

Augustine's position, though neither faithfully reproduced it. Molina's insistence that 'free choice is always able to do otherwise' (p. 195) is shown to be alien to at least some of what Augustine says about grace, while Báñez pays insufficient attention to those places where Augustine allows for a human response to a graced motivating impression before God gives a second grace of consent. For Byers, the story is then complicated by Augustine's later moving away from this 'dialogue' model of conversion, in which there is space for both divine initiative and human co-operation, to a model after 425 of concurrent grace operative through human decision-making, where such grace is necessarily irresistible, both because of its strength as the grace of Christ, and because of God's omnipotence as Creator. This latter position Byers believes to be flawed, and it is here that Thomists may take issue with her all too brief analysis of the philosophical problems. Nonetheless, this is an excellent book which makes a very helpful contribution to our understanding of Augustine both as a philosophical theologian and as a scripturally trained contributor to the philosophy of the emotions.

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**ENGLISH CATHOLICS AND THE SUPERNATURAL, 1553–1829** by Francis Young, *Ashgate*, Farnham, (Catholic Christendom 1300–1700 series), 2013, pp. xii + 308, £70.00, hbk

An unexpected book. For a start the author admits that by 'supernatural' he really means 'preternatural': witches and curses and ever-filled purses and things that go bump in the night. The enquiry is whether English Catholics during the recusant period had the same, or different, attitudes towards witchcraft, ghosts, poltergeists, and exorcisms from those held by their Protestant neighbours and relations. On the whole, the answer is no: ordinary lay Catholics held much the same views on such matters. When witch-hunting was fashionable, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Catholics were just as liable as Protestants to revel in absurd stories of broomsticks and midnight feasts. The sixteenth century did take such things seriously, along with astronomy and various forms of fortune-telling. The author seems to assume that the Middle Ages were sunk in superstition, and believed all stories uncritically, but surely such credulity is not a mediaeval phenomenon, but a by-product of the so-called Renaissance, under the influence of neo-Platonism. By the late eighteenth century Catholics and Protestants alike had swallowed the rationalism of the age, and agreed there was no such thing as witchcraft. The nineteenth century revelled in the Gothick, and loved to tell romantic stories, but in the security of disbelief which makes them comic rather than spiritual. The *Ingoldsbys Legends* and the stories of M.R. James are not evidence of belief in the preternatural, rather the opposite – surely the rather indifferent Mezzotint reproduced on page 105, showing ghosts in Coldham Hall, does not change by moonlight to let us see them moving?

In general, our author has found very little material indeed to work on, and he does not indicate whether at any stage his quoted sources are typical of the Catholic community, or the eccentric ramblings of isolated individuals. An Appendix reprints Gregory Greenwood's bizarre 'Three Discourses of Witches and Witchcraft', written in the eighteenth century, but incorporating early seventeenth-century French material – and the author reminds us (p. 22) that this is the *only* treatise on witchcraft by an English Catholic.

Stories of ghosts and apparitions are typically pointless: a figure or figures is glimpsed in the half-light, but the interpretation depends on the preconceptions

of the viewer. A Catholic might suppose this is a soul in purgatory requesting prayers: a rationalist looks for refracted moonlight projecting an image onto glass. Protestants expected many such tales were Popish tricks, designed to seduce the unwary.

Tales of witchcraft and possession can have a more serious content: the clergy did take notice of them, and some did attempt to practise exorcisms. Here perhaps there is a difference between Catholic and Protestant: the Catholics were much more inclined to be sceptical, precisely because they had the training in ascetic theology necessary to distinguish the fraud from the fool and from the really preternatural. We are reminded of Fr Brown's 'incredulity' – 'Any sham lawyer could bamboozle me, but he couldn't bamboozle you; because you're a lawyer yourself . . . It's just because I have picked up a little about mystics that I have no use for mystagogues. Real mystics don't hide mysteries, they reveal them', said Father Brown. ('The Arrow of Heaven' in G.K. Chesterton, *The Incredulity of Father Brown*).

All in all, I am not sure of the point of this book, or whether it tells us anything new. There are amusing passages, but on the whole I suspect it would have been better as an article.

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**JESUS THE MEDIATOR** by William L. Brownsberger, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2013, pp. 170, \$ 49.95, hbk*

Brownsberger unashamedly adopts a realistic approach in theological method, where the reality of Christ as the Mediator of our salvation demands that certain things be really true of the Saviour's mind and heart. At the basis of the book is Brownsberger's eschewal of any purely voluntaristic account of salvation, where it would be reduced to an arbitrary divine act. According to Brownsberger, on such a view salvation would become something of which the Saviour had no real understanding, to which his emotional life was at best peripheral, where he would be, as far as his humanity is concerned, but a pawn in a game, an unwitting passenger. For Brownsberger, however, salvation makes real sense, and it is this that requires a certain picture of the Saviour's intellect, will and emotions.

The bulk of the book consists in the first chapter, where Brownsberger's argument is at its most successful, but at the same time its most controversial. The chapter takes us into the debates about Christ's consciousness that were a prominent feature of twentieth-century neoscholasticism, and treads its way with skill and care through questions of Christ's divinity and humanity, unity, self-consciousness, subjectivity, personal agency, and so on. Though these scholastic concerns may seem somewhat dated to readers, Brownsberger holds such questions about Christ's psychology to be justified by the fact that he was a real figure whose history, as our Saviour, affects us today. The implication of a realist soteriology for Christ's knowledge is that he must know what he is about such that he can love specifically and personally in the act of salvation as the Saviour of each one of us. This provides Brownsberger's position in these debates, for which he argues convincingly: for such knowledge in Christ's humanity only the beatific vision will do. While he does not intend to solve issues of biblical interpretation, where passages in scripture might seem to militate against this interpretation of Christ, he takes the view that we cannot begin to read scripture aright in these cases without sorting out such questions about the Saviour's