

discussed in a too-cursory way but do provide a direction for future studies: there are brilliant things said about the nature of logic (pp 187 ff), philosophy of history (p. 142 ff) and the self (pp 206 ff.). Provided that one is persuaded by the book's presentation of Lonergan one has a place to find new food for thought.

STEFAN LINDHOLM

SACRIFICE AND COMMUNITY: JEWISH OFFERING AND CHRISTIAN EUCHARIST by Matthew Levering, *Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, Pp. 202 £19.99 pbk.*

When children in Catholic schools and parishes in this country are first taught about the Eucharist, it is very often explained to them in terms of celebration. 'Jesus is inviting us to a special sort of party every Sunday', or words to that effect. This is not something new; parents with teenage children of their own had the same impoverished instruction in the meaning of the Mass, with the result that they are quite unable to answer their children's perfectly reasonable question – especially given the liturgical tendencies of so many celebrations of the Eucharist – 'If this is Jesus's idea of a special party, what's so great about Jesus?'

Matthew Levering encounters essentially the same disastrously bland and enervated approach to the Eucharist, not at the level of child catechetics but in the highest reaches of Catholic academic theology. This book is a vigorously argued, passionate and stimulating attempt to counter what he calls 'Eucharistic idealism', the replacement of the traditional Catholic understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass, and the people's communion in and through it, with 'spiritualizing accounts of Eucharistic communion with God' (p. 8). It is not that Levering objects to the notion of spiritual communion as an essential part of eucharistic theology; rather, he insists that a polarisation between this notion and that of an embodied sacrificial communion, an idea that draws on the Jewish roots of our Christian faith, is a false polarisation: there can be for us, in the sacramental economy, no spiritual communion with God and with one another which is not achieved in *and properly understood as* a real, bodily communion. Though he does not say so explicitly, the heart of Levering's argument is that worship in spirit and in truth is not instead of, but rather built upon, a corporal religion of sacrifice.

To believe otherwise, he argues, is supersessionist as well as lacking in regard for the Church's patristic and mediaeval inheritance. Fear of denying the radical newness of Christ's paschal sacrifice has – ironically – led some to deny its sacrificial nature, at least inasmuch as it is communicated to the faithful through the sacraments, and especially the Eucharist. Thus Levering begins with a brief but extremely helpful sketch of the development of eucharistic idealism 'from Luther to Rahner', in which the latter, along with Schillebeeckx and perhaps even von Balthasar, among other twentieth-century Catholic scholars, are accused of allowing philosophical Idealism to negate the reality of eucharistic participation in the sacrifice of the Cross.

Levering recognises that to make good the damage it is necessary to return beyond the patristic and mediaeval sources of theology to the scriptural origins of the notion of eucharistic sacrifice. It is a particularly gratifying aspect of this book that it represents a rare attempt – and a still-rarer *successful* attempt – to integrate scriptural studies with systematic theology. So often the exegetes seem to live in an isolated world with no recognition of the broader theological context of their work, and it is perhaps a consequence of this that much modern theology seems to have as its canon the latest modish philosophy and to be in ignorance of much that might be of value in scripture. Levering offers a model for another, surely more Catholic, approach, and one which incidentally is not afraid to take seriously

the insights of Jewish scholars into their own scriptures, with clear expositions for example of Jon D Levenson's analysis of the binding of Isaac and Michael Wyschogrod's theology of the relationship between communion and sacrifice in the covenant of Sinai. These, like many of the positions Levering outlines later in his book, are complex and controversial ones, and they are clearly portrayed and differentiated. If one were to venture a slight criticism, it might be that he does not always make it clear as readily as he might whether, and to what extent, he agrees with the ideas he is explicating, which occasionally leaves one feeling that one has been led up an intellectual *cul-de-sac*.

At the heart of this book, however, is Levering's masterly exposition of the thought of one with whom he is very clearly in agreement, namely Thomas Aquinas. He deals in successive chapters with Saint Thomas's understanding of Christ's death as expiatory sacrifice, the way in which the participation of the believer in this sacrifice at the Eucharist brings about the community of charity, and finally with transubstantiation. For many, this last will be the most fascinating section, and it is certainly a *tour de force*: Levering defends this dogma against its critics not only with exemplary clarity and concision, but also with that same respect for the concerns and arguments of his opponents that Thomas himself showed. Particular respectful attention is given to Bulgakov's 'transmutation', Alexander Schemann's concern that transubstantiation traps the Eucharistic presence into a 'this-worldly' mechanism, and the recent attempts to address these and similar Eastern concerns by David Fagerberg. But what is particularly pleasing about these three 'Thomist' chapters is that we never lose sight, in all the detailed argument, of the bigger picture that Levering seeks to paint of the way in which sacramental participation in the once-for-all sacrifice of Calvary brings about what he repeatedly describes as 'cruciform communion'.

If the last two chapters mentioned may be said to deal respectively with the *res tantum* and the *res et sacramentum* of the Eucharist, then Levering's final chapter naturally enough moves to the appearances of things with a brief chapter on the liturgy of the Eucharist. Here one feels that perhaps some questions have been left unanswered, perhaps for the sake of brevity. How, in particular, is the Mass to be celebrated in a way which more clearly manifests that communion-in-sacrifice of which it is the efficacious sign, so that we can give the children – and their parents – something to be excited about again? Nevertheless, this is a minor quibble with a book that thoroughly deserves its place among a series called 'Illuminations', and should be read by anyone who wants the best answer to the question 'What happens when we go to Mass?'

RICHARD J OUNSWORTH OP

RETHINKING AUGUSTINE'S EARLY THEOLOGY: AN ARGUMENT FOR CONTINUITY by Carol Harrison, *Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006*, Pp. xiii+302, £55 hbk.

G.E. Moore once said that he was never puzzled by the world but only by what philosophers said about it. One has the sense of both the truth and the perversity of that comment in reading Harrison's book on Augustine.

Her thesis is that those scholars who swim in the wake of Peter Brown's acclaimed biography – a biography, as she implies, in which the author make his case both more compelling and less accurate by his over-heated style – and who see the 'Reply to Simplicianus' (henceforth the 'Reply') in 396 as a revolutionary turning point in Augustine's theology are mistaken. In the steps of Madec she argues for substantial continuity: in 396, she thinks, Augustine was compelled to admit that the hopes for post-lapsarian human freedom with which, while