

involvement; a little on mention of and reference to Origen, from Casiodorus to the end of the Middle Ages; sections on Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola and an excellent discussion of the publishers of the first printed editions of Origen's writings.

In Chapter 4 comes a meticulous analysis of Erasmus's acquaintance with the texts, and a close-up study of the ways in which he used Origen in his own work. Then in Chapter 5 we arrive at the translations. The book includes the first English translation of the prefaces to Erasmus's edition of Origen's writings, including his *Life of Origen*. The English is especially welcome because of the rebarbateness of Erasmus's attempts to make his Latin more classical than medieval. He is never a comfortable read in the original.

Erasmus's *Life of Origen* goes a long way beyond the conventions of late medieval hagiography. He weighs the evidence for the various details of Origen's life; he analyses the evidence for the authenticity of his writings and tries to set out the order of their composition and the datings. Here Scheck once more comes into his own as a scholar, providing comprehensive annotation and reference.

Erasmus's own prefatory 'assessments' are translated next, of Origen's Homilies on *Genesis*, *Leviticus*, *Joshua*, *Job*, three *Psalms*, the *Song of Songs*, *Luke*, *Romans*, lost works and the inferences to be drawn about Origen's 'method'. These 'assessments' are often a startling read. Erasmus pulls no punches in his judgements of the behaviour of the 'booksellers' who have sometimes 'laid aside all sense of shame' in their falsifications, as when they 'inserted the name of Jerome in place of Rufinus' (*Romans*). He dismisses some works as so awkward in their Latin that neither the translator nor Origen as author can be relied on. The preface to the commentary on *Job* is by a 'loquacious, unlearned, and shameless creature'.

A substantial appendix translates sixteenth-century assessments, sketching in detail the condemnation and rehabilitation of Erasmus's work. The translation is highly readable, and the collection will be invaluable both the scholars of the Renaissance and Reformation and to students of Origen himself.

G.R. EVANS

EXPLORING CATHOLIC THEOLOGY: ESSAYS ON GOD, LITURGY AND EVANGELIZATION by Robert Barron, *Baker Academic*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2015, pp. xv +250, \$24.95, pbk

Robert Barron, recently consecrated a bishop, is well known as an American Catholic priest who has made extensive use of IT to expound the Catholic Faith, reaching huge global audiences through his 'Word

on Fire Ministry' and website. Alongside the very regularly produced webcasts he has written 12 books. They all demonstrate vast reading, a strong grasp of theology, a passion for the Gospel and evangelisation, and a concern for the formation of people in the way of salvation. He is additionally blessed with a clear, fluent and engaging style.

His latest volume is no exception. It consists of 15 essays organised in four parts: (1) Doctrine of God; (2) Theology and Philosophy; (3) Liturgy and Eucharist; (4) A New Evangelisation. Seven of them (spread across all four parts) were written between 2005–2009 and one in 2013, these having been published elsewhere. The rest are published here for the first time, and I guess (perhaps wrongly) written most recently.

Barron's understanding of God, the focus of Part 1 but also the foundation of the whole book, is very much in line with the thinking of Thomas Aquinas. God is the act of being itself, not a being (albeit a superior one) among many other beings. To think the latter is the mistake made by the New Atheists (discussed in Chapter 2) though in this they take up ideas whose origins are very old, stemming from Scotus who worked soon after the death of Aquinas. It is only when we grasp that God is so different, describable in analogical but not univocal terms, and yet full of power that we can defend and affirm creation *ex nihilo*. God did not need to make anything but from the fullness of being that God is, God chose to create that which is not to share some aspects of his existence and ongoing blessing for their own good. God is so otherly transcendent that he can be deeply imminent to creation, sustaining each thing though the act of being it receives from God and in God. By nature God is so different to creation that God does not compete with it as one being among many. This non-competitive relationship God has with the created order, but one characterised by immense generosity and fidelity on the part of God, makes possible the Incarnation, in which the divine and human natures coinhere in a union that respects the distinct qualities of each (as Chalcedon defined). It also means that God saves us non-violently, that is while respecting our nature and freedom, even amidst the most violent and rejectionist actions by created beings against their creator. Limited space means I can only list some other Thomistic ideas taken up in Barron's understanding of God and creation. He makes extensive use of Aquinas's understanding of analogy, participation and coinherence. On this much of his grasp of man as being in and for relationship is founded, and so also Barron's approach to ethics, which take seriously Servais Pinckaers' work on freedom of excellence and the importance of virtue.

For all this, Barron is not a dry and abstract Scholastic philosopher. Chapter 12 on Lonergan shows his ability to explain such work and then transpose into far more accessible and pastoral terms. He has a deep familiarity with Scripture, and the skill to undertake exegesis that is both historically critical and embraces articulation of the four fold sense of Scripture. His dogmatic and scriptural insights align

beautifully. Part Two is a sustained and very helpful examination of faith and reason by different but complementary approaches. Philosophy is brought into dialogue with and under the rule of faith. Informed and insightful about enlightenment and post-modern thinking, Barron is aware of the dangers posed to the faith but keen to engage with it. He draws on Newman, seeing him as the model for how to respond to the challenges of rationalist and historically conscious thought and, as such, an early Post-modern thinker (Ch 7), one who Avery Dulles has much in common with (Ch 6). Part Two culminates (in Ch 8) with an explanation of *Dei Verbum* that combines the concerns of historical criticism with the riches that come from opening up the four fold sense of Scripture.

Salvation is embraced by faith but nourished in the liturgy and especially the Eucharist. Barron often addresses these themes in clear Thomistic terms and does so again in Part Three. Humans as embodied beings are well prepared by God for a sacramental economy in which God acts. The Mass is a banquet and a sacrifice both made possible by the way God is able to be present. The Mass empowers us to live virtuous lives and to witness to our faith in mission.

Barron is an evangelist as well as a theologian and these two energies cross-fertilise. Part Four is explicitly dedicated to theological teaching and reflection on evangelisation. The kerygma is never far from his expressed thought, and he treats it in Ch 13, focussing on the resurrection, and the importance of joining the Church. Prior to that, he is emphatic (and correct) that Jesus lay claim to being divine in his earthly ministry and was executed for this. A fuller treatment of sin and the Cross would be worthwhile though he covers it in other books. Although he often takes up ideas from Balthasar, Barron avoids his theology of the Christ's descent into Hell, though some comments on this would be welcome. Barron goes on to look at evangelisation of culture in Ch 14 and 15. In a similar way to the rest of creation, culture is orientated to the true, the good, and the beautiful, and its evangelisation involves proclaiming the truth, goodness and beauty which is in Jesus Christ, prompting the transformation of culture with grace. Accommodating Revelation to the culture and its rationalist and other philosophical and cultural attitudes is disastrous. There are '*logoi*' out there and these should be discerned and taken up but merely correlating the Gospel with culture is inadequate. Barron argues that the focus needs to be on proclaiming Christ in all his richness, allowing him to cast the light of his truth, and unmasking false ideologies but baptising what helpful insights that they contain. He takes up Newman's idea of assimilation as a mark of orthodoxy and of the true Church to show how such assimilation of culture and ideas operates in evangelisation. As Aquinas pointed out, we are not to water down the wine of the faith, but to turn water into wine. In terms of their approach to modernity, Barron favours Balthasar over Rahner, and Barth over Tillich, though he appreciates some of the connections Tillich established with culture and anthropology.

The essays are all theological in tone, though some are more technical than others. Within the third section on liturgy, I would have preferred to see the essay on teleology (Ch 9) placed last as it is the most technical. Some repetition results from the book being a collection of essays. Particularly striking in this volume is the importance of Newman, both directly and on some other thinkers (such as Lonergan and Dulles) whom Barron admires. Anyone with an interest in theology could benefit from the book, as will thinking evangelists. I heartily recommend it.

ANDREW BROOKES OP

OUR LADY OF THE NATIONS: APPARITIONS OF MARY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CATHOLIC EUROPE by Chris Maunder, *Oxford University Press*, Oxford, 2016, pp. xv + 219, £25.00, hbk

Chris Maunder's book is engaging and extremely thought-provoking, written with an enthusiasm and seriousness that come across to the reader and *makes them think*. Consequently in this review I want to think with Maunder rather than provide an exegesis on his text.

Although it is *unlikely* it is nevertheless *possible*, the Church teaches, for there to be an authentic apparition of the Virgin Mary. Of course this is the point at which a whole host of issues immediately come crashing in. After all, the apparition happens in *this* world. The appearance of Mary in the secular sphere might therefore be misapprehended, misunderstood or, indeed, invented for reasons of this world and of those who claim to have witnessed it. For good reason the Church practises caution when a claim is made about an apparition.

Caution has been especially pronounced since Vatican II. As Maunder points out post-Conciliar Mariology has been 'ecclesiotypical' – Mary is identified as a forerunner and member of the Church. Mary is *of* and *in* the Church. This approach is implied by the structure of *Lumen Gentium*, where Mary is discussed in the context of the Church. According to Maunder this was almost certainly done in order to promote ecumenism. The problem is however that apparitions, including those of the post-Conciliar period, have tended to be of a more 'Christotypical' flavour, 'in which Mary's privileges – based on her closeness to Christ and participation in his mission – are highlighted'. These 'privileges' are expressed in the Marian doctrines – Mother of God, Ever Virgin, Immaculate Conception, Assumption – which are not necessarily ecumenically friendly (p. 13). After Vatican II and in the context of a modernity which seemed to justify claims of secularisation and secularism (with ecumenism as a defensive attempt to find allies), apparitions of Mary became, and Maunder chooses the right words, a 'possible embarrassment'. The