustains the doctrine in the long run, while strengthening and honing its polemic fronts, whatever those may be at present and in the years to come.

The Shape of the Doctrine of Atonement

What then is the shape of the doctrine of the atonement? How do we reach a sufficiently broad and rich understanding of this work? The first and basic move is to recognize that the atonement receives its shape first and foremost from the fact that the being, life, and will of God are constitutive for every element of the doctrine. It is the triune God, the maker of heaven and earth, who is active in Jesus Christ, and it his will and character which determines every step of the way, whether directly, as he himself is active in this work, or indirectly, as he is the source of all creation, and that which all creation either conforms to or rebels against. Atonement doctrine derives its shape, meaning, and significance from the prior and greater reality of the eternal life of God, revealed and enacted decisively in the life of Jesus Christ.

The internal dynamics of the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (such as the divine origins and perichoresis), the divine attributes (such as the divine love, patience, long-suffering, holiness, goodness, and righteousness), the history of God's self-involvement with creation and the people of Israel in terms of his laws, covenants, promises, self-giving, and self-naming, at every step it is the person and work of the triune God which implicitly and explicitly constitutes the essential premises, elements, and purposes of any explanation of Christ's work—for this is his work: his action, his creation, his purposes. Because it is God's work of reclaiming God's creation by means of God's own life and act, for the accomplishment of God's purposes, the shape of the doctrine of the atonement is essentially Trinitarian, marked off at every point by the being and act of the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Among God's works, the life of Christ—particularly his death and resurrection—is the central locus of divine self-revelation, which marks the great transition from promise to fulfillment, from the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants to the New Covenant, with all the changes (and continuity) implicit therein. Far more than an event, or even an

event in the divine life, this particular work stretches back into the eternity of the divine life, as the subject and object of divine election, and forward into eternity. In thinking about the life and work of Christ, we are delving into the heart of God and his concern for his creative enterprise, for there is no such thing as creation apart from the will and purposes of its maker, Jesus Christ (John 1:3; Col. 1:1017). It is at this point, on this ground, that the "cathedral" of atonement doctrine is built—the work of Christ. So while the Trinity shapes every element, the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is where that shaping occurs, with special emphasis upon the death and resurrection.

Five Key Elements

While the divine life and will unconditionally shape every aspect of the atonement, and the edifice of the doctrine rises from the ground charted by the life of Christ, there are five main components to any theory of the atonement which together, in their many interrelations, provide the basic features of this building. First are the characters in this history, this relationship. The triune God made man in Jesus Christ through the incarnation of the Son takes center stage, but along with him the whole of humanity (Jew and Gentile alike), the angelic and demonic hosts, and the full spectrum of the animal kingdom all play their respective roles. Creation is the stage for covenant, for God's binding of himself in relationship to his creatures that he might share the divine life with them. Accordingly, the creatures with whom God is in relationship provide the basic building blocks of this building—it is with them that the triune God is concerned.

How the relationships between these characters is construed, or how these building blocks are connected and related within the structure, is largely a matter of the second main component of any theory: the divine attribute(s) it emphasizes. Athanasius's incorruption, Anselm's honor, Barth's justice, Campbell's love, Forsyth's holiness, Schleiermacher's impassibility, each of these theologians emphasize a unique attribute of God (in the midst of a host of other attributes to which they might refer), to give character and definition to their account of the works of Christ. Theories of the atonement, in order to limit the scope of their work and focus the energy of their treatment,

emphasize one divine attribute to develop the relationships between the characters in this drama—for while all the attributes are present and active in Christ, highlighting one or the other casts the whole scene in a very different light, drawing our attention to different aspects of our salvation in Christ. Just as a building is formed not simply by its parts but by their relations, it is precisely the divine attributes that provide the resources for speaking of this range of relations.

The third component hinges upon the second, accounting for the problem of sin Christ overcomes in terms of the perversion of this attribute, guiding us into a deeper understanding of the reality and implications of a particular dimension of our rebellion against God's character and will. The tension supporting an arch likewise tears it apart—for the power of goodness, lacking the bounds which keeps it in check, is precisely the power that is so destructive and evil. That is, the same relations that explain the strength of the building account for its demise, when those relations are perverted either through lack of proportion, changing circumstances, or misuse. And the consequences, of course, are disastrous, whether in architecture, human relations, or doctrine. Just as our salvation is manifold, so is our dilemma, and one responsibility of the doctrine of the atonement is to honor the nature of this manifold dilemma, bringing such diverse issues as guilt, shame, demonic oppression, environmental crises, and systemic poverty under the scope of its inquiry. The work of Christ, after all, reconciles all things, all sin, all things currently opposing the will and purpose of God.

The final two dimensions consider how the work of Christ saves us from this reality of sin (primarily through his death), and how he saves us for a creaturely participation in the reality of the divine life (primarily through his resurrection). Christ came not merely to free us from bondage, or remove our sin and ignorance, but to clothe us in righteousness, and build us up into a holy temple (1 Pet. 2:5). Both elements are vital. On the one hand, there is the matrix of realities and consequences from which we are saved by the work of Christ. But just as we don't restore a building merely to remove rubble and hazardous conditions, so Christ came that he might bring this building to completion, to

perfection. The work of Christ is fundamentally positive, constructive, and life-giving, though it contains within it an essentially negative, destructive, and deadly element. Above all, Christ came that he might extend to the creature participation in the life and character of God, thereby restoring all relations, overcoming all sin, and bringing about our full salvation.

These five components ultimately entail the whole of Christian doctrine. I put them in this abbreviated form to give clarity and definition to our speech. While such abbreviation has its place, it must always serve the higher end of theology outlined already, encouraging reflection into the whole set of relations between the various Christian doctrines (creation, pneumatology, ecclesiology etc.) and their subtopics within the doctrine of the atonement. For the shape of the doctrine of the atonement is determined by the life of God and is ordered to the life of God—a doctrine that contains within itself the whole sweep of theology, as God takes up his creation by means of his own self-involvement, bringing it to fulfillment in and through himself. While these five components play an important heuristic role in thinking about the basic shape of the work of Christ, ultimately theology, like the God it serves, is one, and this unity must play itself out in sustained attention to the whole set of doctrinal interrelationships. Nowhere is this truer than the atonement, which every doctrine looks toward or builds from. When put this way, these five main parts of any atonement theory must be a vehicle toward a fuller understanding and exposition of this event, rather than a rigid construct hampering further exploration.

Theories of the Atonement

This brings us to how we are to understand the phrase "theory of atonement" in the first place—a phrase largely unique to the past two hundred years. Prior to that, theologians sought to explain the efficacy of the work of Christ by exploring the manifold reasons making Jesus's death and resurrection necessary or fitting. Multiple explanations were a matter of course, given the complexity of the problem(s) to be overcome—more a matter of "let me count the ways" than boiling things down to one primary view. As part of the Enlightenment's influence, however, particularly

in attempts to summarize and classify the history of doctrine, theories often came to be seen as unique and mutually exclusive explanations held by individual theologians and the churches or schools that followed them. While this is not the place to offer a full critique of this unfortunate turn of events, it bears noting that this understanding of "theory" is (1) a late development in the history of doctrine, (2) subject to considerable criticism (and outright rejection), and (3) one that should not be presupposed without due theological warrant.

It is far more advisable to interpret theories as largely complementary expositions of the work of Christ. The key lies in the explanation of their diversity. If this is a matter of the cultural husk that came to surround (or contaminate) the gospel, or competing definitions of key concepts, then the differences will remain, and theories continue to vie for supremacy. If the diversity lies deeper still, however, if it lies in the different aspects of the divine character enacted for our salvation, the different dimensions of the plight of sin from which we are saved, and the complex nature of the life for which we are saved, then an altogether different understanding emerges. Different theories may be mutually complementary accounts of the work of Christ, exploring how his life, death, and resurrection were effective for us by means of emphasizing the role of different divine attributes in the work of Christ, the characters and forces involved, the sin they overcome, and the salvation they bring. A diversity of theories is thus inherent in the saving action of the living God who in and of himself is diverse in the fullness of the divine attributes. While historical differences between theories remain, and biblical and theological disagreements remain, the diversity proper to the life of God as it is active in Christ demands a corresponding diversity in our explanations of how this work was effective.

The Future of the Doctrine of Atonement

This vision of the doctrine calls for constructive theological work, furnished by biblical and historical retrieval. It calls for a move beyond the standard questions of the day, into fuller and richer explorations of the ways that the atonement relates to the whole of Christian doctrine and its constituent parts, bringing new life and worship to the field.

And while this is an inherently constructive project, the best tool for accomplishing it is biblical and historical retrieval. Biblical study is vital, for it is God's self-revelation through Scripture that is the basis for the theological task. Apart from this anchor and guide, there is little to distinguish theology from idle (though hopefully benevolent) speculation. At the same time, historical study is likewise vital, for it is the record of the church's interpretation of Scripture, providing us with nearly endless categories and possibilities that energize and rejuvenate the work of biblical studies. One of the best antidotes to the limitations of our culturally laden questions, concepts, and presuppositions is sustained interaction with equally limited questions, concepts, and presuppositions of other cultures, past and present. Struggling to delve into our varied Christian heritage offers one of the most profitable sources for self-critique on the one hand, and new and creative avenues for exploration on the other, for these theologians' reading of Scripture (and the history of theology preceding them) is just as biased as our own but biased in different ways.

While some might caution that studying the works of others may encumber true genius with a spirit of subservience, the greatness of the church is of a lively submissive sort, steeped in the thought of others, and ultimately in the thought of God. It is no less great, noble, and creative for the fact that it is properly submissive to its Lord and the theological mothers and fathers that preceded it, for its goal is not novelty but deepened, enriched, and invigorated understanding of the ever-rich God. And just as our theological heritage consists of a fluid interplay of dogmatic, biblical, philosophical, historical, pastoral, and contemplative categories and methods, it is likewise the reintegration of these fields which will contribute to the rejuvenation of the doctrine of the atonement in the present day—an effort which will equip the church to address the polemic charges leveled against it, by means of its attention to the far greater task of worshipping the triune God who in Jesus Christ became man for our sake and for our salvation.

Constructive Developments

The good news is that such work is well under way. First, in terms of historical awareness within studies of the doctrine, there are good signs that Aulén's

legacy is rapidly diminishing, as increasing momentum builds toward the appreciation of the multiplicity of theories held throughout the history of the church. While one still finds many works that presuppose the "three main views of the atonement," this is becoming less and less common.

Historical accuracy is in and of itself sufficient reason to debunk this artificial categorization and limitation of atonement theories, but the bigger concern is that such a framework for interpreting the history of the doctrine hampers our appreciation of both the immense diversity and simultaneous homogeneity of views which are of significant value in their own right, and an invaluable resource toward renewed interpretation of Scripture.

Second, responsible historical work is impacting introductory or general works on the atonement. Irenaeus is perhaps at the forefront of the movement, as his thought has significantly influenced a number of contemporary works. Significant work on Anselm is on the cusp of reshaping the tiresome abuse of this thought in popular books. This is likewise true of Abelard, who is widely (and falsely) reputed to be the father of "exemplarist" theories of the atonement. One final example of this retrieval work is John McLeod Campbell, whose thought is undergoing a small but significant renaissance.

Third, the history of an entire doctrine is likewise under rehabilitation in broad and sometimes quite divergent circles, as several traditions and figures are seeking to explore, popularize, and modify a range of theories known variously as theōsis, divinization, and participation (in Christ and/or God). These theories, particularly influential in the history of Eastern Christianity, explore the work of Christ in terms of his bringing humankind into a creaturely union with God. This vein of thought is simultaneously the locus of careful historical work and contemporary innovation (with some of the latter being highly polemical and irresponsible) and is particularly promising for the ways it draws upon the history of doctrine to interweave the character of God, power of the resurrection, and the role of the Holy Spirit into the doctrine of the atonement.

On the other side of the supposed biblical/theological divide, similarly excellent work is likewise strengthening and diversifying atonement studies. David Moffitt's work on the role of the resurrection and ascension in Hebrews is a wonderful example of biblical studies retrieving a whole spectrum of the work of Christ typically minimized within historical, biblical, and dogmatic work on the subject. Similarly, important (and ultimately related) work on the Pentateuch develops the unique significance of the sacrificial system as distinct from penal categories, focused on cleansing. Such works build up accounts of sin, atonement, and salvation in a manner distinct from judicial categories, dealing primarily (though not exclusively) with the notion of (im)purity, dovetailing beautifully with the theology of Hebrews. A third example of such biblical study is recent work on the relation between covenant and atonement. A noteworthy feature of many of these biblical studies is that they are increasingly in dialog with theological studies, both historical and contemporary. The results of this cross-pollination, or more aptly, the gradual overcoming of this artificial and disastrous rupture, promise to be of great benefit for everyone involved.

Such developments have their counterparts within constructive dogmatic work on the atonement, which in recent years has aggressively developed the doctrinal interrelations with regard to the atonement. This is most true of the doctrine of the Trinity, motivated in part by feminist, womanist, and nonviolent critiques of traditional views. Even apart from polemic concerns, however, this stands as a vibrant and dynamic field, building off of the significant attention given to the doctrine of the Trinity in recent decades on the one hand, and attention to Christ's descent into hell on the other. Recent studies have also drawn attention to the relationship between atonement and the doctrines of election, the divine attributes, and ecclesiology. Perhaps the two most outstanding loci for development in this regard are creation and pneumatology. While the Holy Spirit is often said to apply the work of Christ, or communicate the benefits of Christ's work to the believer, scant reflection has been offered on the role of the Holy Spirit in the atoning work itself—in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, the resources within the doctrine of creation have been relatively untapped in studies of Christ's work, though new interest in environmental/ecological issues on the one hand, and Irenaeus, Athanasius, and other patristic theologians on the other may bring about a shift in this regard.

Alongside these historical, biblical, and doctrinal developments, it is worth noting an increased interest in broadening the scope of material relevant for equipping and advancing studies of the atonement. Frances M. Young, for instance, has recently published a delightful book drawing not only upon Patristic sources, but ancient art, liturgy, and other theologically rich subject areas, to enrich her understanding of Christ's atonement. The incorporation of such a diverse and rich body of reflection from the history of the church promises to invigorate an already burgeoning field.

Critique and Polemic Fronts

While the emphasis in this chapter is undoubtedly upon the constructive nature of the theological task, theology does not happen in a vacuum, and it is often the case that polemic leads to doctrinal growth. The single greatest challenge to theories of the atonement that are in any way rooted in the theological tradition(s) of the church can be summed up in terms of nonviolent critiques and alternatives. The gist of this position is that interpretations of Christ's work which posit the crucifixion and death of Christ as an event willed or in some sense executed by the Father are intolerable, for they posit an intolerable violence within the character and life of God. Constructive alternatives vary widely, but the conviction that God is nonviolent in all his interactions, and especially the cross, is a widely shared, deeply held, and revolutionary thesis for the doctrine.

This critique, in many ways a variant of problems raised against traditional views of the atonement for centuries, is partly responsible for another major polemic front of the doctrine: the orthodoxy and relative significance of penal substitution. Though aspects of this doctrine were widely held in the early church, it began to emerge more clearly in Thomas Aquinas's development of Anselm and came into its own in the Reformers and post-Reformation theologians. Increasing attacks have

contributed to a new dynamic for some groups, in which penal substitution has become the theory rather than one of several theories of the atonement. This entrenchment leads to a dangerous lack of proportion and perspective. Fortunately, not all proponents of penal substitution are making this move, such that its entrenchment on the one hand, and creative and multi-aspectival development on the other are happening concurrently. Several factors are at play in this discussion: (1) the question of the role of penal substitution vis-à-vis other theories of the atonement, (2) the nature of divine violence, inasmuch as this is an indirect way of approaching those questions and topics, and (3) most importantly, the role of the doctrine of the Trinity and of the divine attributes (particularly justice, righteousness, and wrath).

For an increasing number of theologians, the vacuum created by the critique of penal substitution has been filled with variants of the Christus victor theory—a long-standing train of reflection exploring the work of Christ as depriving Satan of his (real or usurped) power or rights over creation and humankind. This family of theories is exceptionally diverse, ranging from revitalizations of traditional positions to demythologized accounts which employ categories of "victory," "ransom," and "Satan" by filling them with new meaning, often tied to views of evil as a societal force.

Summary

The doctrine of the atonement is no simple matter. To plumb its depths is to delve into the whole of the Bible, and the history of Christian reflection upon this book in biblical, theological, liturgical, and artistic reflection. No simple set of questions and answers, distinctions, and catch phrases will do justice to the complexity of the saving work of Jesus Christ—for this is the center of Christian doctrine, that to which and from which all other doctrinal reflection flows. And if this is to remain a stream of thought which waters and nourishes the church, we must learn to reinvigorate the old questions, and move on to ask new ones, for we are as likely as any other group in the history of the church to fall into ruts and stale patterns of thinking.

How best to do this? By playing at the boundaries—at the boundaries between doctrines, allowing the insights and developments in other

doctrines to bear fruit and implications within the doctrine of the atonement; at the boundaries of cultures, lending an attentive ear to other cultures, past and present, and the questions and perspectives alien to our own which can and should open our eyes to see things anew; at the boundaries of disciplines, dwelling on the possibilities and challenges raised by other theological subdisciplines than those in which we are trained, or other disciplines altogether, such as those of philosophy, sociology, history, and literature; at social and ecclesial boundaries, seeking to listen, honor, and embrace those whose experiences and views differ wildly from our own. But underlying this zest for an expansive understanding of the doctrine lies the core commitment unifying it all: the atoning work of Jesus Christ is the work of the triune God, receiving from him its distinctive meaning and significance. Every field, every insight, plays at best a ministerial role, witnessing to this central insight.

[The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits](#) by general editor, Thomas Worcester, SJ; and associate editors: Megan C. Armstrong, James Corkery, SJ, Alison Fleming, Andrés Ignacio Prieto; assistant editor, Henry Shea, SJ. [Cambridge University Press, 9780521769051]

Founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) has been praised as a saintly god-send and condemned as the work of Satan. With some 600 entries written by 110 authors - those inside and outside the order - this encyclopedia opens up the complexities of Jesuit history and explores the current life and work of this Catholic religious order and its global vocation. Approximately 230 entries are biographies, focusing on key people in Jesuit history, while the majority of the entries focus on Jesuit ideals, concepts, terminology, places, institutions, and events. With some 70 illustrations highlighting the centrality of visual images in Jesuit life, this encyclopedia is a comprehensive volume providing accessible and authoritative coverage of the Jesuits' life and work across the continents during the last five centuries.

Excerpt: In the history of print and publishing, encyclopedias are above all associated with the eighteenth century, also the period in which the Society of Jesus was expelled by several states and then suppressed by the pope. This was the age of the Enlightenment, an age in which certain publications played an exceptionally prominent role, and none more so than Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. The Enlightenment era has even been called the Age of the Encyclopedia. Diderot's consisted of seventeen volumes, first published between 1751 and 1772, with some 24,000 entries, by many contributors. The subtitle of his encyclopedia indicated that the topic was sciences, arts, and the professions. In these volumes, reason was exalted and traditional religion marginalized; progress was imagined as requiring leaving a priestly past, including the Jesuit past, behind.

Diderot's massive encyclopedia helped to change the world, in no small ways, for good or for ill. And it was so influential that even now the very genre of an encyclopedia may bring his volumes to mind. An encyclopedia of the Jesuits would, I dare say, have horrified Diderot, unless it were but a relentless catalogue of Jesuit misdeeds.

A Jesuit encyclopedia proposed by, and published by, Cambridge University Press, a press that was founded in Elizabethan England — a time and place hardly friendly to the Jesuits, to say the least — helps to show just how much times have changed. All of the entries for this Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits were written during the pontificate of Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope. I am and my associate and assistant editors are delighted to dedicate this encyclopedia to him.

Thus, what is in and what is not in this encyclopedia? What matters enough to be included? This one-volume reference work was commissioned as a publication of no more than 500,000 words, with some 600 entries, to appear in hardcover and electronic versions. It has required a great many decisions as to what's in and what's out, who's in and who's out, and so on. This process of selection required a lot of time; in Jesuit terms it required discernment. What I believe matters most about the Jesuits is in; no doubt some will contest some of these decisions. But in fact the decisions were made collaboratively with the other editors

and in the light of the generous advice of a great many people, Jesuits and others, from across the world, ranging from graduate students to professors emeriti/ae. Of the 600 entries, approximately 230 are biographies of individual Jesuits and of other persons important for Jesuit history; approximately 370 entries treat concepts, terms, places, institutions, events that matter for Jesuits. Depending on the topic, some entries are as brief as 300 words, while some are as long as 3,000 words; many are about 800 words. Most entries include a bibliography. Entries are signed by their authors, of whom there are 110, a distinguished and international group of scholars, ranging from Church historians and cultural historians to theologians and art historians, from Jesuits and other Catholics, to persons of other faiths or of none. Opinions expressed in entries represent the views of the authors, not necessarily those of the volume's editors. Some seventy images/illustrations point to the visual dimension of Jesuit experience.

One way of approaching Jesuit history is to focus on ideals, and on their expression in the writings of the founder, and/or in official Jesuit documents. Thus, if this is the way to get at what matters most about the Jesuits, one will emphasize reading the autobiography of Ignatius, his *Spiritual Exercises*, perhaps some of his thousands of letters, and then the *Constitutions*, of which he is the principal author. And there have been important studies done recently on these topics. One could also turn to decrees of Jesuit General Congregations, up to the most recent, along with perhaps letters and other documents from superiors general, from Ignatius to superior general Adolfo Nicolás. Many of these topics are included in this encyclopedia.

Yet even though all of these writings, decrees, and so on are certainly very important, I am not convinced that they are always what matters most, or where one might glean what matters most, about the Society of Jesus. How ideals and the prescribed have actually been lived out (or not) is something much, much messier, and much more time-consuming to access and study. But I believe that how Jesuits have lived their lives and what they have actually done are essential topics if one is to be able to talk with any credibility about Jesuit history. I am not

suggesting that there has always been a huge gap between ideal and reality, but I suspect that there has usually been at least some significant disparity, human nature being what it is. Jesuits are human beings, with strengths, weaknesses, inclinations and actions ranging from heroic sanctity to deep-seated evil. Most Jesuits are somewhere in-between, most of the time.

The sources for studying what Jesuits have done over the centuries are phenomenal; an amazing quantity of manuscripts, printed sources, and other primary sources — such as Jesuit architecture, painting, other visual arts — have survived, despite expulsions of the Society from various countries, despite the suppression of 1773-1814, despite the vicissitudes of time. Archives and libraries rich in Jesuit sources have helped to make this reference work possible.

Expulsions and suppression: These kinds of events recall the fact that the Society of Jesus has not always been appreciated or well received. The extremely varied reception of the Society of Jesus is surely one of its characteristics: Jesuits have been used as scapegoats for just about everything wrong with culture and society; some Jesuits have been killed for simply being Jesuits, while others have been revered as saints and heroes in their lifetimes, whether or not they are ever officially beatified or canonized. The Society itself, as an institution, has experienced just as broad a range of responses, from demonization to an embarrassing flood of unqualified praise. Enemies of the Jesuits, as well as their friends, must be given ample space in this encyclopedia.

The bicentennial of the "restoration" of the Society in 2014 was not a minor anniversary. The significance for Jesuits of the decision of Pope Pius VII, promulgated on August 7, 1814, can hardly be exaggerated. Without it, there would be no Society of Jesus today, there would be no Jesuit schools, no retreat houses, or anything else. In Jesuit history, Pope Pius VII matters a lot. He was also a witness for the Church's freedom in the age of Napoleon's imperialism.

Questions remain for historians to sort about the Society post-1814. This is a period of Jesuit history that has yet to gain the kind of intense attention

currently being given to the pre-1773 Jesuits. Among the key questions: To what extent was post-1814 a restoration of what had existed before? Or was it really a new Society of Jesus, inspired by the old Society in many ways, to be sure, but really something new? This question of continuity and discontinuity pre-1773/post-1814 is a question that informs many of the entries that follow.

But many people approach Jesuit history as a matter of great individuals: both Ignatius and other first-generation Jesuits such as Francis Xavier or Peter Faber, and then as we move along chronologically, to consider superiors general and other Jesuit administrators. Or perhaps to focus on Saints, Blesseds, and martyrs, from Ignatius and Xavier, to Peter Canisius, to Robert Bellarmine or Aloysius Gonzaga, to Claude La Colombière, the North American martyrs or, in the twentieth century, Miguel Pro, Alberto Hurtado, and the Jesuit martyrs in El Salvador. Or Jesuit scholars, theologians, writers, artists and scientists, from Christopher Clavius to Athanasius Kircher, Daniel Seghers and Andrea Pozzo to Gerard Manley Hopkins, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, John Courtney Murray, Karl Rahner, Walter Ong, Jean-Yves Calvez, Pedro Arrupe, Avery Dulles. Jesuits such as these have their own entry in this work.

Lists of names may shed light on the accomplishments of some great individuals, but these lists may also be a bit tedious and, worse, may also occlude a key dimension of Jesuit life. Most of the time, most Jesuits are not simply lone warriors, as it were, carrying out a mission given to them as individuals and that's that. Jesuits are formed in community, and most of them spend most of their lives in community. To put this another way, what matters most about the Society of Jesus may not be a list of great individuals, but a Jesuit collective identity, or corporate culture. Shared priorities, attitudes, values, experiences; a shared project, shared goals, shared commitments, shared resources. These change somewhat, or perhaps a great deal, over time. Each generation of Jesuits may have a specific identity.

The Jesuit vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience may reveal shared values, priorities, shared commitments, and thus at least some of what matters most about the Jesuits. The Jesuit vow of

poverty, I would suggest, has been and is a promise to let go of rugged individualism and independence in favor of mutual support and interdependence. This goes against what capitalist culture tells Jesuits they ought to be. The Jesuit vow of poverty is profoundly counter-cultural; my students are invariably shocked, indeed astonished, if I mention that Jesuits sign their salaries over to their Jesuit community. Jesuit obedience, too, means putting choice of works and other major life choices in a much broader context than simply individual preferences. It means opting for a life in which personal preferences may give way to more significant considerations. Availability for works one would not, on one's own, be likely to choose, is a central part of Jesuit obedience and identity. An effort to serve others, to help to meet their needs, not solely one's own needs and preferences, is at the heart of the matter. Jesuit chastity is articulated in a similar way: availability for mission, for serving others, those most in need, anywhere in the world, perhaps on short notice.

And yet, as I say these things, I am also concerned to caution against ahistorical generalizations, and to insist on paying attention to the particularities of Jesuit practice in different times and places. The encyclopedia entries on schools or anything else Jesuit must take account not so much of a timeless meaning, but of change over time. History means change, and since the sixteenth century the Society of Jesus has been no more exempt from change than anyone else. There is no direct or short path from what John O'Malley called the "first Jesuits" to Jesuits today. There is, rather, a complex path, winding and meandering at times, doubling back, and then perhaps moving forward in some way.

Is a close look at periods of growth for the Society the way to elicit what matters most about the Jesuits? My own field as a historian is the seventeenth century, the religious history of seventeenth-century France and Italy in particular. That era was in some ways the golden age for Jesuits in Europe, with rapid expansion in many other parts of the world as well. In 1640 the centennial of the Society was celebrated, and such celebration included publication in Antwerp of a self-congratulatory commemorative book, *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Iesu*. In France, there was

strong royal support for Jesuits, and a growing and large number of Jesuit colleges, churches, publications, etc; a Jesuit was the king's confessor, and Jesuits ministered to all levels of society, from the court in Paris and Versailles to poor workers and peasants. And yet it was also a period of intense opposition to the Society of Jesus.

Another key question is who are/or have been the real leaders, the ones that actually matter, in a given era and venue of Jesuit life and work? Many Jesuits would say that Fr. Pedro Arrupe, superior general 1965-83, was a great leader, but if he was, was it as an administrator, or as a charismatic and prophetic figure? Did he perhaps lead by the example of a holy life rather than by his administrative decisions? If leaders are not necessarily administrators, are they perhaps spiritual directors and confessors? Preachers? Teachers? Writers? Scholars? Advocates for and agents of social justice? Chaplains in hospitals and prisons? No doubt for various times and places the answer may differ. Some would say that in recent decades the voices for social justice stand out. One may think, for example, of the Jesuit Refugee Service, founded in 1981. It may be that leaders in the Society are those that serve where the needs are greatest, and this can be a lot of different places.

One may also think of leaders as innovators. Is innovation what matters most? Though the word 'innovation' had very negative connotations in the time of Ignatius — more or less equivalent to heresy — today it has a rather positive resonance for most people. And I think that Jesuits tend to think of the Society of Jesus as innovative, from its very beginnings. For example, unlike monastic orders, and even unlike the friars such as Franciscans and Dominicans, Jesuits do not chant the divine office in choir. Jesuit spirituality is centered on the Spiritual Exercises, not on a liturgical calendar, especially not on the divine office in common. Jesuit spirituality is not tied to the seasons of the liturgical year, and yet the Eucharist has been at the heart of Jesuit spirituality. That no female branch of the Society developed was also a kind of innovation, but one Jesuits may find embarrassing today. But this lacuna is one of the things that distinguished Jesuits from monastic

orders or from the mendicant orders: they had male and female branches. And yet, to be fair, religious life for women in the sixteenth century was almost always cloistered monastic life only. This began to change by the seventeenth century, and Jesuits did at times support efforts to create active women's communities similar to the Jesuits: for example, Fr. Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ, played a central role in the establishment of the Sisters of St. Joseph, in seventeenth-century France.

As an active religious order, indeed some might say the active religious order par excellence, the Society of Jesus may tend to be identified by its works, by what its members do. Is then what matters most about the Jesuits what they do? In a similar vein, are Jesuits best understood as hyphenated priests? Priest-teachers, priest-scholars, and so on?

But perhaps how Jesuits do what they do is a better gauge of what matters most than what we do. Ignatius was very keen to prevent greed from taking hold of what would be the Jesuit way of doing things. Ministry was to be offered gratis, and this included not only pastoral or sacramental ministry but also education. Up to the Suppression, Jesuit schools did not charge tuition. As I tell my students, perhaps those really were the good old days! And yet those days are not completely gone. In recent times, in the United States, where high-priced tuition and fees are the norm in private schools, Nativity middle schools actually live out the older tradition and provide a free education. Generosity is at the heart of Ignatian ideals, and Jesuits today do at times manifest this in a variety of ways, not just in some schools.

One may also ask: Is what matters most who Jesuits are? Jesuits call themselves companions of Jesus and the company of Jesus: Is this companionship what matters most? Jesuits have often had a reputation as men of hope and optimism, as men who live in the world and see it as filled with the presence of God. Jesuits have often been seen as taking a very positive view of human nature, emphasizing human dignity and freedom and how human beings are created in the image of God. And Jesuits tend to be optimistic about where God may be found: everywhere, not just in church, not just among the pious, and the good people; not just

among the respectable but also, and perhaps especially, among the outcasts, the outsiders, the despised, the excluded, the marginalized, in all corners of the earth, Christian or otherwise. Jesuits commit themselves to following and walking with the Jesus who favored the scorned people, the ones that were wrongly thought not to count or somehow to be inferior. Pope Francis is relentless in drawing attention to the marginalized and in insisting that priests, Jesuits among them, give priority to their needs.

Attention to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius reveals a spirituality that is grounded in dependence on God's abundant and utterly undeserved grace, but it is also a spirituality that emphasizes the freedom and the ability of the human being to make a choice to cooperate with that grace, to engage in a cooperation rooted in a love that manifests itself in deeds. There is a kind of balance of hard work and radical dependence on grace. Indeed the very notion of "exercises" suggests an important role for human effort, for human practice, not merely for some passive reception of, or submission to, something entirely external to oneself and one's actions. Thus Jesuits embrace not nature or grace, but both nature and grace. Jesuit spirituality is focused on Jesus, his life, his ministry, his death and resurrection. Jesuits are Christocentric, but at the same time Jesuits, following Ignatius, also find God in all sorts of places others might spurn as godless. God, for Jesuits, is revealed in Jesus Christ in a particular way, but God is also revealed in an amazing array of places, persons, and situations that many people would find unlikely to reveal the presence of God. "Both ... and" may be a Jesuit way of thinking. The Spiritual Exercises are thoroughly Christocentric, and they are more than that too.

In relation to the Exercises, and in many other places, including daily life and how they talk about it, Jesuits often use a specialized vocabulary. Is this Jesuit language, is this Jesuit-speak, perhaps the key, the entrée, to what matters most? The encyclopedia entries that follow include many examples of Jesuit terminology. Jesuit terminology grounded in the Spiritual Exercises includes the principle and foundation, composition of place, the examen, discernment, and three degrees of

humility. There is contemplation and the Suscipe. And Jesuit language goes well beyond the Exercises; Jesuits speak of novices, scholastics, regents, temporal and spiritual coadjutors, professed fathers, the provincial. Jesuits are called to be zealous for helping souls. There are Jesuit houses, regions, provinces, and assistancies; there is the ratio studiorum, the preferential option for the poor, men and women for others, the magis; there is AMDG and the faith that does justice. There is villa; there are informationes; there are degentes; there is much, much more.

Jesuits belong to particular local Jesuit communities and to Jesuit provinces. But they also belong very much to the entire, worldwide Society of Jesus. The international dimension of the Society goes back to its very origins. The first Jesuits, Ignatius included, were foreign students studying at the University of Paris. This fact points to two central characteristics of the Society of Jesus: its international membership and identity, and its focus on education. Ignatius understood himself as a pilgrim, on the road. And pilgrimage, in various ways, is a part of a Jesuit's formation. A Jesuit is formed to be available to be sent to the ends of the earth, wherever the needs are greatest. The great variety of places to which Jesuits have been sent must figure in this encyclopedia. Jesuits are called to transcend national, ethnic, cultural, and racial boundaries; a good Jesuit is an antidote to the fear fostered by xenophobia. For a Jesuit, the pope is the universal pastor, a pastor able to transcend national barriers. When Jesuits make a vow to God of obedience to the pope, they mean obedience to one concerned to provide for the needs of persons all around the globe.

Recent historical work has documented that many European Jesuits in the first two centuries of the Society's existence wrote letters to provincials and to Fr. General asking to be sent overseas to the missions; some of these volunteers were accepted and some were not. At the margins, yet in the center: Jesuits in China is a topic that seems to fascinate a very large numbers of scholars in recent years, a fascination that was further energized by the 400th anniversary, in 2010, of the death of Matteo Ricci. But in some ways, the Jesuits in China were not typical of what Jesuits did in the sixteenth

to eighteenth centuries; for one thing, they founded no school in China. By most standards their work in China was not very successful. But then what criteria do we use to gauge Jesuit success? Are they somehow different from criteria used elsewhere?

To return to the theme of education, a few years ago I was asked at the College of the Holy Cross to write a brief summary of what Jesuit education is all about, and this summary was to help a college committee on strategic planning do its work. This is what I wrote:

Optimistic in its assessment of human possibilities, the Society of Jesus views each person as an image of God. Jesuit education values the beauty and dignity of that image, and cherishes the diversity of ways in which human beings manifest the glory of God. Academic excellence is understood to play an indispensable role in making that glory evident. Interdisciplinary in its structure and rationale, Jesuit education privileges the links between the humanities, the sciences, and social sciences. Respecting and valuing the particular methodology of each discipline, Jesuit education also poses broad questions of ultimate meaning and purpose, questions that cut across the curriculum and shed light on its interconnections. Jesuit education spares no effort in developing as fully as possible the unique potential of each student for growth in knowledge and wisdom.

One may ask: Are Jesuit schools the premier example of Jesuit success? Though the Society of Jesus was not founded as a teaching order, that is, as a religious order devoted

exclusively or almost exclusively to teaching, within the lifetime of Ignatius Jesuit schools were founded and began in various ways to take precedence over most other work. More and more Jesuits were missioned to work in the schools. Of the hundreds of Jesuit schools, from those for young children to research universities for graduate students, selected institutions have their own entries in this encyclopedia, institutions representative of the diverse countries and cultures where Jesuit schools have been founded.

It should be kept in mind that the Jesuit community attached to a school has very often included men working in other ministries such as itinerant preaching or hospital chaplaincy. But is education in fact what matters most about the Jesuits? Jesuits themselves are often highly educated, beyond the already long formation in philosophy and theology required for ordination. It is not uncommon to hear Jesuits in studies joke about being in the 20th grade or higher. And some Jesuits along with others would say that Jesuit schools are what matters most about the Society of Jesus.

Jesuit schools have often done a lot with the arts, with the visual arts, and with performing arts, theater in particular. Indeed, Jesuits tend to be very aware of the pedagogical power of images. The plain, bare style of some monastic traditions and of many Protestant churches is not a Jesuit style. Jesuits have known how to use images in teaching, and in propagating the faith. Jesuit spirituality is incarnational: There is emphasis on seeing and on other senses as a way to believing and to living out the faith. The visual imagination plays a major role in the Spiritual Exercises; Jesuit spirituality focuses on God as taking on flesh in Jesus, thus on a transcendent God who chose to be made as visible and tangible as any human being. Some seventy images are included in this encyclopedia, and not as mere "illustrations" somehow ancillary to the text but as integral parts of Jesuit history and identity, as central to what matters most about the Jesuits.

In their efforts to teach something about God to peoples in Asia, in the Americas, and elsewhere, Jesuits often relied on images, even as they worked hard to learn local languages. Jesuit missionaries, in some parts of the world, made the founding of schools a priority, for the benefit of both the children of European colonists and the native population. In North America, the first Jesuit school was founded in Quebec City, in 1639. From the sixteenth century on, as Jesuits went all over the world, they often gained a reputation, through their preaching and teaching, for accommodating local cultures. That is, rather than take a tabula rasa approach, as some other missionaries did, to the cultures they encountered in places such as Asia or the Americas, Jesuit missionaries tried to separate

Christian faith from European cultures and to respect local cultures. And this kind of accommodation got the Jesuits into a lot of trouble in Europe, where some popes and other authorities saw the Jesuits as soft on paganism (e.g., Chinese Rites Controversy). In recent decades, most scholars working on this kind of topic tend to view favorably Jesuit efforts at accommodation, even if by post-colonial standards (post-1945 perspectives) Jesuits remained limited by, and at times gave way to, European arrogance, racism, condescension.

But it was not necessarily a good thing to always embrace accommodation. Is it a good thing for Jesuits to accept the caste system of India and to despise those considered of low caste or as untouchable? Or if a Jesuit were to find himself in Nazi Germany, would accommodation of Nazi culture be appropriate? Jesuits once owned slaves in the southern United States — a case of accommodation of local culture, but hardly a witness to the Gospel.

Collaboration with others is something Jesuits have never done without, certainly in a time and place of declining Jesuit numbers, as is the case in parts of the world at present, but it is also true that Jesuits have always needed co-workers, supporters, allies. This is part of the Jesuits' story, too. Benefactors have always been needed, and so too at least tacit tolerance of Church and State authorities for Jesuit schools and other works; lay collaborators were envisioned as playing a role from the beginning. In the early modern period, confraternities and Marian congregations had Jesuit chaplains but were largely run by and for persons other than Jesuits.

As for Jesuit schools, Ignatius insisted that Jesuits not administer corporal punishment, though they could have such punishment meted out by a corrector, a person other than a Jesuit. This may seem a rather odd, perhaps awkward, example of persons collaborating with Jesuits, but the point here is simply that, from the sixteenth century on, Jesuits did not engage in their works without collaborators. It is not merely a recent development, though General Congregation 34 of the Society of Jesus, meeting in 1995, issued a decree on cooperation with laity in mission as well a decree on women. Both decrees acknowledge the dependence of

Jesuit works on contributions of persons other than Jesuits.

In 2008, at the 35th General Congregation, Pope Benedict XVI called on Jesuits to serve the universal Church, especially by going to the frontiers, not only geographic frontiers, but cultural and intellectual ones, in order to live out a faith that is harmonious with reason and with science, a faith that promotes justice for the poor and the excluded. And in a talk in Mexico City in 2010, Fr. General Nicolás pointed to a "world of globalized superficiality of thought" and called on Jesuits and their collaborators to "promote in creative new ways the depth of thought and imagination that are distinguished marks of the Ignatian tradition" ("Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry").

This encyclopedia considers not only the history of the Jesuits since their founding in 1540 but also the contemporary Society of Jesus.

Though it may seem self-evident to say that an encyclopedia is encyclopedic, in the sense of all-inclusive, in fact this one-volume reference work does not and cannot cover everything about the Jesuits. Even ten volumes or twenty volumes would not suffice for that. No doubt some readers will regret this or that silence or absence. In order to stay within the word limit of the project, tough choices have had to be made, but they have been made with a view to putting forward what matters about Jesuits, from a variety of perspectives, and including religion, culture, education, and the arts. The goal has been to include what sheds the most light on the significance of the Jesuits since their founding in the sixteenth century, and to do so in a reference work of manageable size, accessible and useful for a multiplicity of audiences: students of various levels, an educated public, scholars, Jesuits, and other clergy and religious. Many readers of this encyclopedia will already be aware of the *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, published, after various delays, in Spanish only in 2001. Among the *Diccionario's* obvious limitations is a complete lack of illustrations or images. Its entries are already somewhat dated, having been commissioned and written some two or three decades ago; yet it remains a useful reference

work, especially for basic biographical information on a great many obscure Jesuits.

Entries for this Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits were commissioned in 2013 and later; an English-language project for Cambridge University Press, it is far more concise than the *Diccionario* and includes as its authors both well-known experts and younger scholars charting new paths in Jesuit studies, a burgeoning, lively field for the twenty-first century, a field given fresh energy by a Jesuit pope full of surprises. This encyclopedia has sought to take into account, Jesuits from the time of Ignatius to the first years of the papacy of Pope Francis. Some of the possible topics have been very much moving targets, as it were. Changing boundaries and names of Jesuit provinces offer a good example of such movement, and they are a topic on which whatever is said may be outdated very quickly. So that the ever-present prospect of one more update not delay publication, any Jesuit events or developments later than mid-2016 are not included in this encyclopedia.

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Thomas Worcester, SJ General Editor <>

Aquinas

[The Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae](#) by Philip McCosker and Denys Turner [Cambridge Companions to Religion, Cambridge University Press, 9780521705448]

Arguably the most influential work of systematic theology in the history of Christianity, Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* has shaped all subsequent theology since it was written in the late thirteenth century. This Companion features essays from both specialists in Aquinas' thought and from constructive contemporary theologians to demonstrate how to read the text effectively and how to relate it to past and current theological questions. The authors thoroughly examine individual topics addressed in the *Summa*, such as God, the Trinity, eternity, providence, virtue, grace, and the sacraments, making the text accessible to students of all levels. They further discuss the contextual, methodological, and structural issues surrounding the *Summa*, as well as its interaction with a variety of religious traditions. This volume will not only allow readers to develop a comprehensive multi-perspectival understanding of Aquinas' main mature theological work, but also promote dialogue about the vital role of the *Summa* in theology today.

Excerpt: What need is there for yet another collection of essays on Thomas Aquinas? The obvious, and nondefensive, answer to that question is that we need any and as many as are worthwhile, as many as contribute to his reception within the theological and philosophical communities — those communities being as many and various as they are, they need as many and various Thomases. And Thomas being the kind of generative thinker that he is, his writings invite and

reward endlessly, even occasionally cacophonously, plural engagements.

This volume, moreover, is less than a comprehensive account of the theology of Thomas Aquinas, being confined as it is to the Thomas whose theological mind can be discerned in a particular text, his *Summa Theologiae*. Though our collection no doubt will contribute to the dominance of that text within the contemporary reception of Thomas' thought, it is worthwhile noting now that it would be possible to give an account of Thomas' theology, in its different way as comprehensive, and in its different way as limited, as that to be found in the *Summa*, but based entirely on his biblical commentaries, especially those on the gospels of Matthew and John.

There is therefore something distinctive about a collection of papers on the text of the *Summa Theologiae* alone. Our focus on Thomas' mature 'systematic' work of theology, so central to the theological canon, yields different dividends. In addition to exploring Thomas' own views on many theological topics and methodological questions, our contributors show how one can still do theology with this seminal text. Our volume has quite a bit to say (and show) on how that might be done. It thus necessarily differs in focus from its stable-mate edited by Norman Kretzmann and Eleanore Stump, [The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas](#) (Cambridge University Press, 9780521437691), for this latter volume attends principally to the thought of the philosopher whom, Thomas believes, he has to be if he is to have any sort of credibility as a theologian. These two Thomases should ideally be read side by side. Both are needed and they fit together, indeed frequently they are identical. At any rate this volume is intended to complement that earlier volume. In its multi-perspectival dimension it is also doing something significantly different from the recent single-author guides to the *Summa Theologiae* by Bauerschmidt, Davies, Loughlin, McGinn, and Torrell. It is closest to Andreas Speer's edited collection but differs from it in its theological focus. Some of the dividends by which we have been struck in our collection include: the thoroughgoing importance of *convenientia*, or fittingness, in the *Summa*; the ubiquity of the Holy Spirit in Thomas' teaching; the aporetic nature of

Thomas' christology and anthropology; the forgotten centrality of the life of Christ in his thought; the way in which Thomas complicates facile East/West theological cleavages; and the overall importance of the practical, especially in the form of moral theology, for the whole: it is all geared to action.

One recent development in the reception of Thomas' Summa is a plurality and diversity of interpretations, whether of its overall structure and purpose, or of the relative significance of the two main sources known to him of classical Greek philosophies in Aristotle and Plato, or of the influence on his theology of Muslim thought, especially that of Avicenna (as Ibn Sina was known in the Latin West), or the Jewish theologian Maimonides, or indeed of the relative roles of scripture and philosophy. In this collection of papers we have tried to represent no one school of interpretation alone, but rather as many as possible. The heterogeneity of readings, of styles of presentation, of views about the nature, purpose and context of the text means that no reader should expect an easily identified consistency in the matter of the interpretation of the Summa. One should, rather, expect to find represented a broad, though by no means entirely comprehensive, representation of the main approaches to the reading of Thomas' Summa in contemporary scholarship. This should encourage readers to come up with their own interpretations of Thomas' text in dialogue with others.

Because, unusually, this Cambridge Companion is focussed upon a text rather than a complete oeuvre or single theme, we have introduced a whole initial section devoted to the question of what kind of text it is, and how it should be read. We thought it important to attend to the preliminary questions of what Thomas' purpose was in writing it; of how, for Thomas, the description of the author at work in composing the Summa is incomplete without reference to the sources of his theology in a life of prayer; of how the structure of the text reveals its primary purpose to be the construction of a coherent moral theology appropriate for the training of Dominican preachers. We thought it important to give an account of the relative places and roles of scripture

and philosophy in Thomas' text and likewise to give some account of the distinctively medieval conception of theological (and philosophical) teaching method and argument structure.

Thereafter, in the central Part II of our collection, the essays address broad themes in the Summa. This is not to say that in all cases they address 'sections' of the text, for, though others, including some of our contributors, disagree, in general it is not our view as editors that the structure of the Summa is determined by discrete sections or, as some call them, 'treatises,' on discrete and detachable subject matters. Were one to suppose this to be so, it would come as a shock to most readers to discover that Thomas' set-piece discussion of grace is confined to but seven 'questions' of the Prima Secundae. In fact it would be more to the point to stress that the doctrine of grace is so pervasively present throughout the whole Summa that, like the air we breathe, you would notice how present it is in the work only when, exceptionally, it seems to be missing. Though, understandably, the Summa is rarely read from cover to cover, it is important at least to acknowledge that the ordering of its agenda is determined, as Thomas emphatically insists in the work's general prologue, by pedagogical considerations bearing on the training of his fellow Dominican preachers and confessors. The structure of the Summa betrays Thomas' sense of a learning curve for theological neophytes. You will not get your christology right in the Tertia Pars, he implies, unless you have got in place first your doctrine of God, one and three, in the Prima Pars; and the over-arching pastoral purpose of the Summa — considerably more than half of the work's total volume is devoted to what we today would call moral and pastoral theology — demands that it be enclosed within that framework, of God one and three at the outset, and of the incarnation of that triune God in Christ in the final part. The Summa, in short, is an intricately connected whole. It cannot be read without distortion as a series of separable 'treatises'.

Inevitably, however, we editors had to allocate topics to our fellow contributors on some principle of division of labour, and though we vary much in how exactly we approach our task, on the whole

we have seen our purpose to be that of inviting the reader in to particular aspects of Thomas' theological temperament: and there, once again, one discovers not a singleness, but a multiplicity of voices and perspectives fully reflective of the multi-valency of the text of the Summa itself. It is, for example, necessary to give due place to the importance that Thomas attached to a sort of pre-theological rational argument for the existence of God; equally, it is important to stress the ultimacy in Thomas' theology of the apophatic — for Thomas at the beginning, in the middle and threading through to the end of theology there is mystery: we do not, and cannot, know what God is. But take both approaches together, and the reader will find that they converge on the same Thomas Aquinas: there is but one God and that one God is, as Thomas himself says, both the 'formal object' of 'Sacra Doctrina' and ultimately unknowable whether by reason or by faith (1.12.1 3 ad3) — and yet it is precisely with this God that by means of that grace of the Spirit which is charity we are made 'one' through Christ and the Church.

We have also attempted, in Part III, to give weight to the work's historical and contemporary relevance within a broader range of Christian theological traditions, from its most natural environment in the Roman Catholic traditions, to those Christian traditions other than the Roman Catholic, whether variously Eastern Orthodox or Reformed and for whom, in Thomas' own times or in recent decades, the Summa has become a common source; and then finally it seemed worth adding some reflections on the work's reception, whether actual or possible, within some of the non-Abrahamic religious traditions. Thomas Aquinas — or rather a distinctly odd version of him as a, or even the, 'Christian philosopher' — used to be the private and closely guarded 'official' possession (and weapon) of a Roman Catholic church in search of a distinctive theological identity, one moreover marked by its hostility to much in the philosophies of the modern age. More ecumenical and inter-religious times, together with their considerably improved grasp of history and hermeneutics and their theologically more generous scholarship, have reconnected Thomas' theology with the common traditions of the mainstream Christian churches which results in an immeasurably enhanced theological payback to

all. The Thomas whom we as editors have come to know in the course of assembling this collection of essays would certainly have approved of this revision of his place within the history of Christian theology as a 'doctor communis', a common resource for all traditions.

Perhaps the over-riding impression of Thomas' theology as represented by the Summa Theologiae that we hope the reader of this volume will be left with is that in that vast work there converge an implacable commitment to rational coherence, obedience to the laws of logic, and pedagogical purpose, with a sense that the whole enterprise of theology is shot through with unresolvable mystery. For Thomas, logic and philosophy, indispensable to the theologian, have nonetheless missed the mark if that ultimacy of the mystery of God is not what they lead to, just as the task of the 'doctor' of the sacred, the task of the theologian, is betrayed if it leads the student to anything other than the even deeper mystery of faith.

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The *Liber de causis* (*De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa*), a monotheistic reworking of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, was translated from Arabic into Latin in the twelfth century, with an attribution to Aristotle. Considering this Neoplatonic text a product of Aristotle's school and even the completion of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Albert the Great concluded his series of Aristotelian paraphrases by commenting on it.

To do so was to invite controversy, since accidents of translation had made many readers think that the *Liber de causis* taught that God made only the first creature, which in turn created the diverse multitude of lesser things. Thus, Albert's contemporaries in the Christian West took the text to uphold the supposedly Aristotelian doctrine that from the One only one thing can emanate—a doctrine they rejected, believing as they did that God freely determined the number and kinds of creatures. Albert, however, defended the philosophers against the theologians of his day, denying that the thesis "from the One only one proceeds" removed God's causality from the diversity and multiplicity of our world. This Albert did by appealing to a greater theologian, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and equating the being that is the subject of metaphysics with the procession of Being from God's intellect, a procession Dionysius described in *On the Divine Names*.

[Creation as Emanation](#) examines Albert's reading of the *Liber de causis* with an eye toward two questions: First, how does Albert view the relation between faith and reason, so that he can identify creation from nothing with emanation from God? And second, how does he understand Platonism and Aristotelianism, so that he can avoid the misreadings of his fellow theologians by finding in

a late-fifth-century Neoplatonist the key to Aristotle's meaning?

Excerpt: Responses to Emanation

According to Wisdom of Solomon 7.25, wisdom is an emanation from God—an ("flowing from") in the Greek original, or an emanatio ("trickling out of") in Jerome's translation. Yet, despite the term's adoption by a biblical writer, many Christian philosophers in our day grow uneasy at the mention of emanation, feeling that it smacks of pantheism.

Of course, their quarrel is not with the Bible but with Neoplatonism: those who object to "emanation" do so because it is most familiar to them from Plotinus, who, besides being a non-biblical source, may even oppose biblical teaching. Saint Basil the Great thought he did, and attacked the Neoplatonists for making God's production of the universe automatic and unwilling, like a body's production of a shadow (Hexaemeron 1.7). And, whatever we are to make of Plotinus' remarks about necessity and the will, the image of flowing does suggest a necessary process, along with more unity between cause and effect than some may wish to admit.

But we need not read medieval philosophers for long before we notice that their reaction to emanation often differed greatly from that of Basil and our contemporaries. Pseudo-Dionysius, for one, adopted this terminology without reserve. Most striking is the case of Eriugena, who identifies emanation from God with creation from nothing, on the grounds that God is nothing—by which he means, not that God does not exist, but that he is more than being (Periphyseon 634A-687D). Eriugena, of course, had an undeservedly bad reputation during and after the Middle Ages, but Dionysius was accorded the authority of an apostolic Father. Boethius, too, may be added to the list of respected Greek and Latin Christian authorities who speak frequently of emanation.

In fact, many medieval philosophers not only accepted emanation but gave it new prominence. For, however freely books about Plotinus speak of emanation, such terms were far from common in the writings of the pagan Neoplatonists themselves. They became common among Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophers. And where pagan Greeks had

envisioned the trickling of droplets, writers in Arabic, whatever their religion, thought in terms of flowing, flooding, gushing, bursting, and inundating. Even those who claimed the label "Peripatetic" used this language. And among Peripatetics, Albert the Great stands out.

Recently, Lloyd Gerson has argued that Plotinus was no pantheist, that what he meant by the metaphor "emanation" amounted to creation, and that the necessity he attributed to emanation was not the necessity which Christians deny of creation. Had Albert possessed more than indirect knowledge of Plotinian thought, he would have concurred with Gerson's assessment: as we shall see, Albert treats creation as the most perfect case of emanation and considers emanation a corrective to pantheism.

But Gerson recognizes a difference between Plotinian creation and creation as usually understood within the Judeo-Christian tradition. On his reading of the *Enneads*, the One is pure existence and causes the existence of everything, not just of Intellect, while Intellect is essence and causes the essence of everything. For believers, on the other hand, God causes both the fact that things are and what they are; God's free and wise choice determines the number and kinds of creatures. To put the problem another way, emanation—as Albert himself will point out—implies effects ranged in order over some distance; it suggests mediation. Do not that distance and the mediators which fill it remove God's causality from the diversity and multiplicity of things?

The problem is not only one of origins; it also has much to do with ends. For, procession and reversion go together; if we find well-being by returning to the source of our being, then, to the extent that our being comes from an angelic intellect or some other such creature, we ought perhaps to lower our sights and seek union with it, not with God.

However Albert would have interpreted the *Enneads*, he does not admit this disagreement between his faith and philosophy. To be sure, he knows that some philosophers felt a need to introduce created creators or created causes of essence before they could explain the derivation of the many from the One; yet what he judges the

best accounts of emanation at once uphold the unity of God's effect and affirm that God touches the center of each being in its distinctness and individuality.

Where can we find the best accounts of emanation? Dionysius certainly provides one. And, according to Albert, the *Liber de causis* contains another. That may come as a surprise. Many of Albert's contemporaries took the *Liber de causis* to be saying that God creates the first planetary mover, which in turn creates other things. In other words, they assimilated the doctrine of the *Liber de causis* to that of Ibn Sīnā, and pronounced it heretical. Albert, however, identifies it with the position of Dionysius, and presents it as required by sound philosophy.

Thus, Albert's theological commentaries on the Neoplatonic Dionysius hold the key to his philosophical appreciation of the *Liber de causis*. What is more, they hold the key to his philosophical appreciation of Aristotle. To prepare ourselves for understanding this last point, we need to know what the *Liber de causis* was and what Albert thought it was.

Albert on the Nature of the *Liber de causis*

Albert's project of making Aristotle intelligible to the Latins through a series of paraphrases could hardly exclude the *Liber de causis*. This monotheistic reworking of parts of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, along with Plotinian material, was translated from Arabic by Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187) and attributed to Aristotle. Once William of Moerbeke finished translating the *Elements* (on 18 May 1268, according to the colophon in most manuscripts), Thomas Aquinas was able to show how the *Liber de causis* derived from it; but, before that, the *Liber* shared the good and bad fortunes of the genuinely Aristotelian writings. Of course, even prior to 1268, as Aristotle became better known, some readers saw that it could not have come directly from his pen.

While most of Albert's paraphrases go by the title of the text paraphrased, his work on the *Liber de causis* is *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa*—not simply "The Book of Causes," but "On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe from

the First Cause." Perhaps this reflects his preoccupation with the problems surrounding emanation and creation. Be that as it may, scholars have occupied themselves chiefly with Albert's report on the author and sources of the *Liber*: according to Albert, a certain Jew named David excerpted the propositions from the sayings of Aristotle (in a certain *Epistula de principio universi esse*), Ibn Sīnā, al-Gazālī, and al-Fārābī, and added the proofs himself. Albert's opinion probably derived from his curiosity about the *Epistula de principio universi esse*, from his recognition of the doctrinal similarities between the *Liber de causis* and al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Gazālī, from the rather Platonized portrait of Aristotle which the Arabs had given him, and from notes in the manuscript(s) he had seen; however, as Arabists have demonstrated, his opinion was wrong. Unfortunately, the far more important question of how Albert read the *Liber de causis* lies neglected.

Such neglect is particularly unfortunate because Albert thought not just that the *Liber* was in some sense Aristotle's, but also that it was a very important Aristotelian text. There appears to have been a widespread feeling among his contemporaries that not all books of the *Metaphysics* were available in Latin; and some thought the *Liber* supplied what was missing. For instance, a set of questions and answers dating from the 1230s or early 1240s and intended to help students preparing for exams, explains that metaphysics is studied in three books: the *Metaphysica vetus*, which handles being as being; the *Metaphysica nova*, which discusses divine things and the first principles in their being; and the *Liber de causis*, where divine things are considered as principles of being. Albert states the relationship between the *Metaphysics* and the *Liber de causis* as follows:

Non determinatur hic nisi de divinis substantiis, scilicet causa prima, intelligentia et nobilibus animabus, quod ad theologiam pertinet, quam in ultima parte sui et perfectissima considerat metaphysica.... cum de separatis substantiis, quas diversimode Aristoteles et Plato determinaverunt, sit agere metaphysici, determinatur hic de separatis substantiis secundum plenam veritatem,

de quibus in XII et XIII *Metaphysicae* non nisi secundum opinionem determinavit Aristoteles. Propter quod et iste liber *Philosophiae primae* coniungendus est, ut finalem ex isto recipiat perfectionem.

Ostendimus enim causam primam et causarum secundarum ordinem et qualiter primum universi esse est principium et qualiter omnium esse fluit a primo secundum opiniones Peripateticorum. Et haec quidem quando adiuncta fuerint XI *Primae philosophiae*, tunc primo opus perfectum est.

[Except it be for this man is not determined by the divine substances, namely, the cause of the first, intelligence, and nobility of soul, those that it belongs to theology, with the metaphysics which it considers, as the last and most perfect of beings separate in the part of its substances, which in divers ways, Aristotle and Plato show, it is to lead the metaphysician conditioned this separate substances according to the full truth, of which 13 to 12 will be held only by determining the Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Because this is to be conjoined, and this is the first book of philosophy, to receive, as the ultimate perfection of man of that body.

This is when the conditions are XI of First Philosophy is completed in the first work.]

Accordingly, *De causis et processu universitatis*, though published by Jammy and Borgnet with the *parva naturalia*, completes and perfects Albert's Aristotelian paraphrases. Still, readers must not jump to the conclusion that Albert considered the *Liber de causis* the epitome of wisdom and the fullness of truth about separate substances. He may have; yet the many disclaimers throughout his paraphrases of theoretical philosophy forbid facile identification of Albert with the doctrines he explains. "Secundum plenam veritatem" must, for now, be given a relative sense: the *Liber de causis* contains the final word of the Peripatetic school on the final part of metaphysics, whereas *Metaphysics M* and *N* engage Plato in probable argumentation, as an exercise presupposed to determination of the truth.

The Nature of Albert's Paraphrase of the Liber de causis

De causis et processu universitatis (apparently composed between 1264 and 1271) differs from Albert's other Aristotelian paraphrases in several ways. First, whereas others incorporate the more intelligible words and phrases from various translations (Arabo-Latin, Greco-Latin, older, and newer), here he has only the one version of the Liber de casis with which to work. (In fact, nothing in De casis et processu universitatis suggests that Albert consulted more than one manuscript of the Liber at the time of composition.)⁷ Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rušd left him no commentary on the Liber from which to borrow helpful phrases or whole interpretations. In line with his opinion about the authorship of the Liber, however, he sees the works of Aristotle, al-Fārābī, al-Gazālī, and Ibn Sīnā as exegetical tools. Indeed, the first book of De casis

From chapter 5 on, the text moves systematically through the hierarchy, from top to bottom. The first cause, being first, has no cause before it through which it may be known, wherefore it is ineffable. Still, it is named by the name of its first effect, Intellect, in a higher way, since a cause is what its effect is, in a higher way.

Since the first cause is named by the name of Intellect, chapter 6 begins determining what may be said about Intellect. In the first place, Intellect is an indivisible substance, since it is neither a magnitude nor a body (in which case the collective of intellects would be a multitude) nor mobile (and thence divisible by time). For, it is coextensive with eternity; any multitude in it is in it as one thing; and, when it wants to know a magnitude, it does not extend one of its parts far from another, but rather reverts upon its essence, so that its substance and operation are one thing.

Chapter 7 adds that every intellect knows what is above it, since that is its cause, and what is below it, since that is its effect. However, it knows these things according to the mode of its own substance, which is to say that it knows them intelligibly, not according to the superior or inferior mode of their substance. Hence, they are intelligible in it. For, the things in Intellect (the transcendent Forms) are not the impressions (the immanent forms), but their causes.

Chapter 8 is as much about the first cause as about Intellect, though it necessarily speaks of the ineffable in causal or negative terms. The Good establishes Intellect, gives it subsistence (qiwām, essentia), and transmits something of the divine power, whereby Intellect providentially rules everything below it. Indeed, nothing escapes the power of what is above it. Thus, Nature contains generation (sensible, impermanent things), and Soul Nature, and Intellect Soul, so that Intellect contains them all. As for the first cause, it is none of these and above them all, creating Intellect without a mediator and everything else by the mediation of Intellect. Again, its knowledge and power are above psychic and intellectual knowledge and power, creating them. For, whereas Intellect, Soul, and Nature have determinacy and form, the first cause is only being: it is distinguished from other

things, not by some form proper to it, but by its very indeterminacy and the purity of its goodness.

Chapter 9 develops themes found in chapter 4. The first intellects, being closer to the One, are more unitary and therefore more powerful than the second intellects. For, although every intellect is full of Forms, the first intellects have them in a more universal way, whereas the second look to the Forms in the first and, unable to receive them as they are, receive them by separating and dividing them.

The tenth chapter argues that, since Intellect is immobile and causes through its immobile being, its effects are sempiternal, wherefore things subject to generation and corruption must have a temporal, corporeal cause.

Chapter 11 expounds a principle which has already been functioning (as in chapter 9) and which will be crucial in the next two chapters: if one thing is in another, it is in it according to the mode of the recipient, not of the received. So being contains life and intellect existentially, life contains being and intellect vitally, and intellect contains being and life intellectually. Thus, effects are in their causes according to the mode of their causes, and causes in their effects according to the mode of their effects: the first being/ cause is in Intellect intellectually, Intellect is in Soul psychically, Soul is in Sense sensibly, Sense is in Soul psychically, Soul is in Intellect intellectually, and Intellect is in the first being existentially. Consequently, all are in the first cause in its mode.

Chapter 12 amounts to an explanation for the identification of intellects with beings/Forms, which was asserted in chapter 4. Intellect is at once the intellectual subject and the intelligible object, in that Intellect knows its essence. Even when it knows its effects, subject and object are together, since its effects are in it intelligibly, so that it knows them in knowing itself.

Moving down the hierarchy, chapter 13 affirms that every soul contains sensible things, in a more spiritual and unified way, as their exemplar, and intelligible things, in a multiple and moving way, as their image. For, it is between sensibles (its effects) and intelligibles (its causes).

Chapter 14 returns to Intellect without leaving Soul, which, as a lesser sort of self-constituted substance, may be described at the same time as Intellect. Whatever knows itself reverts upon itself in activity, wherefore its substance must also be self-reversive, so that it is self-subsistent, self-sufficient, and simple. (The unstated premise may be supplied from chapter 30: a thing's activity cannot be more perfect than its substance.)

The interpretation of chapter 15, about pure and participated infinity and power must be somewhat tentative, since "powerful" and "being" appear to have been confused rather early in the Arabic manuscript tradition. The intent seems clear enough, however: to show that, though self-reversive in activity and therefore self-sufficient in being, Intellect is not thereby equal to the first cause (this theme recurs frequently until chapter 23). All infinite powers depend on the first infinite, the power of powers; created things are not powers, they have powers. For, infinity is relative: the first cause, as pure power, is infinite in all respects; Intellect's power is infinite only with respect to things below it (i.e., it causes countless effects, none of which escapes its power), not with respect to what is above it, since its cause remains above it, measuring it and all created beings with the appropriate measure. Thus, as Intellect is not power but has power, so it is not the infinite itself, just unlimited. However, the first cause is above the infinite, which is between it and Intellect.

Chapter 16 continues the explanation of participated infinite powers. The more united a power, the more infinite it is, since the first infinite, Intellect, is next to the One; and the more united and infinite a power, the more wondrous its deeds. Division, on the contrary, destroys infinity. (This recalls chapters 4 and 9, where lesser intellects divided universal Forms into a multiplicity of less universal Forms.)

Chapter 17 seems to distinguish the first cause from Intellect by mode of causality. The first Being, the cause of causes who is at rest, gives all things being by way of creation; by way of form, the first Life, which is a first motion from the first being, makes all living things self-moving; and the first Intellect gives all intellectual things knowledge, also by way

of form. The way of creation is proper to the first cause—a crucial point missing from the Latin.

Chapter 18 provides more detail about the hierarchy of beings, and clarifies in passing how a monotheist could call some intellect divine. The perfect in each order are those which depend on the preceding order. Thus, the divine intellect receives much from the first perfections which come from the first cause, whereas the mere intellect receives by the mediation of the prior intellect. The intellectual soul depends on intellect, whereas the mere soul does not. Likewise, the animate body is governed by a soul, whereas the mere natural body has no soul.

Chapter 19 teaches that the first cause rules all created things without commingling with them or losing unity. For, its rule has no diversity: it pours out perfections over things by a single outpouring, but each receives according to its possibility. The efflux is single because the first cause is pure goodness, and its goodness is its being, and it acts by its being alone, without any relation to its effect. (The unstated premise, of course, is that goodness is self-diffusive; hence, where goodness is pure and essential, self-diffusion is without a more or less, without any holding back.) For, a relation to its effect would be an addition to its uncomposed being; again, were it distinct from its act of governing, its governance would be imperfect and would not penetrate things deeply.

Chapter 14 concluded that every self-knower is self-subsistent, self-sufficient, and simple; now chapter 20 qualifies that. The first is self-sufficient because of its unity, whereas composites need something else or their components. Nothing but the first, whether corporeal or intelligible, is self-sufficient—a denial which calls to mind the teaching of chapters 4 and 8, that even intelligible things are in some sense composites. Thus, taken together, these chapters imply that simplicity and self-sufficiency both admit of degrees.

Chapter 21 picks up the theme of chapter 5, divine ineffability, from a different perspective, while continuing the contrast between the first cause and the perfection of such beings as Intellect. The first cause is above perfection, since it is good without limit (i.e., not by participation), wherefore, unlike

perfect things, which cannot pour forth perfections from themselves (since they have acquired them by participation), it creates all things. Consequently, the first cause is above every name, whether it signify an imperfection or a perfection.

Like chapters 17, 19, and 21, chapter 22 shows how far the causal activity of the first cause exceeds that of Intellect: God gives Intellect providential governance, governs what Intellect governs, and governs more than Intellect governs, bestowing perfections even on what has no desire to receive the outpouring of knowledge from Intellect. (This is the only chapter to call the first cause "God.")

Chapter 23 brings this desire to receive together with the single efflux of chapter 19. The first cause is present to all things in one way, but things are present to it in different ways, according to their capacity to receive and delight in it, a capacity determined by their mode of being and knowing.

Chapters 24 through 28 pick up where chapter 14 left off, considering self-constituted substances. No self-subsistent substance is generated, else it would need that from which it was generated for its perfection, since generation is a way from imperfection to perfection. But the self-subsistent is always perfect, because it is the cause of its own formation. And it becomes the cause of its own formation because of its constant gazing upon its cause.

Since generability and corruptibility go together, chapter concludes that self-subsistent substances cannot be corrupted: being their own cause, they cannot be separated from their cause.

Chapter 26 contrasts destructible substances, which are either composed (of matter and form, one assumes, not just of finite and infinite, since indestructible Intellect is so composed) or subsisting in another (as immanent forms).

Chapter 27 shows that self-constituted substances are not only incorruptible, but also indivisible. For suppose a divisible self-subsistent substance to be simple. In that case, the part is self-subsistent, just like the whole; again (since the self-subsistent are self-reversive, according to Inst. 42), the part must be self-reversive, just like the whole. Or suppose a

divisible self-constituted substance to be composite. Since its components are unequal (as formal and materiate), the supposition would entail production of the nobler by the baser. Furthermore, whereas the self-subsistent are self-sufficient, composites need their components.

Chapter 28 draws a further conclusion from the ingenerability of self-subsistent substances: that they are not in time, and are above temporal substances.

Chapters 29 through 31 conclude the movement down the hierarchy of beings, introducing corporeal things and explaining their connection with the higher things, right up to the first cause. Readers of chapter 28 may have thought of a counter-example to its thesis: strictly speaking, celestial bodies are ingenerable, and yet they are somehow in time. Resolving the difficulty, chapter 29 distinguishes the sempiternal above time, which has all its operations together and is whole through its essence, from the sempiternal in time, which has a before and after in its operations and is whole through its parts, and from the transitory. Were nothing sempiternal in time, there could be no contact between the sempiternal above time and the transitory.

Chapter 30 describes another mediation, that of soul, which has its substance in eternity and its action in time. Thus, it links that whose substance and action are both in eternity with that whose substance and action are both in time. No other mediation is possible: since a thing's action cannot surpass its substance, nothing could have its substance in time and its action in eternity.

Chapter 31 reiterates the dependence of all levels of being on the first cause. Whatever is in both time and eternity in different respects is both being and becoming in different respects. Beings, the intermediate things, and things which just become are all dependent on pure Being. And all unities depend on the pure One, whose unity is unacquired. There can be only one pure One, for how would two be differentiated?

A Doctrinal Problem

Many important motifs run throughout the *Liber de causis*, one of which has a special hold upon Albert's attention: that the outpouring from God is

single. To draw together the threads of the argument, God is essentially good, so that his granting of goodnesses is without a more or a less. The evident gradation of beings results from their diverse receptive capacities, in turn determined by the mode of their substance. And what determines that? God alone creates, but secondary causes can form; now, the more the mediators involved in a thing's production (or, the more "distant" it is from the first cause), the less powerful its proximate cause. Still, why this declension of power among secondary causes? Again, the answer lies in the receptive capacities of the secondary causes, and the question of what determines their mode of being and receiving returns. Perhaps Nature does form generable things, and Soul Nature, and Intellect Soul, but what forms the first created thing? God? Possibly the talk of God's measuring every being with the appropriate measure will be taken to signify that God is not absent from the process of formation; however, the source (Inst. 92) would suggest another interpretation. Moreover, it seems problematic to trace a being's delimitation to pure, unbounded Goodness. The only explicit statement about the formation of Intellect is that it forms itself 59 Still, this seems to remove God's causality from the diversity of his effects, whereas the Liber insists that God's all-embracing power penetrates things most deeply and extends even to the last effects. The reader is left in some confusion.

The authority of the Liber on God's single efflux was reinforced by that of Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione* 2.10: "Idem enim et similiter habens semper idem innatum est facere." Many scholastics sensed heresy: if God can make only one creature, then, since more than one creature exists, creatures must create the rest. Indeed, the Liber seemed to say just that in chapter 3: the first cause creates the being of Soul with Intellect mediating. But Albert appears not to have shared these fears: throughout *De causis et processu universitatis*, he makes strong arguments for the Peripatetic dictum; he even criticizes theologians who "misunderstand" and deny it, invoking Dionysius against them (*De causis et proc. univ.* 1.1.10 [22.1-16]).

Martin Grabmann cites Albert's repeated claims to be reporting Peripatetic teaching, not his own, and

points out Albert's perfectly orthodox opinion in *Summa Theologiae* 2.1.3.3.1 (where he speaks in his own name), an opinion echoed in the writings of his disciples.

Pierre Duhem finds this unsatisfactory.⁶³ When Albert's Aristotelian paraphrases refute Avicbron's doctrine that God's free choice determines what sorts of things are made, they refute the orthodox position; they choose the Neoplatonic theory of necessary emanation over the Augustinian tradition. True, Albert warns his readers against assuming he agrees with the opinions he expounds. But who can believe these protestations, since Albert takes sides and shows none of the historian's impartiality? If he defends orthodox views against those of Aristotle in his paraphrase of the *Physics*, that is because

...sous le même froc de Frère Prêcheur, deux Albert se sont succédés. L'Albert qui entreprenait l'exposé de la Philosophie d'Aristote et qui rédigeait la Physique, était tout imbu encore des enseignements de la Théologie...

L'étude patiente et prolongée des doctrines gréco-arabes convertit peu à peu l'auteur de la Physique, et l'on vit apparaître alors un second Albert, l'Albert de la Métaphysique et du Livre des Causes. Pour celui-ci, les propositions augustinienne que le premier Albert avait, en sa Physique, soigneusement sauvegardées devenaient autant d'affirmations absurdes en Philosophie...

[... under the same frock of Brother Prêcheur, two Albert succeeded each other. The Albert, who undertook the exposition of Aristotle's Philosophy and wrote *Physics*, was still imbued with the teachings of Theology.

The patient and prolonged study of Greco-Arab doctrines gradually converts the author of *Physics*, and a second Albert, the Albert of *Metaphysics* and the *Book of Causes*, appears. For this one, the Augustinian propositions that the first Albert had, in his *Physics*, carefully saved became as many absurd affirmations in Philosophy ...]

But is the opinion set forth in Albert's theological works so very different from that found in his paraphrase of the Liber? Must one choose between his theology and the philosophy he presents? Or is his critique of the theologians more subtle than

that? How does he understand this eminently Neoplatonic text *secundum Peripateticos*?

By interpreting the *unum ab uno* as created being, in which all creatures share according to their analogy, Albert removes any supposed opposition between emanation and creation; as he understands it, emanation expresses God's omnipresence even while implying creatures' ever increasing distance from God along the scale of being. For, secondary causes add nothing to the power of God, from whom they receive their power; God works through mediators because distance diminishes our receptive capacity, not his active power. Whatever the distance, God's power extends to the very center of each creature, to the existence under the shadow of which arises the creature's every aspect.

A sublime conclusion, but what of the convoluted way Albert arrives at it? Compared to Thomas' collation of the *Liber de causis* with Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, or to contemporary Arabists' discoveries about the text or about intellectual life in ninth-century Baghdad, Albert's account of the *Liber* may seem unworthy of our attention. Striving to join Platonic to Aristotelian wisdom is all well and good, but can we, with our historical sophistication, find coherence and cogency in a Peripateticism which claims the *Liber de causis* as its own? Even after Albert gained access to the *Elements of Theology*, he seems never to have recognized the revisions it required of him.

Or are we, perhaps, the ones who need to revise our views? I suggest no weakness in the case for early ninth-century, Neoplatonic, Baghdadi authorship of the *Liber*. What I do suggest is that we not lose sight of how carefully Albert qualifies his thesis about the origins of the *Liber*.

The thesis—that the Jew David excerpted the propositions from "Aristotle's" *Epistula de principio universi esse* and from Ibn Sīnā, al-Gazālī, and al-Fārābī, writing the proofs himself—leads Albert to search the works of these philosophers for exegetical clues, yet he remains sensitive to their differences. To recall but two crucial instances, while many of his contemporaries took the *Liber de causis* to promote the same mediate creation as Ibn Sīnā, Albert sees, despite the inadequacies of the

Latin version, that the *Liber* reserves creation to God alone. And where mediation does occur, Albert argues that Aristotle finds the need for it with creatures, and Ibn Sīnā with the Creator; the Jew David does not simply present his readers with conflicting views from his four sources, but rather selects carefully among them and, in this case, sides with Aristotle.

Still, for all the qualifications Albert feels compelled to introduce, he does consider al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā major sources for the author of the *Liber*. But that was not a bad guess, since all three underwent Plotinian influence. As for Albert's allying Dionysius with the *Liber*, historical-critical research has added to the reasons for doing so. What such research disinclines us to entertain is his allying the combination of Dionysius and the *Liber* with Aristotle.

Here too, though, Albert himself shows some awareness of their dissimilarities, as when he notes the Platonic origin of the threefold universal, without which he cannot construe Dionysius' writings, or when he distinguishes the analogy of imitation from the analogy explained in *Metaphysics* 1. Nonetheless, by finding the key to the *Liber de causis* in Dionysius and deeming the *Liber* the completion of Aristotle's corpus, Albert makes Dionysius the key to Peripatetic thought as well. Can we, knowing what we do, take that proposal seriously?

In earlier days, many a philosopher would indeed have weighed it with the utmost seriousness, in that they, too, located Aristotle's achievements within a Platonic framework. Even the *Enneads* of Plotinus himself "are full of concealed Stoic and Peripatetic doctrines. Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in particular, is concentrated in them." And such a path remains open to us today, despite our wealth of historical information, because the issue is not for history to determine: whatever we may find out about which thoughts explicitly crossed Aristotle's mind, there remains the philosophical question of which philosophical developments are compatible with and even demanded by his basic principles. The same, of course, holds for the intentions of the anonymous author of the *Liber de causis*.

[Thomas Aquinas on Moral Wrongdoing](#) by Colleen McCluskey [Cambridge University Press, 9781107175273]

Medieval thinkers were both puzzled and fascinated by the capacity of human beings to do what is morally wrong. In this book, Colleen McCluskey offers the first comprehensive examination of Thomas Aquinas's explanation for moral wrongdoing. Her discussion takes in Aquinas's theory of human nature and action and his explanation of wrong action in terms of defects in human capacities, including the intellect, the will, and the passions of the sensory appetite. She also looks at the notion of privation, which underlies Aquinas's account of wrongdoing, as well as his theory of the vices, which intersects with his basic account. The result is a thorough exploration of Aquinas's psychology that is both accessible and illuminating and will be of interest to a wide range of readers in Aquinas studies, medieval philosophy, the history of theology, and the history of ideas.

Excerpt: In this book, I examine a particular account of moral wrongdoing from the European Middle Ages, but I do so from a perspective different from the one traditionally considered. Often, medieval thought on wrongdoing and evil is seen by contemporary philosophers as engaging what has become known as the problem of evil. Quite briefly, the traditional problem of evil is concerned with the relationship between the existence and/or nature of (often the specifically Christian) God and the presence and amount of (especially horrific) evil in our world. The Christian conception of God is that of an omniscient, omnipotent, and absolutely good God. Such a being would have the knowledge of how to prevent evil from occurring, have the power to do so, and presumably also have the desire to do so by virtue of his goodness, and yet there is evil in our world, much of which appears to be gratuitous. For many philosophers, the presence of such evil in the world constitutes a decisive reason to think that there is no God. For the Christian, then, the challenge is to explain how evil is compatible with the existence of God. There exists an entire philosophical industry to address this challenge.

My project is a different one. I have nothing to say on how to resolve the preceding issue, which Peter

Kivy has designated as the theological problem of evil. Kivy contrasts this problem with what he calls the secular problem of evil. For him, the issue is how to account for cases of evil in which the perpetrator appears to pursue no real or apparent good. Kivy argues that the most prominent accounts of motivation for action face this problem because they presuppose that agents act always for a good, which he characterizes as either their own self-interest or the interests of others. Although Kivy ultimately puts his point in terms of whether human beings can perform what he calls "unmotivated malice" (i.e., malice not out of self-interest or for the sake of someone else), his secular problem of evil raises the question of whether human beings can choose evil for its own sake. As we shall see, the account of moral wrongdoing that I examine in this book also must confront this particular issue. Although Kivy's problem is an important one that I address down the road, my main concern is with a broader issue that is also nontheological in nature, one that I would argue will interest both the theologically minded and the non-theologically minded. The general issue on which I shall concentrate is how to explain why agents engage in wrongdoing or evildoing in the first place.

I find it curious that until relatively recently the attempt to explain wrongdoing on its own terms has been neglected in philosophical discussions. The logical place for it falls under ethics, but traditionally philosophers have been concerned with issues surrounding the nature of the good, the right, or the nature of morality itself (whether from a deontological, utilitarian, or virtue perspective). Although there are some notable exceptions, by and large, philosophers have spent most of their energy developing accounts of the good or accounts of moral rules, which they use to define what is wrong or evil in terms of what violates those rules or what is not good. In other words, traditionally philosophers have given derivative accounts of evil instead of explaining wrongdoing or evildoing on its own terms. But derivative accounts are unsatisfactory in trying to understand wrong actions. First, they are often thin when it comes to trying to explain the phenomenon in question. For example, a common objection to the evil-as-privation account is that it is not helpful or enlightening to be told that evil is (merely) the

absence of a good that ordinarily ought to be present. It does not help to explain which actions are wrong or why they are wrong. Secondly, examining what goes wrong can be helpful in determining an adequate account of the good. For example, Miranda Fricker has argued recently that examining unjust testimonial silencing is fruitful in developing an account of virtuous testimonial practices. She argues that we understand better how to achieve what she calls "ideal testimonial practice" by coming to understand the function of inapparent prejudices held by privileged speakers that contribute to unrecognized testimonial injustice. Without an awareness of how the unjust practice works, we cannot hope to achieve the testimonial ideal in her view. Analogously, one might not recognize how one's account of the good is deficient without an awareness of what can go wrong. An understanding of wrongdoing can function as an important test of the adequacy of one's moral theory.

In the debate over the theological problem of evil, traditionally philosophers have taken one of two routes. Sometimes they have simply presupposed that we all recognize or can agree upon certain cases as paradigmatically evil and then devoted their arguments to reconciling the presence of that with the existence of God. Alternatively, they have given thin accounts of evil as the basis of their arguments before giving their reconciliation arguments. These accounts have been structured, by and large, either in terms of what causes human suffering, distinguishing between so-called natural evil and moral evil, or in terms of a privation, an account that has appeared implausible to many.

This neglect has begun to change. The literature on evil has grown considerably in recent years, regarding both the theological problem and the nontheological problem of evil. Even within the discussion of the theological problem, philosophers have begun to recognize that an adequate resolution of the central issues requires an explanation of evil itself. The number of accounts of evil developed independently of any particular theological commitment has also grown to the point that it is becoming impossible to survey all of them. Evil as a philosophical topic has arrived.

My subject of examination in this book is the theory of wrongdoing developed by what is arguably the most famous philosopher of the European Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas.⁹ The literature on Aquinas continues to be an industry in its own right, and yet astonishingly, there are very few book-length treatments of his account and none that purport to do what I intend to do in this book, namely, to examine his account in the context of his broader moral psychology. There are several reasons why it is important, first of all, to look at Aquinas's explanation of wrongdoing and, secondly to look at it in the context of his larger account of human action. Some of these reasons have to do with the value of Aquinas's account on its own terms, while other reasons are apologetic in nature. First, I address the apologetic reasons.

Despite the acknowledgment of Aquinas's stature in the history of philosophy and the increasing interest in and recovery of medieval philosophy as a whole, too many scholars are quick to dismiss the Middle Ages in terms of its value to current philosophical debates. I certainly would not deny that the level of knowledge in general and of scientific knowledge in particular has moved well beyond that of the medieval world; our perspectives are, of course, much different than those of medieval thinkers. Still, I often find that dismissals of medieval views have more to do with a failure to understand those views than with any particular argument that their conclusions irrevocably rest on outdated perceptions of the natural or social worlds.

A case in point is the medieval discussion of wrongdoing. In general, two different critiques are given of the medieval world on this topic. Each critique is rooted in what its proponents take to be the nature of medieval metaphysics and the relationship between that metaphysics and medieval accounts of ethics. First, there are scholars who assert that medieval metaphysics or theological commitments grounded in that metaphysics did not enable its proponents to develop a robust account of evil." Hence Maria Pia Lara argues that Augustine's project of theodicy led him to characterize evil as (in her words) "metaphysical degradation". By this, I take it that she interprets Augustine as a proponent of the

privation account. G. Stanley Kane agrees, arguing that Augustine felt that he had no choice but to adopt the privation account in order to resolve the problem of evil. Neither he nor Lara takes this account to explain adequately the existence or nature of evil. Both argue that the ultimate concern of medieval thinkers was to ensure that God was not responsible for evil, which was supposed to be secured by the privation account. Kane argues that while the privation account is not defeated by the standard objections raised against it, still it is not sufficiently robust to account for all types of evils and in the end fails to divert responsibility for evil from God. Lara argues that the privation account fails to explain how human beings come to commit evil and so fails as an explanation. I examine the privation account in more detail in Chapter 2 because Aquinas does indeed profess a commitment to it. I argue there that this account does not exhaust the meaning of evil for Aquinas. In examining Aquinas's complete theory of wrongdoing in this book, I hope to demonstrate that his account does explain why human beings engage in evil-doing. Thus, I plan to establish that it is false to think that no medieval thinker developed a robust account of evil.

The second prominent critique of the medieval approach holds that medieval explanations of evil inherently depend upon theological-metaphysical-supernatural entities such as the devil for their explanatory power. As such, these theories have no relevance for anyone who does not hold those theological-metaphysical commitments, which, of course, includes a great many philosophers working today. It is undeniable that the medieval worldview invariably included a commitment to the existence of God. Aquinas, of course, shares this religious commitment, and the extent to which one can separate a purely philosophical (i.e., "secular") theory from the religious context of his views is a contentious issue among Thomistic commentators. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 1, Aquinas holds that human beings are oriented toward God as their ultimate end, whether they understand or acknowledge this. Thus the content of his account of action has a religious orientation and framework. Nevertheless, Aquinas acknowledges that this notion of the ultimate end is controversial (ST I-II.1.7); he is willing to grant that not everyone agrees that

union with God is their ultimate end, although he thinks that he has established through argumentation that all human beings have an ultimate end, which he calls happiness. Given that Aquinas grounds his account of moral wrongdoing directly in his accounts of human nature and action, the basic outlines of those accounts are established in an empirical reality that he often discusses independently of his religious commitments. Thus, while Aquinas's texts are written within a Christian context, much about that context is not essential or particularly relevant to his basic theory. While an understanding of Aquinas's religious context is necessary in order to understand his account, one can describe Aquinas's theory of moral wrongdoing in secular terms without distortion. Aquinas himself often describes his views from both specifically religious and specifically nonreligious perspectives.

For example, he distinguishes between a theological sense and a philosophical sense of sin. A theologian defines sin as an offense against God, while a philosopher defines sin as a violation of the order of reason (ST I-II.71.6.ad 5). In his general discussion of vice and sin in *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas defines sin as a disordered act (*actum inordinatum*; ST I-II.71.1) and describes sins simply as bad acts (*actus mala*; ST I-II.74.1). In the *De malo* account, Aquinas distinguishes between a moral and a nonmoral understanding of sin. The theological and philosophical accounts of sin are related for Aquinas insofar as the order of reason is ultimately laid out by the eternal law, which has its source in God. But as I discuss later in the book, the order of reason is tied to the notion of human flourishing, which need not be considered from an explicitly theological perspective. Although Aquinas holds that human beings do not flourish without this relationship with God, still he often discusses his account simply in terms of *beatitudo* or the ultimate end in general (e.g., see ST I-II.1-5). Aquinas also holds that human beings cannot avoid sin without the aid of God, but it does not follow from this, in his view, that human beings do not commit sins voluntarily or that somehow those actions are not imputed as sins (see ST I-II.109.8.co and ad 1; ST II-II.156.2.ad 1). As will become clearer from my discussion in Chapters 1 and 2, there is much upon which Aquinas and philosophers can agree *vis-à-vis* their theories of action.

This is true even with what are often considered to be explicitly theological notions. Consider the distinction between mortal and venial sins. This distinction is derived from the effects of sin on one's orientation to the ultimate end. By definition, a mortal sin alienates one from the ultimate end. Since for Aquinas the ultimate end is union with God, a mortal sin severs one's relationship with God and does so irretrievably unless one obtains forgiveness from God. Venial sin does not have this effect (ST I-II.88.1; see also SCG III.144 and In II Sent., d.42, q.1, a.4 and a.5). Because a relationship with God is beyond the human capacity to develop on one's own, it requires an infused virtue, charity (along with the other two theological virtues, faith and hope; see ST I-II.62.1 and 3). By definition, charity is a particular kind of friendship with God (ST II-II.23.1), uniting us with God (ST II-II.23.3). It enables us to love God above everything else and submit ourselves to God's will (ST II-II.24.12). It also enables us to love others out of a love of God and so perfects our relationships with one another (ST II-II.25.1). Mortal sin, by definition, turns us away from our genuine end by placing an obstacle to our continued reception of charity (ST II-II.24.12). In pursuing this serious sin, one refuses to submit to God and rejects friendship with God (ST II-II.24.12). One has turned one's back on what in Aquinas's view will make him happy. The sinner remains alienated from his true end unless or until he is restored by God to a state of grace. A venial sin, however, although blameworthy, is not as serious. It does not sever completely the connection between God and the sinner. It does not alienate one from the ultimate end God intends for human beings (ST I-II.88.1). Although the agent who commits a venial sin engages in a disordered act, what he pursues by and large is compatible with love of God or love of neighbor. Hence venial sins might damage our relationship with God (and dispose us toward committing a mortal sin), but it does not destroy that relationship completely (see ST I-II.88.3).

The distinction between mortal and venial sins obviously has theological connections and is important from the point of view of the theologian (which Aquinas considered himself to be). It fits within the entire theological framework of Aquinas's account of human nature, of the ultimate end, and

of good and bad actions and explains the effects of sin on our relationship with God. But it can also be useful from a nontheological perspective. From a philosophical perspective, one also wants to grant that some actions are worse than others. Mortal sin is grave and deadly sin that cuts us off from what we want the most. Venial sin is less serious. The very worst sins are those that violate human integrity and exclude us from the human community. In other words, these actions destroy human relationships or what Aquinas would call love of neighbor. These are mortal sins in both a theological and a philosophical sense. In many of these cases, exactly what can be done to remedy the situation is a difficult question. If the harm is severe enough, the answer may be that there is nothing humanly possible that can be done. Venial sins, however, are clearly blameworthy but are such that reconciliation can be brought about by such human conventions as apologies and reparations.

Thus at least some of Aquinas's explicitly theological terms can be accommodated without much strain by nonreligious theories. Aquinas holds an account that both theists and nontheists could accept, at least in principle. Of course, it is a further question whether Aquinas's account is satisfactory, and in the course of this book, I argue that it is. If my arguments succeed, then it follows that there is at least one medieval account of wrongdoing that contemporary philosophers ought to take seriously.

In the current literature, evil is often considered either from a perspective divorced from the whole of human life or from a rather thin account of human nature. If we examine the few treatments of Aquinas's account of evil in the literature, they often situate that account within his metaphysics of goodness. In my view, both discussions are deficient. Both fail to account for the fact that wrongdoing in general and evil-doing in particular arise within the context of ordinary human life. As an interpretation of Aquinas, the second approach is particularly incomplete. In my view, Aquinas situates his account of wrongdoing squarely on the foundation of his general account of human nature and human action. While his metaphysics of goodness is relevant to a discussion of wrongdoing,

it is not the entire foundation. Furthermore, without a discussion of his account of human nature and action, his account of wrongdoing is difficult to understand and appreciate.

I grant that Aquinas's conception of human nature rests largely on an Aristotelian account of science that has been superseded. It also affirms a teleology that many philosophers find implausible. Nevertheless, I argue that his basic vocabulary involves technical terms employed to capture elementary observable phenomena that still make sense to us today. While our worldviews have been transformed by events that have taken place since the passing of the European Middle Ages and, of course, in places other than Europe, still Western perspectives have been importantly shaped by that past, and it remains relevant for that reason. I argue, however, that the value of Aquinas's theory transcends such merely explanatory value, however important that may be. I hope to show by the end of this book that the theory as an explanation of wrongdoing stands on its own terms.

One might wonder, though, whether Aquinas and those working on current moral debates understand the concept of morality in the same way. Even a cursory consideration of the history of ethics makes it evident that approaches to ethical theory have undergone major shifts across the ancient, medieval, modern, and current periods. Scholars have debated, for example, whether the ancient Greek philosophers held the same concept of morality as those working today. Bernard Williams has argued that the ancient Greeks did not possess a concept of morality at all, while Elizabeth Anscombe maintains that we inherited the notion of the moral from Aristotle, although our usage no longer matches his. Terence Irwin argues that at least in Aristotle we can find the fundamental ideas that ground current conceptions of morality, namely, in his view, duties or obligations to others and voluntariness or control. Julia Annas holds that there are many points of convergence between ancient and current ethical theories. For example, both distinguish between virtuous (i.e., moral) and nonvirtuous reasons for action and hold that moral reasons carry more weight. In her view, both also make claims about the character of the virtuous person and the right actions to perform (although

they weigh the importance of these claims differently). Furthermore, like Irwin, she argues that ancient accounts understand morality as fundamentally other-regarding and nonegoistic and accept voluntariness as a necessary condition for moral approbation and moral responsibility.

It is clear that sometimes Aquinas understands moral language differently than the current debate. For example (similar to Aristotle), Aquinas understands the phrase "moral virtue" (*virtus moralis*) as a technical term referring to virtues that perfect appetitive powers. Yet, in other places in his texts, Aquinas uses the terms "moral" and "morality" in a manner perfectly consistent with both current theoretical and ordinary understandings. For example, he claims that actions cannot be moral actions unless they are voluntary. It will become apparent at different points in this book that Aquinas and his interlocutors from current debates disagree over particular moral ideas. But I do not see this as holding a different concept of the moral so much as disagreeing over what morality requires or involves. I regard this to be analogous to disagreements between utilitarians and deontologists over, say, fundamental moral principles or whether the right can be defined in terms of the good. Yet most philosophers presuppose a shared understanding of basic terms in these debates, and no one accuses them of talking past one another. I would argue that engaging in conversations across historical periods is fruitful as long as we clarify the ways in which terms are being used and avoid anachronism. Doing this enables us to determine the extent to which participants in the discussion do hold a common understanding of the basic terms involved in the debate. I would argue that despite the perhaps seemingly alien context, Aquinas understands basic moral vocabulary in much the same way that we do. I hope that my discussion of individual issues will clarify this point as it arises in the course of this book.

I end this introduction with a very brief description of the topics I discuss in subsequent chapters. As I mentioned earlier, one cannot understand Aquinas's theory of wrongdoing without some background in his metaphysics and basic human psychology. This background is the focus of Chapter 1 and the

beginning of Chapter 2. In addition in Chapter 2, I discuss Aquinas's commitment to the privation account of evil. Both because, like virtually all philosophers, Aquinas holds that a judgment of disapprobation requires as a necessary condition that its perpetrator satisfy certain conditions for moral responsibility and because his account of moral responsibility interestingly sheds light on his commitment to the privation account of evil, I also consider Aquinas's account of moral responsibility in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I first discuss some general points that apply to all wrong actions on Aquinas's account and then examine wrongdoing that originates in the intellect. The focus of Chapter 4 is wrongdoing due to the passions of the sensory appetite, including incontinence and weakness of will. In Chapter 5, I consider Aquinas's account of wrongdoing that originates in the will. The focus of Chapter 6 is the vices and their relationship to wrongdoing in the intellect, sensory appetite, and will. I conclude Chapter 6 by summarizing what I find useful and important about Aquinas's discussion of wrongdoing.

Evil is a tragedy and in our world an all-too-frequent occurrence. As Lara, Kekes, Card, Groenhout, and others have pointed out, perhaps the most important reason for developing an account of moral wrongdoing is that it gives us tools for attempting to understand why agents engage in such behavior in the hope that we can try to prevent at least some instances of it. This seems especially urgent insofar as peoples' prospects for flourishing are increasingly threatened on an unprecedented level, not only militarily but also economically and environmentally, and more and more from a global perspective. We seem to find increasingly lethal ways of harming each other, and we seem to be willing to engage in these practices more and more frequently. By considering the resources that one prominent thinker in the history of philosophy brings to the table, I hope to have made one small contribution to the project of mitigating its pernicious effects.

[Aquinas on God: the 'divine science' of the Summa theologiae](#) by Rudi A. te Velde [Ashgate studies in the history of philosophical theology, Ashgate, 9780754607540]

[Aquinas on God](#) presents an accessible exploration of Thomas Aquinas' conception of God. Focusing on the "Summa Theologiae", the work containing Aquinas' most systematic and complete exposition of the Christian doctrine of God, Rudi te Velde acquaints the reader with Aquinas' theological understanding of God and the metaphysical principles and propositions which underlie his project. Aquinas' conception of God is not dealt with as an isolated metaphysical doctrine, but from the perspective of Aquinas' broad theological view which underlies the scheme of the Summa. Readers interested in Aquinas, historical theology, metaphysics, and metaphysical discourse on God in the Christian tradition will find this new contribution to the studies of Aquinas invaluable.

Excerpt:

Thinking Systematically about God from Within the Christian Tradition

Throughout his whole career as a Dominican professor in theology, working in the medieval academy during the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) was occupied with the question of God.¹ The principal theme and focus of his theological thought concerned the truth of that absolute reality which people name 'God'. In this book we are going to follow Thomas in the way he, especially in his major work, the Summa theologiae, conceives of God and develops a metaphysical account of the divine as the *prima causa* of everything which exists. Since our aim is primarily to expound and explain Thomas' analysis of the concept of God, with the accent on the way in which the 'theological' and the 'philosophical' are hereby interwoven, it may be useful to consider first, by way of introduction, how the question of God is approached in his work, what his position is with regard to the tradition of Christian faith and its sacred writings, and what precisely it means to call his way of thought 'theological'.

Thinking and writing about God may happen in various ways, from different perspectives, in different styles and with different questions to ask. What the word 'God' stands for is never a matter of indifference, which one can decide freely to think about or not. God is always, in one way or another, a matter of ultimate concern, and as such the name is already invested with a complex web

of meaning, in the light of which human beings interpret their life by giving it a determinate form and orientation. One cannot, therefore, think about God without being in some way related to and engaged in a particular context of human culture in which 'God' enjoys a certain objectivity in religious beliefs and practices of worship, in ecclesiastical institutions, in ethical regulations of human behaviour, or even in the form of an existing philosophical tradition of searching for wisdom and truth, leading to God along the way of speculative knowledge. In this sense 'God' is never to be approached without presuppositions and on neutral ground, but is always the focus of a complex whole of thoughts, feelings, attitudes of hope and fear, of longing and love, and so on, and thus the object of the highest human aspirations, and at the same time the object of dogmatic regulations and stipulations by which the religious community tries to establish a normative consensus of orthodox truth. What God is and what the implications of belief in God are for human life is never something that can be freely decided on as a matter of individual preference; belief in God, especially in the Middle Ages, has an objective reality insofar as it shapes a collective form of life in all its aspects.

In view of these inescapable cultural and religious contexts of human life in which 'God' has its concrete meaning and significance, it is important to underline the fact that the principal focus of Thomas' thought, embedded as it is in the tradition of Christian faith, is directed to the reality of God. Thomas is not primarily interested, like a scholar in the study of religion, in historical facts and developments concerning human religious ideas and beliefs about God, and thus in how people have in fact conceived of God, but rather in the truth of what religion, especially Christian religion, is about. What we see Thomas doing, in his systematic theological writings, is approaching the question of God through the medium of thought, aiming at understanding what something in truth is. Thomas is, in the first place, prior to the distinction between theology and philosophy, interested in the matter of truth.

Now, it is clear that the truth of God cannot be relative to any particular standpoint or perspective. Perhaps one feels tempted to say that Thomas

approaches God from a particular standpoint, namely, from the standpoint of Christian faith. Let there be no misunderstanding regarding the fact that Thomas is in the first place a Christian theologian. Thomas always considered himself as a 'teacher of Catholic truth' (*doctor catholicae veritatis*).² But this does not mean that he somehow restricts his attention to what is called the 'God of faith', that is, the God as perceived and talked about by Christian believers and as addressed by them in religious acts of worship. The typical modern distinction between the 'God of reason' and the 'God of faith' is not, I think, particularly helpful in identifying Thomas' position with regard to Christian faith. It is certainly true to say that he approaches the question of God from within the Christian tradition. In my opinion any attempt to construe a system of 'natural theology' from Thomas' writings will distort the proper theological focus of his thought. But saying that, for Thomas, faith provides the main access to the question of God would not be accurate either. If one says that faith, according to how it understands itself, is somehow directed to God or is 'about God', then Thomas' approach may be described as an inquiry into the conditions which 'God', as object of faith, must fulfil in order to be understood as God. His approach is not immediately directed to how God appears to the religious consciousness and is represented or described by it, but he is engaged in an ontological depth inquiry into how that very reality must be understood in relation to which the statements of faith about God have their truth. (I shall return to this topic in the Epilogue.)

The truth of God, in this sense, is not wholly untouched by and unrelated to how people actually think of God. What Thomas is after in his theological inquiry is not finding something previously unknown; his intention is not to provide new information about God. To give an example: when he argues that God must be 'immutable', Thomas quotes a passage from the Bible in which it is said that God does not change (*Mal. 3,6: Ego Deus, et non mutor*). This passage is, as such, not part of the argument but, rather, the argument aims to clarify the truth hinted at in this text, by showing that the being of God (what it is to be God) must be understood as excluding the possibility of any change. The ontological truth of the *immutabilitas* of

God need not be part of how religious consciousness, expressing itself in this kind of biblical statement of faith, may explain and interpret itself, since the hermeneutical self-interpretation of (biblical) faith remains within the phenomenological objectivity of the 'God of faith'. The divine attribute of immutabilitas, as a defining feature of the reality of God, does not stand on the same level as the language of faith in which the believer is intentionally directed to God; it is rather a part of the concept of God, of what it means to be God.

For Thomas, thinking of God is not a journey of discovery, a setting out to discover a new part of reality previously unknown. Nor is it a personal adventure resulting in something like 'God as I see Him', the 'God of Thomas Aquinas'. Of course, there is certainly a sort of 'personal vision' in Thomas concerning God, but this is not something he is after. His principal intention is to think (to clarify, to make understandable) the truth of God as intended by and expressed in the doctrine of Christian faith. This 'as' should thus not be read in any restrictive way; it is not the 'Christian God', that is, God as relative to a particular perspective, that he is engaged in explaining. It is the divine reality itself, the truth of which is, as such, not confined to any perspective.

Still, one might say that Thomas proceeds from a basic theological assumption, consisting in the claim that God has made known his truth to man through revelation and that, consequently, the truth claim of Christian faith — the 'system of revealed truth' — is warranted by God himself. This basic assumption is nowhere formally demonstrated. And how could it be? One cannot step outside revelation in order to prove its truth from a logically independent standpoint. On the other hand: Thomas' whole work can be seen as one persistent attempt to argue for its plausibility and intelligibility by showing how its alleged truth can be made understandable.

Thinking about God under the conditions of revelation — understood formally as revelation of God's truth through himself — cannot mean that philosophy and philosophical reason are of no use within theology. Thomas' proper theological approach and method does not at all imply the rejection of philosophy based on common human

reason. The assumption of a divine revelation is not simply an alternative to the 'way of reason'. If revelation is what it is said to be — a revelation of God, disclosing to man true knowledge concerning God — then the very intelligibility of this revelation-based discourse requires a prior ontological 'definition' of God, in reference to which the propositions of revelation have their truth. Revelation does not constitute a wholly independent realm, closed off from reality as knowable and accessible in the light of reason. Reason and revelation are two formally distinct routes to the same God. In other words: revelation does not propose a wholly new definition of God as if the ontological referent of God could be internal to religious discourse. In this sense one can say that, for Thomas, there is no exclusive Christian God, even if there are some truths about God which are exclusively Christian (the Trinity and the Incarnation).

Thinking about God thus means thinking about the being of God. The proper focus of Thomas' thought is ontological. In his view, (philosophical) thinking is essentially ontological insofar as it aims to express in itself the intrinsic knowability of reality (*ens et verum convertuntur*). So the fundamental question of Thomas's theology is an ontological one: how must the reality to which the name 'God' refers be understood if it is a divine reality? What is it for a reality to be divine? Following this line of inquiry it then appears that 'God' does not refer to any particular reality, a particular kind of being existing within the common logical space of reality. In a certain sense 'God' is another name for 'everything'. This has important consequences for what it means to think the truth of God. One cannot confine the question of God to a special discipline of thought. Thinking the truth of God demands that the whole of reality is taken into consideration, since it is only in reference to the whole of reality that God, as its comprehensive principle and ground, can be thought.

For Thomas this means that (the being of) God can only be made an object of inquiry within the science of metaphysics. It was through Aristotle and the Arabic philosophers, especially Avicenna (980-1037), that Thomas became acquainted with a philosophical consideration of the whole of being,

of 'being insofar as it is being' (*ens inquantum est ens*), which is entitled 'metaphysics' or 'divine science' (*scientia divina*).³ Metaphysics is a universal science (*scientia communis*) which considers the common being of all things and its common principles and causes. It is named 'divine science' because it aims at the knowledge of the 'divine causes' of reality. For Thomas, this metaphysical theology of the philosophi is about the same divine reality as referred to by Christian revelation, although the formal perspective under which the two kinds of theology approach the truth about God differs: the one treats of divine matters insofar as they are knowable in the light of natural reason, the other in the light of divine revelation."

The existence of a twofold discourse on God in Thomas is one of the most striking features of his thought which, in my opinion, forms the main crux of the interpretation.' It is not only that Thomas, standing in the Christian theological tradition, acknowledges the existence of a philosophical discourse on the divine, independent of revelation, and exemplified by the works of the philosophi; the metaphysical approach to God is also made part of his own theological project of expounding the doctrine of Christian faith. In both his major systematic works of theology, the *Summa contra gentiles* as well as his *Summa theologiae*, the metaphysical approach to God (as *prima causa*) is found integrated within a comprehensive treatment of Christian faith.' And though Thomas is, in general, very clear and outspoken about the formal distinction between philosophy and theology, the actual use he makes of philosophy within the systematic unity of his theological project is much less clear. Thomas remains to a certain extent silent about the philosophical dimension of his own thought. On the one hand his thought may impress the reader as much more philosophical than he would have probably admitted himself, but on the other hand he never pursues philosophical knowledge purely for its own sake. His most valuable philosophical ideas are usually developed within a specific theological context.

The common view holds that Thomas granted philosophy the independent status of an autonomous discipline of reason, formally distinct from Christian revelation and the doctrine of faith.

Under the influence of the reception of Aristotelian philosophy during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries 'reason' became emancipated from its previous dialectical use in matters of faith, becoming the full-grown and independent capacity of 'natural reason', that is, the natural human capacity to attain knowledge of things and their causes by study and investigation. As such 'natural reason' serves as the foundation of the various philosophical disciplines, practical and theoretical, which cover the whole of natural and human reality. Reason was no longer exclusively an instrument to be used within the Christian community for conceptual clarification and ordering of the truths of faith; now it became a natural faculty for investigating the truth about things independent of the interpretation of the world in the light of revelation.

This process of the emancipation of natural reason has as its implication that, for the first time in the history of Christian thought, theology was conceived as an independent 'science', formally distinguished from the philosophical disciplines.' Christian theology had to redefine itself in the face of the naturalism of Aristotelian science and philosophy. This is what we see happening in the work of Thomas. He shows an acute awareness of the status aparte of theology formally based on divine revelation, and as such different from all the philosophical disciplines which proceed by natural reason. The truth of what Christians believe about God and about the meaning of human life in the light of God's promise of salvation is in principle beyond the grasp of human reason (*supra rationem*). The proper dimension of faith is beyond reason. Therefore, the saving truth of faith, from which the Christian community takes its life and inspiration, cannot in any way be transformed into a science of reason. By assigning to theology the independent status of a 'science' of faith, apart from the philosophical disciplines, Thomas is deviating from the old and honourable tradition of the *Sapientia Christiana*. This tradition, starting with Augustine (354-430) and continuing into the Middle Ages, incorporates philosophical speculation and rational thought, fed by a Christianizing Platonism, within the horizon of truth disclosed by faith. In general one can say that Thomas' predecessors used to place more emphasis on the continuity

between philosophical reason and faith's apprehension of the truth. Philosophical thought serves the development of Christian wisdom, drawing from the spiritual and religious sources of the Bible and the Fathers. Especially after Augustine, philosophical reason gave up its formal autonomy and operated in its search for wisdom and truth within the intelligible realm disclosed by God's revelation in Christ. Now, Thomas does not follow this traditional Augustinian way of integrating philosophy within the perspective of a comprehensive Christian wisdom.

Thomas Aquinas is the author of an enormous oeuvre, including commentaries on the majority of Aristotle's philosophical writings, works of biblical exegesis, series of disputed questions, such as the *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* and the *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, and, most importantly, his systematic and comprehensive works on theology, such as the *Summa contra gentiles* and the — unfinished — *Summa theologiae*. In my view, the *Summa theologiae* represents Thomas' most- successful and impressive attempt to construe a distinct theological scientia about God based on divine revelation. Here he develops in a fascinating way a systematic understanding of the scientia of the doctrine of faith, which formally differs from the Augustinian method of *fides quaerens intellectum* as well as from the method of natural theology conceived of as a kind of *metaphysica specialis*. The theological project of the *Summa* marks itself off against the whole of philosophical disciplines, not by excluding and rejecting them as being foreign to its own revelation-based approach to the truth, but by incorporating philosophical (metaphysical) reason and at the same time limiting its scope from within. The *Summa* incorporates philosophy, not only in the obvious sense that it contains much philosophical argument and analysis, but also and in the first place in the sense that philosophy (metaphysics) assists the theological reflection on the teachings of faith by providing it with an intelligible account of the reality of God as presupposed by faith.

In this book I intend to follow Thomas in the way he construes and develops, in the *Summa theologiae*, a theological science about God. It is not my intention to treat the whole of the *Summa*; I have confined

myself to the essential elements of Thomas' understanding of the concept of God as set forth in the *Summa*, with special emphasis on the methodological and systematic aspects of his approach to God. The first chapter will introduce the *Summa theologiae*, its subject matter, method and composition. One of the most remarkable facts about the *Summa* is Thomas' claim that the doctrine of faith constitutes a 'science'. What this means exactly, and which role

philosophical reason plays in this non-philosophical science about God, are still issues of debate in the literature. The interpretation I will propose is not radically new, but it might nevertheless shed some new and clarifying light on these difficult issues. The subsequent chapters are devoted to the different aspects of Thomas' doctrine of God from the perspective of the systematic order in which he proceeds in the *Summa*. Thomas begins his inquiry into the truth of God by asking two questions, namely whether God exists and what God is. Chapter 2 is devoted to the question of God's existence (the 'Five Ways'). Special attention will be paid to the first (Aristotelian) argument for the existence of God: the argument based on motion. The question 'what God is' — the question of the concept of God — is the subject of Chapter 3. This chapter deals with what may be regarded as the heart of the matter: Thomas' understanding of God as self-subsistent being. Following the order of the *Summa*, the topic of the names of God will be treated in Chapter 4. Thomas' analysis of how God can be named by means of human language leads to the famous — or rather infamous — doctrine of analogy. Strongly convinced of the crucial importance of the idea of analogy in Thomas' theology, I propose to clarify as lucidly as possible what analogy, as applied to the names of God, means, and what its metaphysical presuppositions are. The next chapter (5) deals with the notion of creation and Thomas' metaphysics of participation. It is characteristic for Thomas that creation receives its interpretation within the framework of the metaphysical consideration of being as being. In this light, creation is understood as God's proper act of letting others share in the being He himself possesses in infinite fullness. Finally, Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the notion of grace and of the systematic relevance in Thomas' thought of the

difference between 'nature' and 'grace'. It will be argued here that, for Thomas, God must be understood as a God of grace, and that grace is not merely an accidental corollary of faith to the metaphysical concept of God.

Most studies on Thomas are written either from the perspective of the philosopher, interested in those aspects of Thomas' thought which are commonly identified as belonging to philosophy or to philosophical theology, or from the perspective of the (Christian) theologian who regards Thomas in the first place as a theological thinker firmly embedded in the tradition of Christian faith. Although I am myself a philosopher by profession, I do not want to plump for either the philosophical Thomas or for the theologian. In my view, Thomas is an extremely gifted philosopher and a profound metaphysical thinker. But at the same time one has to recognize that his philosophical genius has been 'taken captive by Christ'.⁸ This does not, however, make him a lesser philosopher. But one should recognize, in the words of Mark Jordan, 'that whatever philosophy there is in Aquinas can be approached only through his theology if it is to be approached as he intended it'.⁹ And this approach I intend to follow in this book.

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[Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union](#)

by Michael Gorman [Cambridge University Press, 9781107155329]

The hypostatic union of Christ, namely his being one person who is simultaneously human and divine, is one of the founding doctrines of Christian theology. In this book Michael Gorman presents the first full-length treatment of Aquinas's metaphysics of the hypostatic union. After setting out the historical and theological background, he examines Aquinas's metaphysical presuppositions, explains the basic elements of his account of the hypostatic union, and then enters into detailed discussions of four areas where it is more difficult to get a clear understanding of Aquinas's views, arguing that in some cases we must be content with speculative reconstructions that are true to the spirit of Aquinas's thought. His study pays close attention to the Latin texts and their chronology and engages with a wide range of secondary literature. This book will be of great interest to theologians as well as to scholars of metaphysics and medieval thought.

Excerpt: This book is an exploration of Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics of the hypostatic union. According to the traditional Christian teaching accepted by Aquinas, God created humans and placed them in paradise, but they rebelled and fell into sin. This damaged their relationship with God in a way that they could not themselves repair, so God intervened to remedy the situation. The method God chose was for the second of the three divine persons, the Son, to become human, suffer, die, and rise from the dead. This divine person's becoming human resulted, on the traditional understanding, in there being one person or "hypostasis," Jesus Christ, in which two natures, humanity and divinity, were united. This union is often called the "hypostatic union."

The central claim of classical Christology is thus that Christ is one person with two natures, divinity and humanity. But it is far from obvious how one person can have two natures, and attacking this problem is what Aquinas's theory of the hypostatic union is about. Aquinas's work on the subject grew out of a long-running tradition, a tradition that did not express these ideas explicitly from the start. Oral traditions originating from Jesus's first followers

would seem to have included the idea that Jesus himself, and not just his message, was in some way extremely important, and in any case, that is certainly the clear upshot of the writings that originated from those oral traditions, most importantly the New Testament: Jesus is proclaimed as "Lord," and having a correct relationship with him is said to be necessary for salvation. But to say this much is not yet to make it very clear why Jesus is so important. Some New Testament passages do suggest rather strongly that Jesus is divine, and many passages make it almost inescapable that he is human, but Biblical interpretation is tricky, and it is not always easy to tell which passages should be understood literally and which symbolically. For that reason, Christians found themselves in discussion and even controversy essentially from the start.

Multi-volume books have been written on the early Christological controversies.' For present purposes, a simplistic and unoriginal sketch will have to suffice. The first main watershed was, famously, the Council of Nicaea, called in the year 325 in response to the teachings of the Alexandrian priest Arius. Arius taught that the Son was less than the Father — not that he was human, but more that he was a sort of demiurge or minor god. Against this, the Council affirmed that the Son was "of the same nature" or "of the same substance" as the Father — homoousios in Greek. In a certain sense it is right to say that this teaching is really a part of Trinitarian theology, inasmuch as the main point is that the second (and third) divine person is divine in the full sense, and not merely godly. Even so, it clearly plays an important role in the subsequent Christian understanding of Christ, inasmuch as it affirms his divinity.

A second crucial debate culminated in the first Council of Constantinople, held in 381. At issue here was the proposal of Apollinaris that Christ had no rational soul, his rationality being, on Apollinaris' account, entirely accounted for by his divine nature. If Nicaea emphasized Christ's divinity, Constantinople I emphasized the fullness of his humanity by rejecting Apollinaris' proposal.

The next crucial council was held in Ephesus in 431. Nestorius, the archbishop of Constantinople, taught that the Son, the second person of the Trinity, was

not the same as Jesus, a human being who died on the cross. To be fair, Nestorius' teaching was not altogether clear, and he did try to affirm that the Son and Jesus were "one person" (Gk. *prosôpon*), but his adversaries were convinced that his understanding of "person" was too loose. On his proposal, at least as they understood it, the incarnation involved not a true union in one hypostasis or one person but instead only a particularly close cooperation of two hypostases or persons; Nestorius labeled the result "one person," but using the right language was not enough. Against Nestorius, the Council affirmed that Jesus and the Son were not two persons but just one person and one hypostasis, in part by declaring that Jesus's mother Mary was *theotokos* or God-bearer: The person to whom she gave birth was the same person as the second person of the Trinity.

Another controversy soon arose from the other direction, however. Where Nestorius had suggested that Christ was not one person but two, the monk Eutyches held, or at any rate was thought to hold, that Christ had not two natures but one, namely, divinity. Against this, the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451, gave what was the clearest and most systematic formulation to date of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation:

So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer, as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent

being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ.

So Chalcedon affirms, emphatically and in detail, both uniqueness of person and duality of natures.

This statement, clear though it was, did not eliminate all further controversy. For example, the second council of Constantinople, an extremely messy affair, attempted in 553 to make clear that the decree of Chalcedon was not a capitulation to Nestorius's affirmation of two persons. In 680, the third council of Constantinople then came at it from the other direction once again, spelling out that the oneness of Christ's person did not undermine his having two natures, this time by stating explicitly that Christ had two wills — his having both a divine and a human will being a necessary condition of his truly having both a divine and a human nature.

There is a sense in which theological controversies — like philosophical controversies — never die out altogether. At the same time, however, it is fair to say that by the end of the seventh century, i.e., the time of Constantinople III, a consensus had been reached that was shared by the vast majority of Christians: Christ was a single person, none other than the second person of the divine Trinity, who at a certain point in history had become human as well, with both halves of this affirmation to be understood in as uncompromising a way as possible. "One person" was to mean one person and not, say, two persons acting as a team; "two natures" was to mean two distinct and complete natures, divinity serving to make Christ truly and fully divine with all that that entails, and humanity serving to make Christ truly and fully human with all that that entails.

This orthodox understanding is the basic framework within which Aquinas's ideas have to be understood. But there is a more immediate context for Aquinas's views, namely, the Christological reflections of his predecessors in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Latin-speaking West. This historical period has not been fully explored yet, and for that reason, it is even more difficult to summarize than the earlier centuries. I certainly make no claim to original scholarship in this connection. For the purposes of this book, the most important thing to note about

Aquinas's immediate Christological inheritance is simply what was most important to him about it, namely, the so-called three opinions in Christology. These are the views or tendencies identified by Peter Lombard in the *Sentences*, book III.¹ The first, often referred to as the *assumptus homo* or "assumed man" theory, says that the Word assumed an independently existing human being in such a way that one divine-human person resulted. The second, often referred to as the "subsistence theory," says that the Word assumed a human nature in such a way that one divine-human person resulted. The third, often referred to as the *habitus* theory, thinks of the assumed human nature as similar to an acquired garment (think of a religious "habit"); according to this last approach, the body and soul of Christ are not united to each other (this prevents them from giving rise to a second person), but each is independently united to the Word. As indicated already just above, these three are not so much precise theories as tendencies that can be detected in early medieval Christology, each tendency having been developed in different ways by different authors. Leaving such complexities aside, what is most important here is that Aquinas (together with his contemporaries) sees the second of these three as being an authentic presentation of Catholic doctrine, and the first and third as being unorthodox deviations.

Because Aquinas was a Christian theologian, the incarnation ought to have been an important topic for him, and so it was. He discusses it at length, in a number of works, during every period of his career: in his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, in his ninth *Quodlibet*, in the *Summa contra gentiles*, in the *Compendium of Theology*, in the disputed question *De unione verbi incarnati*, in the *Summa theologiae*, and in several Scriptural commentaries. Its importance can perhaps be indicated by the way he introduces the third part of the *Summa theologiae*:

After our consideration of the ultimate end of human life and of virtues and vices, it is necessary, for the fulfillment of the theological enterprise in its entirety, to turn our consideration to the savior himself and to the benefits that he offered to the human race.

The entire *Summa* finds its fulfillment in the discussion of the person of Christ and the benefits he bestows. It would, to be sure, be a mistake to say that everything in the *Summa theologiae* that comes before the third part is merely a preparation for it; nonetheless, it is clear that Christology in the *Summa* is not an afterthought, but rather an essential aspect of the work and perhaps even its highpoint.

Studying Aquinas's views on the incarnation not only gives us insight into an important element of his thought. It also sheds light on his understanding of other topics, such as God, human nature, various metaphysical issues, and so on. Much of this will become apparent in the chapters that follow. Further, studying Aquinas's Christology gives us an occasion to reflect on a very important truth about his thought more generally, namely, that it is not only philosophical but theological as well.

If studying Aquinas is worthwhile at all, then, it is clearly worthwhile to study his thoughts on the incarnation. This is true not only for reasons of historical interest but also because understanding his views may shed light on the actual truth about any number of matters. Aquinas is so powerful a thinker that what he has to say on such topics is bound to be illuminating, even when we end up disagreeing with it.

I have mentioned both historical and speculative reasons for studying Aquinas's Christology. These two kinds of reason, while different, are of course in no way opposed. It is immensely valuable to grapple with the thoughts of others, and the best way to do this is not just to read them and let their words trigger new thoughts in us, but to truly engage their thoughts in detail.

And Aquinas is not just another thinker. Reading what he has to say is not just one more step in getting familiar with "the literature." He truly is a philosopher and theologian of genius, someone from whom anyone has a lot to learn. Just as it would be unwise to do physics without learning from past physicists (not necessarily by reading their works, however — the analogy limps here), so too are we working at a great disadvantage if we try to engage in Christology or metaphysics without dealing with Aquinas. We will run a great risk of

re-inventing the wheel, not to mention making it less round than it ought to be.

Coming at the point from the opposite side, now: If we really want to engage in a historically accurate reading of Aquinas, we will have to be as sharp as we can speculatively. Not only will we have to be concerned with the words that Aquinas uses and the historical context he is writing in, we will also have to be sensitive to the meanings of his words, to the concepts they convey, to the structures of his arguments, to the ambiguities in his formulations, to the distinctions he is making, and to how his views differ from other views — including views he never considered. Our real goal is not to know what he wrote, but what he meant, and we cannot get to that without real philosophical and theological engagement on our part.

Perhaps all this is obvious, but obvious things sometimes bear repeating. Those who deal with the history of philosophy and theology are sometimes so anxious to stay historically faithful to their authors that they stop at the words and miss the chance to grasp fully the ideas behind them, thus failing to achieve a higher kind of historical faithfulness. Others, out of a legitimate interest in the truth of the matters under discussion, jump too quickly to struggling with the Big Ideas without dealing with the nitty-gritty of historical analysis; these miss the chance to learn something new from their authors, finding in the end only what they themselves already thought. Different scholars have different emphases, which adds to the richness and mutual helpfulness of the scholarly community, but here as elsewhere, excess is to be avoided.

That brings me to indicate the kind of study engaged in here. Naturally, I will aim for both historical accuracy and philosophico-theological insight: who doesn't? But there are different ways to go about it. Beyond the brief historical background already provided in this introduction, I will not spend a lot of time in this book carefully comparing Aquinas to his sources. Instead, I will focus on carefully studying Aquinas's texts and trying to get clear on what is going on in them. Especially beginning with Chapter 3, I will focus my attention on areas where Aquinas's thought is unclear or problematic. Sometimes, Aquinas expresses himself rather casually — the idea that

his formulations are always rigorously strict and consistent is an obfuscating myth — and careful analysis is needed to figure out what he really means. Other times, the problem runs deeper: an issue that we want to know about turns out to be one that he did not explore explicitly and in depth, with the result that it is not obvious whether we can figure out his views at all. In this book, I spend a lot of time focusing on such difficulties. That is not because I think that Aquinas's Christology is just a mass of unclarity and problems. On the contrary, most of it is clear and straightforward — but for that reason, most of it does not require extensive commentary.

In dealing with the difficulties, we have to read Aquinas as carefully as we can. Sometimes this will enable us to figure out what he meant, but not always; when we come up short, honesty requires us to admit that, on those topics, we do not know what his views were. At that point, we will have attained as much historical truth as we can. Then we can turn to a different but related task, namely, engaging in speculative reconstruction in order to work out what a "Thomistic" view of the issue would be. This is a perfectly legitimate thing to do, so long as no confusion arises about what is going on: There remains a difference between what (as it seems to us) Aquinas would or should have said, and what he actually did say.

Because our topic is the metaphysics of the hypostatic union, we will be constantly faced with the interaction of philosophical and theological streams in Aquinas's thought. Aquinas thinks it important to distinguish these — to distinguish, that is, between issues that can be dealt with by philosophical reason alone, without guidance from divine revelation, and issues that can be dealt with only by having recourse to divine revelation. The metaphysical tools that Aquinas uses in his Christology are, for him, examples of the first kind of thinking; Christology proper is an example of the second. A few words should be said about Aquinas's approach with regard to the second, theological kind of issue.

The first point to be noted has to do with the ground on which one accepts a given theological claim. Let us take as our example the central Christological claim that Christ is one person with a

divine and a human nature. While Aquinas considers it to be a fact that God became human, he would say that it is a fact that could not be discovered by human reason operating on its own. Humans can learn it only by God's revealing it: God tells them that it is true, and they accept what God says as true, i.e. they have faith in what has been revealed. This is, in Aquinas's view, the indispensable starting point for Christology as for any other properly theological inquiry.

The second point is that once one has accepted the incarnation in faith, one should try to understand it. The assent of faith is for Aquinas not a substitute for reflection but rather something that paves the way for it.¹⁰ A theologian, therefore, is at the outset someone who accepts in faith what is revealed, but from then on someone who attempts, using every means possible, to reflect on what has been revealed so as to understand it as fully as possible. He or she will draw out implications, make comparisons between revealed realities and more familiar things, and so on."

Third, it is worth noting something about how Aquinas compares theological things to more familiar, created things. He takes concepts that could be discovered by reflecting on ordinary experience without recourse to revelation, and he adapts these concepts in a way that allows him to make sense of revealed doctrine. The following example can illustrate the point. Plato and Aristotle and other philosophers developed a notion of nature or essence: The objects of our experience are not mere individuals, but come in types or kinds. It is possible to use this idea to talk about Christ as divine and human by saying that he has "two natures." However, the idea that something has more than one nature is somewhat at odds with the ordinary philosophical concept of nature. As we shall see in detail in Chapter 4, Aquinas is best read as thinking that the off-the-rack philosophical notion of nature is inadequate for Christological purposes. Something tailor-made — a modified notion of "nature" — is required. Comparison to created realities, then, is not assimilation to them. Certain possibilities become apparent only in light of revelation, and the theologian's task will, on occasion, involve adapting philosophical ideas to make them adequate to this larger context.

Theology for Aquinas demands that we be willing to accept that the full truth is surprising and even somewhat subversive of our natural ways of thinking. It requires a willingness to allow theological reflection to suggest new ways of metaphysical thinking. This is a theme that we will encounter several times in this book.

Fourth, while Aquinas is eager to understand things as much as he can, he thinks it crucial to remember that the theologian will eventually run up against certain limits." Some truths, above all some truths about God, exceed human understanding, and especially human understanding as it operates in this life.' With regard to the hypostatic union itself, Aquinas says:

As his [God's] power is not limited to those modes of goodness and existence which are in creatures, but he can make new modes of goodness and existence that are unknown to us, so also, through the infinity of his power, was he able to make a new mode of union, although no adequate exemplar for it may be found among creatures.

Even in such cases, however, the quest for understanding has not been abandoned: The theologian can at least give an intelligent account of the way in which the object of inquiry has eluded his or her intelligence.

Aquinas thinks that proceeding along such lines, from revelation to understanding, with acceptance of the fact that some points will never fully be grasped, is eminently sensible and that it can actually rise to a "science" in the Aristotelian sense. Now whether one should agree with him on this is a difficult question and not one that I will try to settle in this book. But at least we can note that his way of proceeding — from belief in revelation to incomplete understanding of it — is far from absurd. Supposing there is a God, it is at least plausible to suppose both that we will be able to have some understanding of him (in part on the basis of his own self-revelation) and that we will nonetheless be unable to grasp his nature and actions completely.

All this raises interesting points for the interpreter. If the interpreter is, like Aquinas, a Christian, then he or she will likely agree with Aquinas's views about

the need to rely on revelation, the need to not be limited by what can be learned from reason unaided by revelation, and the need to accept the limits of what humans can understand. Of course, he might disagree with this or that aspect of Aquinas's account of the incarnation (or any other theological topic), but he will not be out of step with the overall approach.

But if the interpreter does not agree with Aquinas on these things — if, for example, the interpreter thinks that there is no God, or that God has revealed nothing, or that what Christians claim to be revelation is false — then he will be in an interesting interpretative situation. He will find himself in greater opposition to Aquinas than the first kind of interpreter, and probably this will show itself in how he reacts to the details of Aquinas's account of the incarnation. For example, when Aquinas comes to propose a modification in the concept of nature, the non-Christian interpreter may be struck with the thought that this is a merely ad hoc proposal. Or, when Aquinas makes a certain suggestion but at the same time points out that it contains elements that cannot really be grasped by human reasoning, the second kind of interpreter may consider this to be not rational humility but irrational obscurantism. Now, no one will wish to deny this sort of interpreter the right to react in this way, but the following warning should naturally be kept in mind: Whatever one criticizes Aquinas for, one should keep in mind that at least sometimes, the reason why Aquinas does not provide something is that he does not try to provide it and does not think it can be provided. If Aquinas does not prove, independently of revelation, that Christ is God, or if he does not explain in exhaustive detail how one person could have two natures, then the non-Christian interpreter will naturally desire to fault Aquinas for not having given enough rational support for his views. This interpreter should, however, also keep firmly in mind that Aquinas did not try to offer such proofs or explanations and thought it inappropriate to do so. There is a difference between faulting someone for failing to do something and faulting him for not trying.

Given the importance of the topic, it is not surprising that there has been some scholarly literature on Aquinas's Christology. This literature

includes a few book-length works on his Christology as a whole, and a few book-length works on his Christology that focus on very particular issues. It also includes shorter discussions of Aquinas's Christology existing as parts of books. And, of course, there are a good number of journal articles on this or that aspect of his Christology. There is, however, no highly-developed treatment exclusively of his metaphysics of the hypostatic union. That is what I aim to provide here.

The first chapter lays out some of the key philosophical notions that Aquinas uses in his Christology. The central concepts are person and nature. What, according to Aquinas, is a person, and what does it mean to say that persons have natures? If he relied only on reason, unaided by revelation, and if he considered only the entities that we encounter in everyday experience, i.e. entities with just one nature, there are certain things that Aquinas would say. That is what Chapter I is about.

The second chapter discusses Aquinas's basic understanding of Christ as one person with two natures. It explains how Aquinas lays out the "one person — two natures" claim, gives some details on what Christ's humanity is like, and offers a number of clarifications about Aquinas's concepts and terminology. In this way, it begins the task of showing how Aquinas uses, for Christological purposes, the concepts explained in Chapter I. What it does not do is delve into the deepest and most vexing issues in Aquinas's Christology. Those are taken up in later chapters, and I explore them roughly in order of difficulty: The earlier chapters engage questions where we can be fairly clear about Aquinas's ideas, and as the book progresses, I discuss topics where it is harder and harder to pin him down.

The third chapter explores how Aquinas can handle certain difficulties that arise from the divine side. First, it seems that Aquinas's doctrine of divine simplicity excludes Christ's having two natures, his having accidents, and so on. Second, it seems that Aquinas's doctrines of divine immutability and impassibility exclude Christ's becoming human as well as his being human in virtue of his human nature. I show how Aquinas can handle these issues

and also note certain implications of his solutions for his overall approach to theology.

Chapter 4 examines how Aquinas's thought deals with certain difficulties that arise from the human side. The most important of those difficulties is this: Why does the presence of a human nature not give rise to a human person distinct from the Word? Going beyond Aquinas's explicit affirmations at some points, I argue that his approach would involve making certain adaptations of the philosophical concept of nature so as to make it fit into a Christological context.

In the fifth chapter, I turn to a standard debate in Thomism, namely, Aquinas's views on the existences of Christ. This topic in Aquinas's Christology has been discussed by scholars more than any other, largely because Aquinas appears to have changed his mind (and perhaps to have changed it back again). I distinguish a variety of questions hiding behind what appears to be a clear-cut formula, I argue that commentators on Aquinas have typically failed to understand the question that Aquinas was primarily interested in, and I argue that in certain crucial respects, it is simply impossible to say for certain what Aquinas's real position was. While thus sounding a somewhat agnostic note, I do also indicate what position seems to me most in line with his overall principles. In this chapter too, I note the extent to which Aquinas adheres to philosophically available understandings of key ideas, and the extent to which he modifies them for theological purposes.

In the final chapter, I engage the question of whether Aquinas has sufficient resources for formulating the traditional Christological claims in a way that avoids logical self-contradiction. After raising doubts about some recent interpretations of Aquinas's ideas on this issue, I give reasons for thinking that what Aquinas says does not give us enough information to know what his views were. I then offer, rather tentatively, what I think might be a Thomistic account of how one might avoid contradiction in Christology, even if I do not say that that account is Aquinas's own.

A person for Aquinas is a subsisting individual of a rational nature, and a nature is a principle in virtue of which something exists as a supposit of a certain

type, a principle that is not caused by any principles of its supposit and does not actualize any potentialities of its supposit. Socrates is thus an independently existing individual with a rational nature — a human nature. His human nature, his humanity, is a principle in virtue of which he exists in a human way, and simultaneously with that it is a principle in virtue of which he subsists: This principle is not caused by any prior fact about him, nor does it actualize any potentiality he might have. In addition to this nature he, like all other creatures, has accidents that are in one way or another caused by his nature.

In this chapter, we have explored Aquinas's views on the two most crucial metaphysical concepts for Christology: person and nature. Now let us see how Aquinas uses them to explore the hypostatic union.

In discussing the Incarnation we have seen the basic points that Aquinas makes in his account of the incarnation: that Christ is divine, with all that that involves; that he is human, with all that that involves; that his natures are united in person but not in nature; that neither is properly thought of as a part; and that Christ is composite. We have also seen a distinction between "human nature" and "human reality," a distinction that must be kept in mind if Aquinas is to be properly understood.

Once this basic approach is understood, certain difficulties and questions arise; indeed, some have already been mentioned. The first two arise from the fact that the natures are not joined in nature and thus remain, each in its integrity. If Christ is really divine, then it seems that he should be simple, and also that he should be immutable and impassible — but then how can he be composite, and how can he become and be human? These are the topics of Chapter 3. On the other hand, if his human nature is a true human nature, then it seems that it would serve as a ground for a supposit. But in that case, how could there be only one supposit? This is the topic of Chapter 4.

Other difficulties arise when we consider that the natures are joined in person. If Christ is really both divine and human, that suggests that he has a double existence; but if he is really one person, that suggests that he has just one existence. How this is to be sorted out is the topic of Chapter 5. But

number of existences is not the only issue raised by union in person. Some of the attributes that Christ would seem to have in virtue of his divinity are, it seems, inconsistent with attributes he would seem to have in virtue of his humanity. For example, someone who is both divine and human would seem to be both unchangeable and changeable. How can Christ be understood in a non-contradictory way? This is the topic of Chapter 6.

Let us now turn to the first of these difficulties.

In this chapter, I have set out how Aquinas would reconcile divine simplicity with Christ's compositeness. I have also set out how he reconciles the idea that the Word became human and is human with the idea that the Word is divine and thus immutable and impassible. In so doing, I have had occasion to indicate where his metaphysical analyses run up against the idea that Christology involves theological mystery. Now it is time to turn to another topic, namely some problems that arise from the human side.

For Christological orthodoxy, it is important to say that Christ's human nature is a real and full one, and likewise it is important to say this of his human reality. It is also important to say that neither grounds a supposit. How can all this be true? Aquinas does not give an explicit answer, but I have proposed a reconstruction of his thinking according to which substantial natures are the sorts of principles that can ground supposits without having to be principles that do ground supposits. On this reading, substantial natures are treated in a way somewhat similar to the way in which Aquinas treats accidents in Eucharistic theology.

I have also dealt with the question of whether not grounding a supposit takes away from the dignity of the assumed nature. Here reconstruction is not necessary: Aquinas tells us that the nature gives up the dignity of supposit-grounding for the sake of a higher dignity, namely, that of belonging to a divine person.

Third, I have discussed the old problem of why, for Aquinas, there is no second person in the hypostatic union. Is it because something is lacking to the human nature that other human natures have, or is it because something is added to it? I have made common cause with those who hold to the latter

interpretation, although I have added my own distinctions.

Before closing the chapter, it is appropriate to reflect once again on the theme of metaphysics and mystery. The questions explored in this chapter do not arise in any purely philosophical context. The entities that philosophy knows of all have one nature, and thinking about what would happen if some entity acquired a second nature is a strange business. Aquinas's approach, as I have proposed we understand it, attempts to maintain the truth of revelation — to steer between Monophysitism and Nestorianism — while remaining, metaphysically speaking, as full and respectable a theory as possible. In one way, the Thomistic approach as I have envisioned it goes beyond ordinary metaphysics by rethinking what a substantial nature is. In another way, however, the approach stops short of what ordinary metaphysics might be thought to aspire to, namely, full comprehension and demonstrative certainty. Faith seeks understanding, and it ventures into new territory, but it must accept limits on what can be accomplished.

In this chapter, I have tried to show how Aquinas handles problems that arise from the side of the assumed human nature. In the next chapter, I shall begin a discussion of problems that arise when we think about the two natures together.

I have argued that Aquinas's main concern is with the factual existence of the supposit Christ. I have also argued that his stated views on the topic do diverge from one another, although we do not know why this happened. I have claimed that the view in the *De Unione* is better. Finally, I have indicated how one might resolve, on Aquinas's behalf, a certain question that Aquinas does not himself raise explicitly, namely, the question of what principle actuates Christ's human nature (on the assumption, again, that such a principle is needed). Now let us turn to the second of the main questions that arise when we consider Christ's two natures together, namely, the consistency of Christology.

This chapter has raised the problem of consistency in Christology. I have argued that a solution that some have attributed to Aquinas is not really his,

and that some of the main texts where he seems to propose that solution are really texts where he is making pragmatic points about how to prevent Christological claims from being misleading. I have examined the main text where he does give something like an account of how to solve the consistency problem, namely, ST III, q. 16, a. 4, and I have claimed that the proposal there is extremely under-described. I have suggested one way to develop it, arguing that the Thomist can thereby avoid inconsistency, while granting that it involves using the language of predicability in an extremely extended sense.

This concludes the interpretive chapters of this book. In the conclusion that follows, I will summarize Aquinas's views on the metaphysics of the hypostatic union and offer a brief assessment.

I have laid out an interpretation of Aquinas's writings on the metaphysics of the hypostatic union. Now, in my conclusion, I will summarize my interpretation and offer some remarks about the value of his contribution.

In the introduction, in addition to laying out the theological and historical context of Aquinas's ideas, I pointed out that from Aquinas's point of view inquiry into theological topics like the incarnation has to be carried out in a certain spirit. On the one hand, it is a bold spirit: the theologian must be willing, in response to revelation, to rethink what would seem to be the case from a purely philosophical perspective. On the other hand, it is a humble spirit: the realities that such inquiries are concerned with are, in principle, not fully graspable by the human intellect, at least not in this life. I think that if one accepts the basic ideas that Aquinas is starting from, above all the existence of a transcendent God, then this is an extremely reasonable view for him to hold. As I will mention near the end of this conclusion, however, there is a certain caution that I would wish to add.

In Chapter 1, I set out Aquinas's philosophical views on person and nature. A person for him is an individual, subsisting, and substanding entity of a rational nature; in addition, it is a whole, it is what exists in the primary sense, and it is what acts and bears properties in the primary sense. A nature for him is an intrinsic principle of a person (or of any

supposit), a principle that grounds that supposit, that does not actualize any potentiality in it, and that does not arise from any of its features. These two notions, which Aquinas draws from the Aristotelian tradition, are in my view a good foundation for Aquinas's further thinking on the hypostatic union. Indeed, in some ways, the sophisticated Aristotelian analyses he is able to give of these notions put him in a better position than the Patristic authors who created the classical Christology that he inherits and interprets.

In Chapter 2, I set out Aquinas's basic understanding of the hypostatic union. In Aquinas's view, Christ is a person who is both divine and human. The divine nature gives him certain attributes, and so does the human nature (although precisely which human attributes he has turns out to be a somewhat complicated matter). Aquinas says that the human nature is united to the pre-existent person of the Word of God "in person," i.e., in such a way that no new person results from this union. At the same time, he holds, the union is not a union "in nature," i.e., it is not a union according to which some new nature is formed from humanity and divinity together; instead, each nature remains in its own integrity. Christ for Aquinas is thus one person, but a composite person, and composite in a way that no other person is. He is composite not merely by way of having, say, a multiplicity of accidents, but more radically, by way of having two natures. On the way to working all this out, I added some distinctions, the most important of which was the distinction between "human nature" in the strict sense and "human reality." In my judgment, although Aquinas's basic account is sometimes not as clearly expressed as we might wish, it makes good sense of the traditional Christological doctrines, and it does so in a way that puts to good use the philosophical ideas sketched out in Chapter 2. But it raises problems, too, problems that were addressed in the chapters to follow.

In Chapter 3, I examined Aquinas's way of handling problems posed by the fact that the person that became human in the incarnation is a divine person. One problem had to do with simplicity, and I argued that the apparent incompatibility between divine simplicity and Christ's compositeness disappears when we

understand what Aquinas means by Christ's compositeness and especially when we understand what he means by divine simplicity. The only real difficulty here, on my interpretation, is the danger of misunderstanding what Aquinas understands divine simplicity to be.

But there is another problem that arises from the fact that the assuming person is divine, and here things are more difficult. A divine person for Aquinas is both immutable and impassible, i.e., unable to change and unable to be on the receiving end of any causal process. How Aquinas addresses the problem is fairly clear. He holds that the assumed nature has a mixed relation with the assuming person; in this respect the Word-humanity relation is like the more general God-creature relation. At the same time, Aquinas goes beyond what he derives from the philosophical doctrine of creation and holds that the mixed relation is a union in person; in this respect the Word-humanity relation is unlike the more

general God-creature relation. Treating the Word-humanity relation as a mixed one is intended by Aquinas to preserve divine immutability and impassibility: because the relation is a mixed one, the Word's coming to be human, and the Word's being human in virtue of its humanity, do not on Aquinas's account qualify as *motus* and *passio*. Saying that the relation gives rise to a union in person is intended to ensure that the humanity is not merely related to the Word, but related to it in such a way that it humanizes it. But a difficulty remains: Why is this not a case of trying to have one's cake and eat it? I think this is one of the places where Aquinas would say that we have run up against the limits of what can be said. We know from both revelation and natural reason that the Word is immutable and impassible; we know from revelation that the Word is human in virtue of the incarnation; but we cannot know in detail how this works. Saying that the relation is mixed, and that it gives rise to a union in person, is a way of conforming to the constraints that revelation imposes; admitting that we do not understand how it works is a way of admitting that revelation transcends our powers of understanding. The way Aquinas in all this balances the need to go beyond ordinary metaphysics with the need to accept limits

strikes me as judicious; it is difficult, for me at any rate, to think of how one could go farther than he has on this point. And yet, as I will discuss below, a judgment like that can only be provisional.

In Chapter 4, I examined problems that arise when we focus on the fact that the assumed nature is a substantial nature. If what the Word assumed is a true and full human nature, won't it ground a supposit? And even if somehow it does not ground a supposit, isn't its not doing so a kind of loss of dignity or value for it — a kind of failure, so to speak? To the latter question, Aquinas gives us a clear answer: The assumed nature does indeed lack a dignity it might have had, but it gives it up for the sake of a greater one, namely, that of being joined in person to the Word. To the former question, Aquinas does not give us a clear answer, but it is possible to construct one on the basis of things he says: What makes a nature substantial is not the fact that it does ground a supposit, but the fact that it can. This way of thinking makes a lot of sense, in my view: All the natures that we normally think of as substantial still get counted as substantial, but extra room is created for Christ's to be substantial too. In addition, I considered the question of why, for Aquinas, the human nature assumed by Christ does not ground a human being. Engaging the three classic interpretations discussed by Schweizer, in light of some distinctions of my own, I adopted the view that the assumed nature does not ground a person because it is joined to the Word, and not because it lacks anything.

In Chapter 5, I examined Aquinas's views on the existences of Christ. I argued that the very question at issue is much harder to identify than commentators have generally seen, but that once the possible questions have been sorted out, we can see that Aquinas's main question is about the (qualified and unqualified) factual existences of supposit that Christ has. I also argued that Aquinas does not articulate a consistent answer to that question. Sometimes he argues that Christ has (a) one unqualified factual existence of supposit, i.e., his divine existence; (b) a multiplicity of qualified, accidental factual existences of supposit; but (c) no factual existence of supposit precisely from his human nature, qualified or unqualified. In one text, however, the *De Unione*, he argues that Christ has

not only (a) one unqualified divine factual existence of supposit and (b) a multiplicity of qualified, accidental factual existences of supposit, but also (c) a qualified but non-accidental factual existence of supposit from his human nature. I explained how these two different conclusions arose from the two different starting points he adopted, but I was unable to explain why he used two different starting points. In my judgment, the *De unione* approach makes more sense from Aquinas's point of view, but we cannot say which was his "real" historical view. In addition to all that, I addressed a question that Aquinas does not himself talk much about but that some of his commentators seem to be taking him to be talking about: Is Christ's human nature actuated by his divine existence principle, or is it actuated by a distinct existence principle proper to that human nature itself? I argued, briefly, that the latter answer makes more sense from Aquinas's point of view.

In Chapter 6, I took up the consistency question, and I differed from the mainstream "mereological replacement" interpretation of Aquinas. I argued that in his *Sentences* commentary he holds a mereological replacement view in only a qualified sense, and I argued further that in the *Summa theologiae* he does not endorse such a view at all. In passages where he has seemed to be endorsing such a view, I maintained, he is really doing something very different: He is not addressing the consistency issue, but instead he is giving us a strategy for avoiding misleading ways of speaking. He does address the consistency question in the *Summa theologiae*, but only very briefly, and not in a way that sheds much light on things.

Based on some remarks drawn from both the *Sentences* commentary and the *Summa theologiae*, I then proposed a certain reconstruction of what a "Thomistic" view might be, and I showed how it can be applied to certain cases, such as the problem of whether Christ is both possible and impossible. The core of the reconstructed view is the introduction of a very weak sense of "predicable," a sense according to which we can safely say that opposed predicates are predicable of Christ. The reconstructed view has a number of advantages, the most important of which is that it avoids contradiction, its main goal. Also, the way it asks us

to re-think certain concepts does not undermine what we need to say, on purely philosophical grounds, about creatures: Just as, in Chapter 4, the expanded notion of substantial nature leaves intact what we need to say about Socrates's humanity and Rusty's felinity, so too, in Chapter 6, the expanded notion of predicability leaves intact what we need to say about which features are and are not predicable of Socrates and Rusty. There is a difference, however, and it is an important one. The expanded notion proposed in Chapter 4 still seems like a legitimate way of understanding substantial natures. The expanded notion proposed in Chapter 6, by contrast, is (at least to my mind) much more of a stretch: It asks us to allow that some feature can be predicated of a supposit even though the supposit does not have that feature. One can, if one wants, stipulate that this is how one is going to use the word "predicate," but I think that this is going too far. "Predication" in this sense really doesn't sound like predication any more, but like something else instead.

For that reason, I would not want to incorporate into my own Christo-logical thinking the proposed reconstruction of Aquinas's thought that I offered in Chapter 6. While I think it makes sense to say of Christ that he is divine and that he would be impossible were divinity his only nature, I would not on that basis "predicate impossibility" of him, however weakly. Neither Christ nor Socrates is impossible, it seems to me. But that does not mean that Christ is no different from Socrates: Christ, but not Socrates, is such that, were he to stop being human, he would then be impossible. This approach would in my view be superior to the one I construct for Aquinas. I cannot, however, attribute it to him, because he says explicitly that opposed predicates can be predicated of one supposit if different natures are involved. On the other hand, it is important not to overstate the difference here. The main drawback of the proposed reconstruction on this analysis is that it uses the word "predication" in too weak a way. But to say that is nearly to have reduced the disagreement to a disagreement over words. Such disagreements can be important, but they are not Christological!

So much, then, for a summary of Aquinas's views — or, in some cases, of what I have proposed as

reconstructed "Thomistic" views — as presented in this book. Now I would like to conclude with a few more general remarks about Aquinas's accomplishment.

I have stressed more than once the importance, for understanding Aquinas, of the idea that theology can only go so far, that our reflections must always reach a point where we must settle for something that is, in itself, not fully satisfying. Now, as noted already, I think that if we accept Aquinas's theological presuppositions, the need for "settling" in this way would be hard to dispute. If there is a transcendent and infinite God, and if humans are finite, and if on top of that they are fallen, then it should be no surprise that our accounts of certain truths about God and his actions will be very hard for us to grasp in a more than rudimentary way. To be sure, one can reject these presuppositions: by denying the existence of God, for instance, or by denying God's transcendence and infinity. But from Aquinas's point of view, even if in some areas of inquiry, the fact that a theory is hard to grasp might count against its truth, that kind of reasoning has little place in theology.

It should be granted that accepting this brings with it a certain danger. The idea that theology involves realities that are ultimately incomprehensible can all too easily give us an excuse for not trying to understand them at all. We can fall into a kind of intellectual pusillanimity in which the mystery drives out the metaphysics. But I do not think that Aquinas can be accused of this failing. He delays, as long as he can, the point at which he admits defeat, and he is not afraid to return to an issue more than once, in an attempt once again to understand it as well as he can.

It would be hubristic for any theologian, even an Aquinas, to think he had taken things as far as they can be taken by anyone. Indeed, it should be evident from the analysis in this book that Aquinas has not done so. On some topics, his view is not laid out very clearly (see Chapters 2 and 4); on others, he fails to arrive at a single stable position (see Chapter 5); on still others, he has very little to say at all (see Chapter 6). So while there is a point beyond which no one can go, one should not be too quick to identify this with the point beyond which one has not gone oneself. Someone who runs up

against an aporia might be facing an unsolvable problem, but then again he or she might just be facing a problem that he or she is (at least for the moment) personally unable to solve — a problem that some other thinker might be able to make progress on.

If this is right, then someone who finds inspiration in Aquinas's Christ-ology should have in mind the hope of going farther than Aquinas did. It seems plausible that there is a learning curve in Christology whose slope is not constant: In the first few centuries, things were learned relatively quickly, and as time has gone on, it has become harder and harder to make real progress. For most of us, just learning and understanding what our predecessors have done is already a serious task! Nonetheless, the fact that our predecessors have achieved a lot does not mean that we cannot, starting from where they left off, go farther still. Surely someone can, even if you and I cannot. The only way to know is to try.

Now I would like to shift focus a bit to consider another point that I have several times discussed, namely, the way in which Aquinas takes notions from philosophy and modifies them to make them workable for theology. There is an interesting dynamic here that is worth reflecting on. Let me begin with an analogy from ordinary life. When listening to other people speak, we grasp what they say partly on the basis of the sounds we hear, and partly on the basis of what we consider it plausible for them to say. Our views about what they are likely to say — our pre-judgments about it — are often indispensable factors in the listening process: Without even noticing, we sometimes fill in syllables that were drowned out by background noise, correct for misstatements, and otherwise make determinate sense out of what is not sufficient for determining a sense. On the other hand, this procedure, while indispensable, is risky. Perhaps they are trying to tell us something that we have never imagined it possible for them to say. In such a case, a pre-judgment runs the risk of being a real prejudice.

The way that philosophical starting points function in theology is a bit like that. If we do not begin with some solid philosophical awareness, we will not be able to understand what is said on any theological

topic. If someone says that God is an uncaused cause, for example, I cannot understand this if I do not know what causality is. And yet, just as I must not let my preconceived notions about someone's opinions prevent me from understanding what she is saying, so too must the theologian be careful lest his philosophical views make it impossible for him to hear anything new in theology.

From Aquinas's point of view, Christian doctrine is a kind of new message, a revelation of truths that we would not have thought of on our own. It makes available to us certain facts that we must adapt our thinking to, and refusing to do so would be not the rightful use of prejudgments to understand what is said, but a wrongful fall into prejudice. From his point of view, it is incumbent upon us to be willing to stretch our views and re-interpret certain philosophical ideas — e.g., what a substantial nature is — to make room for the new facts of revelation.

I think it makes sense for Aquinas to proceed in this way. I also think that he does so in a sober manner. For example, consider a move discussed in Chapter 3. To address the problem of the Word's immutability and impassibility, he does not invent a whole new set of notions from whole cloth; instead, he takes hold of a notion (mixed relation) that he had already deployed for the more general case of the God-creature relation, and then he makes a change to it, enough of a change to resolve a specific issue concerning the incarnation. Or, to take another example, this one drawn from Chapter 5: In the *De Unione*, Aquinas does introduce a new kind of qualified factual existence of supposit, but that move leaves, so to speak, a smaller footprint than would a strategy that involved completely re-thinking the entire structure of existence and how it is divided up. I do not mean to imply that the modifications that Aquinas proposes are inconsequential: On the contrary, they involve serious re-thinkings of what we would normally have accepted on the basis of purely philosophical thinking. But while the moves he makes are not small, he seems to be trying to make them no bigger than they need to be.

Aquinas's approach is sober in another way as well: He leaves the ordinary, non-theological cases relatively unaffected. Let me illustrate this by

commenting on the main moves discussed in Chapters 4 and 6. The revision of the notion of a substantial nature makes room for what is needed in Christology, namely, a substantial nature that humanizes a supposit without grounding it, but it does so without changing our views of what other substantial natures do. Socrates's nature, and Rusty's, are still substantial natures, and they still do what metaphysics apart from revelation had said, namely, they not only humanize (or felinize) a supposit but also ground it as well. The notion of substantial nature gets changed for the sake of making sense of one special case, the hypostatic union, but the change leaves the other cases as they were. Likewise with the point made in Chapter 6. I tried to make sense of Aquinas's brief remarks by proposing a weak form of predication. As indicated earlier in this conclusion, I am not particularly happy with this proposal and think it a bit forced. But whatever disadvantages it may have, it does not have the disadvantage of making us speak differently about normal created supposits like Socrates and Rusty. Both of them can have their features predicated of them weakly, and even though, by design, the weak predications do not entail the strong predications in the case of Christ, they do entail them for Socrates and Rusty (if we call on an easily available premise). In other words, again space has been made for the incarnation, but not by crowding out what we know well we ought to say about Socrates and Rusty. So again, we have a kind of low-impact, sustainable change to the metaphysical ecosystem.

Taking all this together, my assessment of Aquinas's theory of the hypostatic union is positive. If one accepts the starting point of Christian revelation as set forth by the classic conciliar decrees, then Aquinas's task is to take some solid metaphysical views and use them to lay out the doctrines as best he can. Unsurprisingly, he sees a need to adapt or modify those metaphysical views, but he does so minimally — making relatively small changes to them, and leaving non-theological claims more or less as they were.

What this means is that Aquinas has done a good job, given his starting points. One could challenge him in two basic ways. First, more radically, by challenging his starting points, e.g., by challenging

the very idea of God, or the very idea of revelation, or the Christian claim that these books and decrees express that revelation. Obviously, it lies well outside the scope of this book to consider the strength of such challenges.

Less radically, one could question whether Aquinas's views are the best that can be developed given his starting points. Perhaps better accounts of the incarnation can be found in the writings of John Duns Scotus, for example, or Karl Barth, or any number of other thinkers. That sort of investigation too lies outside the scope of this book. However, it does seem clear that Aquinas's views are good enough to be worthy contenders in an argument with authors like Scotus and Barth.

One could have various reasons for arranging an argument among famous theologians. It would simply be interesting to figure out how best the presuppositions of Christology could be worked into a coherent system. Or one might arrange such an argument because one actually shared those presuppositions and wished to form one's own views about the very things themselves. Whatever the reason, I think it is clear that an argument best worth listening to would include Aquinas. Putting it differently, Aquinas is an author one would do well to learn from. If this book has made it easier to do so, then its purpose has been accomplished. <>

[Zealots for Souls](#) by Anne Huijbers [Quellen Und Forschungen Zur Geschichte Des Dominikanerordens: Neue Folge, De Gruyter, 9783110495256]

'I beg them who are about to read the following text, that they will not read it as a chronicle of times for sole curiosity, but that they consider diligently whether anything in their morals deviates from the standard of justice that shines famously in our holy fathers, and that they repair in themselves anything that is contrary to the path of true religion.

With this normative statement the Dominican Johannes Meyer (1422-1485) opened his Short chronicle of the Order of Preachers, which he dedicated to a Dominican official in 1470. He could not be more explicit: this chronicle was not meant to end up in a dusty order archive as a document chronicling the order's past that only

those driven by mere curiosity would read. On the contrary, Meyer emphasized in his prologue that his chronicle was supposed to be used to strengthen the Order of Preachers, to aid individuals within the order in coping with the 'daily conflict of vices and virtues, and to teach the brothers how to follow 'the path of true religion'.

Meyer's chronicle is only one of many narratives produced by members of religious orders in the fifteenth century that aimed at contributing to the construction of a well-defined religious identity. Up until now the larger part of mendicant institutional historiography has only received modest interest among order historians and has not been the subject of any in-depth comparative research. Aside from the cultural relevance of the works introduced in this study, many of these narratives have a number of other characteristics that make them appealing for cultural and intellectual historians of the fifteenth century. For example, they enable further investigation into the many understandings of reform in the period before the Protestant Reformation, and a proper scrutiny of these texts might lead to a deeper insight in 'medieval views of institutions and the representation of institutional self-conceptions'.

This book is a first step to filling this gap for the Dominican order and contributes to a field of research that can shed new light on religious and intellectual transformations in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe. The chapters that follow explore historical narratives and collective biographies written by Dominicans to serve a predominantly Dominican audience. My investigation starts at the end of the fourteenth century, when the Western Schism had started and the first initiatives of Observant reform within the Dominican order were visible (1388). The book explores Dominican narratives written in different geographical contexts in the long fifteenth century, a period characterized by struggles for Observance within the Dominican order.' The publication of Leandro Alberti's *De viris illustribus ordinis praedicatorum* in 1517 marks the end of this study, as to include what happened to the Dominican narrative identities in humanist contexts. The members of the Order of Preachers operated internationally and, therefore, an investigation into

their identity asks for an international approach. Nevertheless, most surviving narratives originate in Italy, with the German speaking area coming second as provider of institutional narratives.

This book investigates the narrative self-understanding of a religious order and concentrates on the Order of Preachers (in Latin: *Ordo Praedicatorum*), commonly known as the Dominican order after its founder Dominic de Guzman, who died in 1221 and was canonized in 1243. The historiographical tradition of this religious order, officially approved by Pope Honorius III in 1216, is relatively understudied especially for the later medieval period, as will be argued below. By scrutinizing Dominican order chronicles and collective biographies written in diverse regions of Europe, this study explores how members of the Dominican order described their religious order and what unity can be found in their written representations of it. Is it possible to speak of a pan-European Dominican narrative identity - and, if so, what did it consist of? Or do the texts reveal that there were many Dominican identities, dependent on particular contexts?

To answer this question, it is above all necessary to get a grip on the textual evidence, namely the Dominican institutional narratives. Therefore, Part 1 of this book, *Writing the Dominican past*, studies how and why Dominicans wrote institutional history in this period. How did a Dominican author, trying to present the Dominican past, approach this past, and how did he cast it into a narrative structure? Chapter 1 starts by inserting the Dominican texts into the wider field of medieval historiography and considers what common and specific historiographical topoi were developed in the narratives. Because it is important to be aware of the way in which the authors worked and dealt with their models, Chapter 2 is devoted to the method of compilation that they employed. It will become clear to what extent Dominican order chroniclers copied from each other and from other Dominican authors. This influenced the way they approached and represented the Dominican past - and thus Dominican identity.

The remaining chapters of Part 1 discuss the forms in which the institutional texts appeared and attempt to describe their characteristics. In order to

introduce the many narratives that have survived, I have divided them into the following categories: order chronicles that envisage to inform about the whole order (Chapter 3), convent chronicles that focus on a certain friary or nunnery (Chapter 4), and collective or serial biographies that, instead on chronology, focus on groups of Dominicans (Chapter 5). The great overlap between narratives that are traditionally conceived of as pertaining to different genres will become apparent. Part 1 thus situates order chronicles within the Dominican literary production more generally.

Part 2 (*Dominicans and Observance*) fleshes out dominant narrative themes already hinted at in Part 1: the need for Observance that was felt among several order members, and the consequent propagation of Observant reforms within the Dominican order. It shows that the Observants, a minority within the order, were the main constructors of the Dominican narrative identity in the fifteenth century: Observant reform is a central theme in the main order chronicles written in this period. The Observants considered the reform of their order as a necessary step in a larger reform process, which was eventually supposed to affect the whole Christian world. Chapter 6 traces the appearance of Observant identities in Dominican institutional narratives, and shows how authors depicted the beginning and progress of the Observant movement. Chapter 7 investigates what specific strategies Observant authors employed and what topoi they used to promote and legitimize Observant reform. Chapter 8 focuses on the ways in which specific Observant models were portrayed, and compares these to Observant descriptions of the masters general of this period. Building on modern scholarship, I will compare the Dominican Observant self-understanding with the other large mendicant order, the Franciscans.¹

Part 3 of this book is entitled *Dominicans and humanism*. Although I devoted only one chapter to this theme, I found it too important to leave out of this book since it shows the flexibility of the Dominican (narrative) self-understanding. Expropriating on Chapter 5, which focuses on Dominican collective biographies, this final chapter pays further attention to the widespread but little known tradition of Dominican texts entitled *De viris*

illustribus ordinis praedicatorum. It primarily aims to demonstrate to what extent some Dominican authors were influenced by humanist culture. Several Italian friars, trained in the studia humanitatis, tried to make the medieval literary tradition of the Dominicans compatible with humanist standards. This impacted their modes of procedure and their self-representation. Chapter 9 also reemphasizes that, for a proper understanding of 'Renaissance historiography', mendicant collections should no longer be ignored. Forms of religious institutional history continued to thrive in Renaissance Italy and were highly regarded by a humanist elite.

In a final conclusion, I will expand on the question what this study of the Dominican historiographical and hagio-biographical narratives actually tells us about the Dominican narrative self-understanding in this period marked by a struggle for Observant reforms and a breakthrough of humanist learning. I will reflect on several remarks that I made throughout the chapters and that deal with the Dominican sense of collectiveness and the Observant paradigm. The conclusion ends with the observation that we have to reassess traditional labels with arbitrary connotations that have been assigned to Dominican institutional texts previously, because, instead of providing understanding, they often obfuscate our view on precious textual witnesses.

Methodology

Dominican identities are expressed in diverse media, such as rituals, liturgy, images, architecture, and texts. We can distinguish between internal identities, constructed by Dominicans, and external identities, constructed by people who do not pertain to the order. I will look at internal and written identities: narrative identities produced within the Dominican order. The internal identity is often an ideal identity. External identities can indeed diverge from this ideal internal identity: whereas outsiders depict Dominicans mainly as inquisitors,' this book shows that this image is not cultivated in the Dominican narratives of self-understanding under scrutiny.

The modern order historian William Hinnebusch suggests that, from the beginning, the order's identity was well defined. He tends to pass by the

process of the creation and construction of a Dominican cult and identity — l'invenzione della memoria, as Luigi Canetti called it.' Instead, he stated in his History of the Dominican order that the Dominican system was and is 'unified, directing everything to the summit of God's love', and that the Dominican order 'has its own forms of piety and liturgical rite, its own approach to truth and way of training its members, its own saints and scholars, in short, its own spiritual and intellectual environment that only Dominican friars and sisters completely understand, that only they can cherish with filial love'. Hence, Hinnebusch, who wrote what still counts as the most important handbook of Dominican history in the English language, suggests that the Dominican identity is something 'religious' that non-initiated scholars cannot pin down completely. Nevertheless, this book tries to create a historical perspective on the actual formation of this Dominican identity during the period of Observant reforms, by looking at the ways in which Dominican authors represented their order in institutional narratives.

Theoretically, this study presumes that the identity of the Order of Preachers is a construction, which is largely shaped in institutional narratives. This presumption is based on Paul Ricoeur's concept of 'narrative identity', which posits that narratives are a central medium of self-understanding. Ricoeur points out that narratives are linguistic constructions that can serve as an example for a collective entity — in this case: the Dominican order. Through examining narratives the process of identity formation can be reconstructed, because narratives preserve the interpretation of one's self-understanding. In addition, the renowned sociologist Anthony Giddens has postulated that a narrative that links particular events together is necessary for the creation of identity. According to him a person's identity is to be found in 'the capacity to keep a particular narrative going'. Giddens' observation can also be applied to collective identities — not just in the modern world, but also in pre-modern times.

Religious communities were very well aware that they had to keep a narrative going in order to establish and retain their collective identity. The

twentieth-century Dominican intellectual Edward Schillebeeckx wrote:

'Dominikanische Ordensgeschichten halten uns als Dominikaner 'zusammen'. Ohne Geschichten wären wir der Erinnerung beraubt, könnten unseren eigenen Platz in der Gegenwart nicht finden und würden ohne Hoffnung auf Zukunftserwartung bleiben.'

Schillebeeckx considered his religious order as an eigene Erzähl-Gemeinschaft: 'wo durch wir zu einer eigenen, besonderen Familie gemacht werden, zu erkennen an verschiedenen, großen und manchmal kleinen, aber nicht zu verbergenden Familien-besonderheiten.' He referred to his religious order as a special 'family', but individuals were never born into this 'family'. They became members through a process of learning. The Dominican family was made. Historical narratives and related institutional texts were thus crucial: through these writings the necessary continuities within the religious community were created.

Historiography defined the community's identity. By remembering their past the authors answered the question of who they were and who they wanted to be in the future. Therefore their narratives functioned in a prescriptive way, as they formulated an ideal of 'who we ought to be'. Order chronicles and biographical collections offer moral interpretations of events and people. Therefore, they are important media for the expression of values and norms. These narratives provided individuals within the order with a language that could be used to define their religious identity. In this way the authors of these texts have contributed to the process of 'normative centering'.

The thesis that identities are contained in narratives has become customary in modern studies of medieval and early modern forms of identity formation. Many recent works study identity formation through historical or hagiographical narratives.' An 'awareness of a common past, as well as expectations about a common future' are crucial to any community - whether national, regional, ethnical, or religious. This book concentrates on religious identity, as in late medieval and early modern Europe religion had a profound impact on the process of identity

formation. It studies dominant constructions of religious life, and shows that the institutional narratives are central pillars in the process of religious identity formation, as they simultaneously reflect and dictate the religious life.

Collective identity exists when individuals identify themselves with a group to such an extent that an attack on the group endangers their own personal identity. The group then functions as a normative nucleus (*nucleo normativo*), the unity of which is formed by the coherence of the behavior of its members and regulated by its norms. This process results in both the community creating the individual, and the individual creating the community. Identity formation can be considered a learning process: an identity is mature if it has fully interiorised the norms and values of the group. The norms within a group can be established through education, for example by catechistic writings, sermons and historical narratives. People learn to behave in such a way that they are accepted by society (or the specific order to which they want to belong) and thus they conform to norms in order to fit in.

Status questionis

Many of the texts treated in my research are traditionally considered as insignificant, uncritical and non-original compilations - not only by Protestant historians, but even by Catholic scholars. Illustrative of this is the well-known Dominican historian Marie-Humbert Vicaire who, in 1972, discredited late medieval and early modern Dominican historiography in the important *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*, writing that this body of texts 'uncritically carries all data, inventions and misunderstandings that have been accumulated for four centuries'.

In the thirteenth century, Dominican authors such as Vincent of Beauvais, Martin of Opava, and Jacob of Voragine produced successful historical and hagiographical narratives that enjoyed a wide dissemination and served as handbooks for preachers. Since the 1970s, their texts, such as the *Speculum historiale* and the *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum* have benefitted from a new interest in later medieval historiography. This new focus no longer laments the lack of critical perception in the

texts, but tries to understand their origin, tradition and shape. At the same time, the larger part of mendicant institutional historiography can only rely on interest within the own order - which also makes sense because fewer manuscripts of these texts survive. Of these institutional texts, the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century order chronicles again have benefitted from much more attention than the later chronicles - as is again confirmed in the choices made in the recent work of Achim Wesjohann.

Why has the verdict on the mendicant literary production in the fifteenth and sixteenth century been so severe? In the first place, it is important to note that the scholarship on mendicant cultural production has to a large extent been advanced by friar-historians. Modern mendicant order historians, including the Dominicans, have always singled out the thirteenth century - the era of their foundation and first great missionary and intellectual successes — as a period worthy of scholarly attention, not least because of the search for the 'original' Dominican charisma. If a Dominican were to explain the identity of his order, he would, first of all, turn to the beginnings: the founder, the rule and the constitutions of the order. As Hinnebusch wrote, 'the character of the Order of Friars Preachers reflects the ideals of St Dominic its founder'. However, John van Engen emphasized that, at the beginning of the existence of the Order of Preachers, the person and ideals of Dominic were still 'very vague'. There was not an immediate cult of Dominic, when he died. This cult had to be constructed. Nevertheless, this dominant 'origins' approach has had repercussions for the study of the late medieval history of nearly all major religious orders. For instance, the above-mentioned Vicaire mostly worked on the 'golden age' of the Dominican order: the time of Saint Dominic and his first followers. This holds true for most Dominicans interested in their own order history. The materials of later centuries are considered less important and less constitutive.

Moreover, we should note that until recently, many modern scholars, even those who had a vested interest in taking these documents seriously, have not always considered these historical and hagiographical narratives to be very reliable sources for 'historical' information. Because of their

avowedly positivist stance, they had difficulties accepting that medieval order historians did not make the same distinction between fact and fiction as professional historians strive to do nowadays. Deeds of saints, legends, and miracles are interwoven in these narratives: from a religious point of view, all things are connected within God's plan. This may be a problem when reconstructing 'historical truth', but the questions that historians ask have changed. Historians now want to know other things, e. g. 'what do the sources reveal about the mentalities and the culture in which they were commissioned, written and read'? In order to understand identity formation, the fictive elements of narratives are also of major importance, since an awareness of sharing the same past, invented or not, (or corroborated and legitimized by miraculous intervention) is essential to any collective identity. Founding legends described in chronicles create a 'sense of solidarity' among the members of the order. This book will show that saints and other exemplary figures of the order were essential models in the process of identity formation. Their veneration constituted an integrating element for a group.

Another reason why the texts used in this study have suffered from relative scholarly neglect is due to the period in which they were written. As the rise of Protestantism is one of the main historical 'stories' of sixteenth-century Europe, serious engagement with the intellectual aspects of Catholicism in this period has been lacking. When, in the nineteenth century, historians started to look at the Catholic side, the question they had in mind was 'what caused the Reformation?'. The obvious answer was: 'a decadent late medieval Church that neglected pastoral care'. Catholicism in the early modern period was labeled as Counterreformation and was interpreted in terms of a Catholic reaction to the Protestant challenge. In this view, the Council of Trent (1545 —1563) awoke and revived the Catholic Church. Reformation and Counterreformation historians have consequently dismissed and obscured continuities with the late medieval period, as they do not fit in the historical paradigm of early modern Europe.

Active Observant mendicants eager to reform their order and re-educate the faithful clearly did not fit

into this picture of a decadent late medieval Church; this could be the reason why their vast literary production has been given so little scholarly attention. This also explains why the Observant movements that rose within the religious orders by the end of the fourteenth century have not yet been given their proper place in scholarship. These 'Observants' strove to achieve a strict observance (in Latin *observantia*: hence their name) of the original rule and wanted to return to their pristine ideals, which implied a purification and simplification of the religious life and the abjuration of the orders' worldly concerns.

Instead, discontinuities have been highlighted. Historians such as Gotheim and Ranke placed the newly founded Jesuits at the heart of the Counterreformation while obscuring the role of older religious orders with a medieval pedigree. This trend has been adopted by subsequent historians and is still reflected in the historiography today. In 1988, John Patrick Donnelly observed in a guide to research on early modern Catholicism that the continuity and reform within the Dominicans and Franciscans 'deserve more study than they usually receive', as 'the older forms of religious life, particularly the mendicants, remained the most popular throughout the Counter Reformation'.

While concentrating on one of the 'traditional' religious orders, namely the Dominicans, this book demonstrates that there is more continuity between the medieval and early modern period than is traditionally acknowledged. This is in line with the work of John O'Malley, one of the leading historians of early modern Catholicism. He has recently pointed out that the continuities between late medieval and early modern Catholicism are to be found in the role of the religious orders, whose members 'were both before and after the Reformation much better trained and more effectively organised than the clergy of any diocese'. The current study elaborates on this, analyzing a selection of their literary production. It demonstrates that the mendicant orders — and especially their Observant branches — were very much concerned with the realization of clear-cut norms in belief, thinking and behavior among the members of their respective orders, and beyond. By studying the narratives of self-understanding

within the Dominican order, this study contributes to the understanding of this 'tumultuous' period in the history of Western Europe.

Not only order historiography, but also hagiographical texts from this period have suffered from the lack of interest in (the continuity on) the Catholic side. The significant hagiographical production in renaissance Europe has long been neglected. Alison Knowles Frazier and David Collins have recently devoted two monographs to the subject, respectively on Italian and German hagiography written by humanists. These pioneering studies on renaissance hagiography do not focus on the saints themselves, but on the *vitae* and their authors: why did the authors fashion the saint as they did, and how were these narratives used? Collins explains that the sources have hardly attracted scholarly attention for the same reasons expressed above: they were not considered reliable sources for historical information, and are 'victims' of a problem of periodization: as the sources under scrutiny are mostly conceived as either medieval (up until the early fifteenth century) or early-modern (after the mid-sixteenth-century Council of Trent), the hagiographical production in the period in between 'has been left largely unexplored'. Moreover, renaissance hagiography seemed almost out of place as a genre: due to an essentially anachronistic approach to their subject matter, modern historians of renaissance Europe have been mainly interested in writings on pagan and secular themes, not in humanists writing saints' lives. These reasons help to explain why Dominican institutional texts of this period have remained largely unstudied.

Institutional history

This book explores texts that meant to contribute to the construction of a sense of 'Dominican identity': narratives that were written by Dominicans, about Dominicans, for a predominantly Dominican audience. Although many institutional narratives that were meant to contribute to the construction of a religious identity have survived, they have not been recognised and given their proper place in scholarship, nor in current thinking on the nature and importance of medieval sources. Bert Roest's chapter in a volume on medieval historiography published in 2003 is the first attempt to group

together and shed light on this kind of institutional historiography, and its kinship to hagiography. It shows that these institutional writings written by members of religious orders pose new challenges to existing categories, especially because these texts combine elements of works that have traditionally been assigned to either the genre of historiography or that of hagiography.

The texts discussed in this book often do not fit into the generic categories that modern scholars have developed for medieval sources: e. g. order chronicles have not yet been considered as an independent group in the important series *Typologie des sources du moyen age occidental*. 'Chronicles of monasteries and churches' appear in the volume on local and regional chronicles, which focuses squarely on the high middle ages and therefore does not have much to say about the texts discussed here. In yet another volume of this series, namely one on Latin legendaries and hagiographical manuscripts, Guy Philippart briefly mentions legendaries specialised in saints of a certain religious family, but this is not fleshed out in more detail.

Nor do the institutional narratives by members of religious orders fit into the established paradigms of renaissance historiography. The many order chronicles that were produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are not introduced in standard works on the historical writing of the period. Instead, these works focus on the 'new' humanist historical genres that are said to have broken away from the medieval chronicle format. As such, modern scholars fail to see that humanist historians did not cut all their ties with the late medieval historiographical traditions, and that a number of 'traditional' forms of order historiography did evolve under the influence of new humanist generic paradigms.

Friar-historians have expressed limited interest in the chronicles of the later middle ages. Order historian Vicaire stated that Dominicans have often neglected their history, and suggested that only after 1600 Dominicans started to take order historiography seriously. He clearly did not study the evidence at all. He only mentioned 'les compilations-combinaisons' by Thomas of Siena and Alain de la Roche. In reality, the writings of

Dominicans were many and varied, but the bulk of these texts remains largely unstudied or is not easily accessible. Some survive in one medieval manuscript only, others have come down to us in incunable editions, again others have been edited in hard to find eighteenth-century volumes on local history. A number of them, fortunately, have been edited in modern series on Dominican sources, such as the *Monumenta historica ordinis fratrum praedicatorum* and the *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland*. Aside from such misleading statements about the 'lack' of historiographical engagement, the limited attention that has been given to late medieval order chronicles is prone to anachronistic judgments, as I alluded to before and intend to demonstrate in more detail in the following chapters.

Although many institutional chronicles (and the relation between them) have not been analyzed in detail, several scholars have contributed to the production of partial overviews of Dominican order chronicles. Already in the middle ages, Dominicans compiled lists of Dominican authors and their works. These were often appended to order chronicles. Antoninus of Florence devoted a section of his world chronicle to Dominican historians (Dominican scholars in *materia historiarum*). He did not mention order chroniclers, but listed the most famous historians of universal chronicles. Later, in 1517, Leandro Alberti likewise devoted a section to Dominican historians in his *De viris illustribus ordinis praedicatorum*. After praising his non-Dominican humanist friend Flaminio, he introduced Vincent of Beauvais, Gerard of Frachet, and the order chroniclers Girolamo Borselli and Ambrosius Taegius.

The most important instruments are the large catalogues of Dominican authors: medieval Dominican writers are listed in the four-volume *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevi* edited between 1970 and 1993 by the Dominican friars Thomas Kaeppeli and Emilio Panella. For a chronological overview that includes sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers one can consult the *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum*, edited between 1719 and 1721 by Jacques Quéfif and Jacques Échard. I based my research partly on these

catalogues. The catalogue of Dominican authors by Quétif and Échard contains a useful index: under the heading *Historia generalis ordinis praedicatorum illustrata* authors are listed who are considered to have written an 'elucidating' general history of the Order of Preachers. The Dominican authors listed under the headings of profane and local histories, or saints lives and lists of illustrious Dominicans (*Martyrologia seu historia sanctorum et beatorum ac illustrium ordinis praedicatorum*) are interesting for this study as well. Quétif and Échard did not identify all authors. For instance, they did not know Johannes Meyer, but did mention one of Meyer's works under the name *Anonymus Teuto*. At the same time, Quétif and Échard include authors who have subsequently disappeared from view. For instance, Johannes de Puteobonello (fl. 1439) does not reappear in Kaeppli's catalogue of Dominican writers, neither does Benedictus Paulus from Florence (fl. 1500). The *Compendium cronicarum* of this follower of Girolamo Savonarola is conserved in the National Library of Florence and is still to be studied. Another attempt at listing Dominican historians was made by the eighteenth-century order historian Thomas Mamachi. In the preface of his *Annales ordinis praedicatorum*, he introduced the works of Jordan of Saxony, Peter Ferrandi, Thomas of Cantimpré, Humbert of Romans, Stephen of Bourbon, Stephen of Salagnac, Bernard Gui, Thomas of Siena, Jacob of Soest, Alberto Castello, Louis de Valladolid, Girolamo Albertucci Borselli, Ambrosius Taegius, Sebastian de Olmedo, and Ferdinand Castillio.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, order historian Daniel-Antonin Mortier wrote an extensive work about the Dominican masters general. Unfortunately, he does not critically introduce the narrative sources he used for his multi-volume order history. In 1923, Arnold Köhl included a short overview of Dominican order historians in an appendix to his doctoral thesis on the Dominicans in the Alsace and Rhine area during the thirteenth century. He was mainly interested in the chronicles that could offer information about the thirteenth-century Dominicans of the German lands. In 1948, Angelus Walz provided an introduction of authors who wrote about the Dominican order in his Latin history of the Dominican order - *Compendium historiae ordinis praedicatorum*. More recently, in

1997, Emilio Panella wrote a general article on Dominican historiography in another renowned reference work: the *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*. Although the early chronicles are rather well introduced, the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chronicles are passed over quickly. Panella indeed stated that further study of these fifteenth-century narratives would increase our knowledge of the development of Dominican self-understanding. However, the bibliographical references provided are not exhaustive. For example, his article does not mention an important study by Beltrán de Heredia that introduces the Dominican order historiography in the Spanish provinces.

Most other overviews concentrate on the medieval period. In 1973, William Hinnebusch wrote the second volume of a handbook on the Dominican order, which includes a chapter on medieval Dominican historians. This chapter discusses all types of Dominican historiography and does not consider authors of Dominican order chronicles separately. It briefly introduces the order histories of Jordan of Saxony, Stephen of Salagnac (d. 1290) and Galvano Fiamma, but pays most attention to the life and works of the best known thirteenth- and fourteenth-century historians, like Martin of Opava, Bernard Gui, and Ptolemy of Lucca.

A good recent starting point to find out more about the medieval Dominican chronicle tradition at large is Graeme Dunphy's article in the *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, which introduces around 60 Dominican chronicles. His overview includes different genres of Dominican historical writings: ecclesiastical histories, episcopal histories, papal and imperial chronicles, world chronicles, town chronicles, national, regional and local chronicles, inquisition chronicles, travel stories, eye-witness accounts and order chronicles, both general and local histories, focusing on a particular convent. Dunphy observed that in the Dominican historiography of the fifteenth century 'the German-speaking world took center stage'. Indeed many German-speaking Dominicans took up the pen to write history: Hermann Korner (ca. 1365 - 1438) wrote a world chronicle, though with a regionalised focus, entitled *Cronica novella*,⁶ and Felix Fabri (c. 1440 -1502) wrote a history of Swabia and Ulm. In this context, he also referred to

the order chroniclers Jacob of Soest and Johannes Meyer, who will be discussed later on.

In 2003, Bert Roest wrote a chapter on late medieval institutional history, which includes a section on Dominican order chronicles. He introduced different forms of mendicant historiography (e. g. both concise and larger historical compendia, regionalised world chronicles, national and dynastic histories, and urban chronicles), and offered a well annotated overview of many Dominican convent and order chronicles. Since then, two important German contributions have appeared that analyze different aspects of medieval order historiography. In 2012, Achim Wesjohann published a large study that concentrates on the founding myths in mendicant historiography, but his book ends with the fourteenth century. Most recently, in 2013, Gerd Jäkel studied a selection of Dominican order chronicles written between the thirteenth and fifteenth century. He aimed to show how institutional continuity was constructed in these texts and concentrated on the structure of the chronicles and on repetitive formulations. These are the most important studies that introduce Dominican order historiography. Next to these, there are articles that focus on individual texts, many of which are published in Dominican journals dedicated to order history and culture, such as the *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum*, *Memorie Domenicane*, or *Mémoire Dominicaine*. The impact of this scholarship seems restricted. Journals as the Italian *Memorie Domenicane* are difficult to find outside Italy, and do not reach a broader international audience."

Building on these previous ventures, the present study introduces the different ways in which Dominican friars and sisters chose to present the history of their religious order in writing. It concentrates on little studied Dominican narratives in a period full of Observant initiatives that have been often overlooked. Studying these narratives, this book aims to contribute to various overlapping but at the same time distinct scholarly fields, namely the scholarship focusing on medieval and renaissance historiography, the scholarship interested in the world of late medieval Observant reforms, and the scholarship concerned with issues of identity formation in Europe's large and

important religious orders.' As such, this study hopes to shed light on the strategies available to historians concerned with the survival and transformation of their religious order.

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[And Still We Wait: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theology of Holy Saturday and Christian Discipleship](#) by Riyako Cecilia Hikota [Princeton Theological Monograph, Pickwick Publications, 9781532605598]

In response to the recent critiques made against Balthasar's interpretation of Christ's descent into

hell on Holy Saturday, this book argues that Balthasar does not intend to present a radical reinterpretation of the doctrine in contrast to the traditional teachings but rather intends to fully appreciate the in-betweenness of Holy Saturday as the day of transition from the cross to the resurrection, from the old aeon to the new. The book further argues that this awareness of the "in-betweenness" can be detected throughout Balthasar's theological corpus and provides a clue to interpret his thoughts on Christian discipleship and suffering. After all, the Christian existence is also characterized by the transition from the old aeon to the new, from suffering to victory. The Christian believes that their victory is already here and not here yet. In this sense, the Christian still lives in Holy Saturday. Eventually, we can deepen our understanding of Christian discipleship and suffering in the light of Holy Saturday. In short, we could patiently endure our Holy Saturday because of Christ's Holy Saturday in hell.

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Excerpt:

The Context: The Debate Concerning Christ's Descent into Hell

In recent years, Holy Saturday and Christ's descent into hell have been quietly gaining more and more scholarly attention,' but there is still more to be said about their significance. The most influential modern theologian who has seriously engaged with this doctrine is the Swiss Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988). Inspired by the mystical visions of his collaborator and friend, Adrienne von Speyr, he has presented an innovative, but also controversial, interpretation that on Holy Saturday Jesus Christ suffered in utter solidarity with the dead in hell and took to himself our self-damnation. For Balthasar, this "act" of

Christ reveals the full depth of our redemption. One of the most distinctive characteristics of Balthasar's interpretation is that he reads this doctrine as a Trinitarian event and emphasizes the passivity of the Son, who, in sheer "obedience of a corpse," underwent the godforsakenness in solidarity with the sinful humanity as the final point of his salvific mission received from the Father.

However, Balthasar's innovative interpretation has caused controversies, leading critics such as Alyssa Lyra Pitstick to argue that Balthasar's theology is even heretical.¹ On the surface, Balthasar's interpretation seems to be quite far from the mainstream Catholic teaching of the doctrine (known as the harrowing of hell), which obviously presents Jesus Christ in hell as being already crowned with the glory of Easter and emphasizes the salvation of the patriarchs from Sheol (or Hades, the realm of the dead, which contains both the righteous and the wicked). For example, the current

Catholic Catechism, which was promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992, summarizes this doctrine as follows:

By the expression "He descended into hell; the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil "who has the power of death" (Heb 2:14). In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.

The Catechism also explains that Jesus "descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there" and also "Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him."² This statement of the current Catechism of the Catholic Church basically reflects the teaching of the Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566; the so-called "Roman Catechism"), which had a dominant influence for more than four centuries. The Roman Catechism provides two reasons why Christ descended into hell: to liberate the just³ and to proclaim his power.

Turning to such authorities as these, Pitstick has summarized the traditional teaching by focusing on the following four points:

First, Christ descended in His soul united to His divine Person only to the limbo of the Fathers. Second, His power and authority were made known throughout all of hell, taken generically. Third, He thereby accomplished the two purposes for the descent, which were "to liberate the just" by conferring on them the glory of heaven and "to proclaim His power." Finally, His descent was a glorious one, and Christ did not suffer the pain proper to any of the abodes of hell.

In short, Pitstick has argued that there does exist a "traditional" Catholic doctrine of the descent and that the creeds, the magisterial teaching, the Scripture, the liturgy, the consensus of the saints, and the *sensus fidelium* expressed in sacred art all unanimously show that the descent is "glorious in the first and proper sense of the word," in other words, "glorious" in the sense of Easter, while Balthasar seems to interpret it in the sense of Good Friday.

In response to Pitstick, Edward T. Oakes has taken the position to defend Balthasar, and the series of their debates on this topic has been published. While admitting that "Balthasar is a disturbing theologian. Even among some of his most vocal enthusiasts, he seems 'not quite right'"

Oakes has attempted to defend Balthasar against Pitstick's harsh critiques by mainly focusing on the following three points: Protestantism, papacy, and purgatory. As it is well known, Balthasar is hugely influenced by the Reformed theologian, Karl Barth, in many areas of his theology, including his famous "hope" for universal salvation. Oakes criticizes Pitstick's curt dismissal of Reformed theologians in general. This point is worth noting because, as Oakes reminds us, it is nothing less than St. Paul's doctrine of atonement that Balthasar has tried to bring back into the center of Catholic theology through his engagement with Barth. Therefore, Oakes argues that it is actually St. Paul's teachings that Pitstick is denying by dismissing Barth's influence on Balthasar. Further, Oakes turns to the authority of the two popes, namely, St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who are known to have greatly commended Balthasar's contributions

to the Catholic Church. (The former is the one who insisted that Balthasar be a cardinal, and the latter's own interpretation of Christ's descent into hell sounds similar to Balthasar's.) Finally, as to Pitstick's treatment of purgatory, Oakes points out that Pitstick's argument admits a pre-Christian purgatory, which does not make sense, as not only Balthasar but also the traditional teaching states that the "hell" Christ descended into was Sheol. In short, through a series of articles and responses on this topic, Oakes has tried to present Balthasar's interpretation as an authentic development of the doctrine which can stand the norms set by Blessed John Henry Newman.

Another scholar whose response to Pitstick is worth noting here is Paul J. Griffiths. His focus is not on Balthasar's interpretation itself but on the scope and doctrinal weight of what Pitstick has called the "traditional" teaching. Regarding her four-point summary of the "traditional" teaching, Griffiths has argued that Pitstick "drastically overestimates the extent to which there is settled doctrine on this topic, and therefore also misconstrues the nature of her own enterprise." Pitstick herself clearly appeals to the consensus fidelium to support her argument. However, as Griffiths says, "Appeal to the consensus fidelium to support or rule out some doctrinal is, therefore, while quite legitimate, always difficult and never *prima facie* probative." Specifically, Griffiths has pointed out that the technical language she uses in her summary (such as the phrase "limbo of the Fathers") "has never been the subject of definition by any council, that appears in no creed, and that, so far as I can tell, is almost entirely absent from ordinary magisterial teaching." Further, concerning the meaning of "glory" in the sense of Easter which Pitstick emphasizes, Griffiths criticizes the way she uses the notion "to close thought down" rather than "to break open and suggestively expand the meaning of the descent in ways whose limits cannot be specified in advance." As a conclusion he writes, "the church doesn't teach very much about that matter, which means that the scope for such discussion is wide" In short, Griffiths has shown that the "traditional" teaching presented by Pitstick is "nothing that requires assent from Catholics"

However, Griffiths's article is far from being the final word on this debate concerning Balthasar's innovative interpretation of Holy Saturday. While it has certainly helped us to see that Pitstick's accusation of Balthasar of heresy may not be as solidly grounded as she claims, some of the serious concerns raised by Pitstick against Balthasar have been shared by others (mostly concerning his treatment of the Trinity, Christology, and universal salvation).

Going back to the statement of the current Catechism on this doctrine, while it is true that it sounds far from Balthasar's interpretation on the surface, we should also note that when this Catechism was presented to the public at first some scholars actually said it should have left some room for interpretations like Balthasar's. For example, a Rahnerian scholar Peter C. Phan has written:

There are, however, elements in the Catechism's exposition of the Creed that are "old" in the pejorative sense of outmoded. For example, in its interpretation of the formula "he descended to the dead," the Catechism seems to take it literally to mean that Jesus descended into the realm of the dead ...While such an interpretation is not to be ruled out of course, it would have helped matters immeasurably to state unambiguously that such a phrase need not be taken literally and that other interpretations (such as Hans Urs von Balthasar's or Karl Rahner's) are theologically plausible.

It is further worth noting that Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the editor of the Catechism, has specifically mentioned Balthasar in his introduction to the Catechism's teaching of this doctrine in quite a subtle way. He has said,

The fifth article ... concerns an equally central good of the Christian patrimony of faith. The brief paragraph on Jesus' descent into hell keeps to what is the common property of the Church's exegetical tradition. Newer interpretations, such as that of a Hans Urs von Balthasar (the contemplation of Holy Saturday), however profound and helpful they may be, have not yet experienced

that reception which would justify their inclusion in the Catechism.

We should not read too much into this "not yet," but the subtle way that Balthasar is mentioned here is worth noting. His interpretation has been neither received as orthodox nor rejected as heterodox. In other words, there is still room and even a need to evaluate Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday critically.

The Contributions of This Book in Terms of Its Approach, Scope, and Questions

Now let us clarify the position of this book and the contributions we aim to make in terms of critical evaluation of Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday. Despite its polemical tone, there is no doubt that Pitstick's work has been a great achievement for it has certainly stirred much scholarly interest in this topic. As we have noted above, she has also raised some serious concerns about Balthasar's theology, which have been shared by other critics. First of all, does Balthasar's theology not bring some kind of a rupture into the Trinity? Secondly, does he not depart from the Chalcedonian Christology by confusing the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ? Finally, does his theology not inevitably lead to admitting universal salvation in a systematic sense despite his insistence that it is merely a "hope"? We will discuss these questions as we expound his theology of Holy Saturday.

On the other hand, we find three significant problems with Pitstick's approach to Balthasar, which are directly related to the contributions this book aims to make. First of all, we have to note the huge genre difference between Balthasar and Pitstick. While Balthasar is known for his utter distaste for neo-scholasticism, Pitstick's entire work is precisely written in a neo-scholastic style. This genre difference should not be ignored, as it seems to be one of the causes which lead her to miss the exploratory nature of his treatment of Holy Saturday and to misread him as if he attempted to reshape the Catholic dogma in a radical way. Throughout this book, our position is that Balthasar does not try to present a radical reinterpretation of the doctrine of the descent into hell in contrast to the traditional teachings but rather tries to appreciate the "in-between" state of Christ in Sheol

on Holy Saturday more seriously than any other theologian has ever done. We will argue for it while paying full respect to the genre he is working within, which we understand to be a contemplative combination of theology and spirituality.

This point leads us to the second point: the problem concerning the sources. First of all, in order to evaluate Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday fully, we believe that it is important to see Adrienne von Speyr's mystical visions and to examine how he has developed his own theology by using them as an inspirational source while also turning to various sources for support. In contrast to Pitstick, who almost entirely ignores her writings, throughout this book we will refer to Speyr's mystical visions when it is relevant. We will also emphasize the importance of the spiritual writings of saints in history for him: St. John of the Cross and St. Thérèse of Lisieux in particular.

Finally, the entire scope and angle of this book differs from Pitstick's work and the other previous studies on Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday. In the last analysis, our focus is on Holy Saturday itself, the day between the cross and the resurrection, which includes Mary's Holy Saturday and the Christian's Holy Saturday experience today as well as Christ in hell. We believe that this angle is significant in order to do full justice to Balthasar's treatment of this subject. After all, he himself has preferred this liturgical term "Holy Saturday" to the more doctrinal term "Christ's descent into hell." His preference for this liturgical term also implies the wide scope his theology potentially has. It is not only about what Christ did or where he was on this particular day in what condition, but it also has in its scope the whole "Holy Saturday experience," which can be characterized by silent waiting. For example, the Roman Missal clearly states, "On Holy Saturday the Church waits at the Lord's tomb in prayer and fasting, meditating on his Passion and Death and on his Descent into Hell, and awaiting his Resurrection." We also believe that this element of waiting is important to understand the way Balthasar remains faithful to the Catholic tradition. In his own words,

We could, simply put, distinguish the two great movements of the tradition: that of the East and that of the West. For the East,

the icon of Christ's descent makes the main representation of our salvation. Christ strides over the gates of hell which lie across under his feet, as victor over death, and extends His saving hand to those waiting in the darkness of Sheol ...In the West, theology and liturgy mainly honor the silence of death, so the church watches quietly and prayerfully with Mary at the grave. However, both traditions have an inner limit. The Eastern tradition shows us not the dead but the one who is fully alive, namely the Christ of Easter ...The Western tradition with their pure silence remains somehow eventless, and nothing seems to happen between Good Friday and Easter. Is there a possibility to reconcile both theologies by criticizing their weak points?

This passage helps us to see why Pitstick's main question (whether the descent was glorious in the sense of Easter or Good Friday) can be actually misleading for evaluation of Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday. His own concern does not lie so much in clarifying the meaning of the glory as in fully appreciating this strange pause between death and life, or between suffering and victory. This point can be further justified by noting that Pitstick's argument does not really answer the question why the church actually waits a whole day before the celebration of the Easter Vigil mass on Holy Saturday night. To underline this point, we will conclude this book by exploring the profound relation between the mystery of Holy Saturday and the mystery of the Eucharist, which is "the source and summit of the Christian life."

Once we note Balthasar's emphasis on the "in-betweenness" of Holy Saturday, we start to see the possibility to widen its scope and explore its implications for Christian life. In addition to his innovative treatment of Holy Saturday, Balthasar is also regarded as a pioneer in the area of theological engagement with tragedy, but the profound connection between these two areas has not yet been fully examined. Balthasar fundamentally sees something "tragic" in an in-between state. We will present a close connection between his theology of Holy Saturday and his tragic view of the paradoxical existence of the Christian by focusing on the element of waiting.

With this approach and within this scope, we will explore the following questions in particular: what kind of implications Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday can provide for Christian discipleship? In relation to this, we will also explore the implications for the question of Christian suffering as well: how does Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday help Christians to find meaning and hope in their suffering while avoiding the pitfall of systematized theodicy, that is, avoiding presumptuously theorizing or explaining away the reality of suffering? In fact, Christian discipleship and suffering are closely interlinked in Balthasar's theology, so in the last analysis these questions become virtually inseparable. This point will be made clear as we expound his theology.

We will try to explore the implications for Christian suffering and discipleship by connecting the in-between state of Christ in Sheol and the in-between existence of the Christian in this world. Such an exploration is quite relevant when we critically evaluate Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday while doing full justice to the genre within which he is working. After all, Balthasar's own concern does not lie so much in how to clarify the dogmatic aspects of the mystery of Holy Saturday as how to enrich Christian discipleship by contemplating on its profound mystery. This point is clear from the following passage which appears at the end of his article on Christ's descent into hell:

What follows from all this for us? Let us leave it to the theologians to discuss the dogmatic aspects. We, however, like Mary and most Christians, cannot follow Christ on this last way. We remain awake at the grave with the other holy women: What can we do? Many things. In our lives, revive the spirit of solidarity, this power to share the burden of another, to pray with fervor—and such prayer is unfailing—so that our brothers and sisters would not be lost in the end ...We simply attempt to put into action the small things that are possible for us.

The Outline of the Chapters

Finally, let us explain the structure of this whole book and specify the contents and issues we will discuss in each of the chapters:

In chapter 1, we will prepare the setting for the subsequent chapters. Based on Balthasar's Trinitarian theology and Christology, we will narrate Christ's descent into hell on Holy Saturday as the event in which Christ the Savior went through the transition from the old to the new aeon in hell, while emphasizing the aspect of "waiting" as well as how it does not necessarily contradict the traditional teachings.

In chapter 2, we will explore the descent into hell as "the dark night of the soul," which is a crucial concept for Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday. For Balthasar, hell is first and foremost a christological concept. As the main influences on Balthasar on this topic, we will examine Adrienne von Speyr's mystical vision of hell, "the dark night of the soul" of St. John of the Cross, and "the night of nothingness" of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. We will also make reference to St. Mother Teresa as one contemporary example of the descent into hell persevered for the sake of brethren.

In chapter 3, the focus is on Mary, for Balthasar presents Mary as the perfect role model of Christian discipleship. We will discuss how Mary obediently participated in her son's suffering of the sinner's godforsakenness. We will also criticize Balthasar's view of the feminine, which is revealed in his Mariology. In relation to this point we will discuss his critics' concern that Balthasar's theology does not really serve the cause of social justice.

In chapter 4, we will try to locate Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday within his "tragic" view of Christianity. We will argue that the element of waiting which characterizes Holy Saturday between the cross and the resurrection represents the fundamentally "tragic" state of Christian existence (understood as "tragedy under grace"). In the last analysis, if we locate Christian suffering in the in-between existence represented by Holy Saturday, we could somehow interpret the meaning of suffering into "tragic waiting." This could help us to avoid simply explaining away the reality of suffering while also leaving the hope to find meaning in suffering. The "tragic" waiting in our lives, which is represented by the in-betweenness of Holy Saturday, now can be seen in a christological light.

In chapter 5, we will try to put together the discussions of all these chapters by exploring the mystery of the Eucharist, which constitutes the central part of the life of the church, in light of the mystery of Holy Saturday. Liturgically speaking, Holy Saturday is the day on which we do not celebrate the Eucharist, but without the empty and silent pause of Holy Saturday, we cannot truly appreciate the mystery of the Eucharist. <>

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