

scholarship), but seeks to show the embedded character of divine grace in the impact of Christ's redemptive activity on Christian life and practice. It is a special merit of this book that it details how Christian ethics flows from Christian faith. Moreover, the book is extremely well written—and clearly so; therefore it can easily be recommended as a required book in any course on the history of modern Christian theology. As such it is a commendable achievement.

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Aquinas on the Beginning and End of Human Life. By Fabrizio Amerini. Translated by Mark Henninger. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. ix + 260 pages. \$29.95.
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This volume focuses on Thomas Aquinas' metaphysical account of human embryogenesis. Fabrizio Amerini seeks to provide a textual reconstruction of Aquinas' account in comparison to alternative interpretations formulated in light of current scientific understanding. Amerini argues that, despite the flawed biology Aquinas inherits, the metaphysical principles he applies to the question of how a human being comes into existence remain sound. He further argues that the contemporary biological understanding of conception, along with embryonic and fetal development, does not alter Aquinas' conclusion that a human being does not come into existence until the necessary organs develop to have the capacity for rational thought. Amerini thus disagrees with other Thomistic interpreters who argue that a human being comes into existence once sperm and ovum genetically fuse at conception. Nevertheless, he notes that Aquinas condemns early-term abortion as intrinsically immoral, even if it does not count judicially as "homicide," for even though an early-term embryo or fetus is not yet a human being, it is the numerically same subject that will progress through a series of substantial changes from a vegetative life-form into a sentient animal and finally into a rational human person.

Amerini also discusses how death should be defined for human beings. He addresses the case of human beings who fall into a "persistent vegetative state" and are considered by some interpreters of Aquinas as having ceased to exist as a person prior to the end of their existence as a biological organism. Amerini argues against this interpretation and contends that the end of a human person's existence is coextensive with his or her death as an organism.

This volume presents a valuable contribution to the debate concerning when a human being first comes into existence and later dies. These

metaphysical questions inform responses to further ethical questions regarding the moral permissibility of abortion, embryonic stem cell research, certain forms of assisted reproductive technology, cloning, the creation of animal-human chimeras, the treatment of irreversibly comatose patients, organ donation, and other bioethical issues. Amerini engages the entire Thomistic corpus, drawing on writings that represent the span of Aquinas' intellectual life, and noting the contextual and historical development of his thought. He also advances a provocative interpretation that, while similar in conclusion to that of other contemporary Thomistic scholars, challenges alternative interpretations in an exacting textually based and philosophically nuanced manner.

For Thomistic scholars and Catholic bioethicists, this volume offers a significant advance in the interpretive debates surrounding a foundational and perennially influential thinker. Although the topics at hand have already been subject to extensive discussion over the past fifty or so years, a thorough textual analysis has been lacking, and this book fills that lacuna. Furthermore, Amerini's argument provides a well-founded challenge to standard contemporary interpretations and thereby offers an original and thought-provoking contribution to the field.

The volume lacks, however, any direct engagement with contemporary non-Thomistic philosophers, theologians, or bioethicists who argue for alternative views of the metaphysics of human embryogenesis. Thus, Amerini's work will be more relevant to those interested in understanding Aquinas' thought on these subjects, rather than those who critically engage the Thomistic view from an alternative theoretical perspective. Additionally, while Amerini draws broad conclusions regarding the moral permissibility of some actions, such as abortion, a full-fledged moral analysis would necessitate importing Aquinas' natural law ethic into the discussion, but that would require a whole other volume.

More critically, Amerini's conclusions are not sufficiently contemporized by offering a more careful, in-depth consideration of how current biological understanding of embryological and fetal development delineates the ontological boundaries that mark the substantial changes from vegetative to animal to human life. The reader is left with the impression that not only Aquinas, but also Amerini, believes that approximately forty days gestation is when a human being first comes into existence (236). This seems to be too soon, given Amerini's overall analysis, as neural development has a long way to go before the capacity to engage in rational thought may be reasonably inferred to be present. Also, although the functional role of DNA is discussed at a few points throughout the text, a more thorough analysis of the impact of the genetic identity of an embryo on its metaphysical nature

would be helpful, because this is the primary basis on which Thomists who disagree with the author's conclusion argue for hominization at conception. These critical points aside, Amerini has done a tremendous service to the scholarly community with his detailed textual analysis of the development of Aquinas' thought on matters of importance to both Thomists and non-Thomists alike.

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The City of God (De Civitate Dei): Books 1–10. By Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. Introduced and translated by William S. Babcock. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012. lvi + 348 pages. \$29.95 (paper). *Books 11–22*, 2013. 615 pages. \$39.95 (paper).
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In book 14 of *City of God* we read Augustine's famous words: "Two loves have made two cities. Love of self, even to the point of contempt for God, made the earthly city; and love of God, even to the point of contempt for self, made the heavenly city" (14.28). These two loves are the principles that Augustine uses to interpret human history, society, and power—all of which rise or fall not on the whims of gods and goddesses, nor on military power or political might. Rather, societies rise and fall on the quality of the decisions of the people who inhabit them. Human volition, aided by divine grace, can thereby make virtuous decisions that foster peace and justice. Human volition, resisting grace and ignoring God and the common good, reaps conflict and injustice.

In his preface Augustine called *City of God* a *magnum opus et arduum*—a long and difficult work. It is long in two ways. It consists of twenty-two books, running about a thousand small-print pages in most English translations. And it took Augustine thirteen or fourteen years (413–426) to write this indefatigable response to questions raised by pious pagans about Alaric's sack of Rome in 410. Augustine used the occasion to develop a Christian theology of history and human motivation.

Translating Augustine's tome is also a long and difficult task. Major English translations over the past 150 years include one by Marcus Dods, which first appeared around 1870 and was republished by Hendrickson in 2009 with some updating of the language. Henry Bettenson did a translation for Penguin Classics that was published in 1972 and reissued with a new introduction in 2003. R. W. Dyson produced *Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans* for the Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought series in 1998. An English version of Augustine's work by various translators has also