

exerted an influence on him before the Fall in the mode of a final cause, since Christ is the *finis cuius gratia* of all things. However, while they maintain that it is true that all things are related to Christ as to what is primarily intended by God, they allow a sort of exception for the state of original justice. Since their account of the motive of the incarnation means that Christ's coming presupposed original sin in the order of material cause, that is, the 'destruction' of original justice, Christ did not exert influence, formally speaking, on that original state in the order of final cause.

I would have found it interesting to have seen what Schrader would say about this passage. Otherwise, it is easy to suspect that the Salmanticenses were not quite so Christocentric as he supposes. Or is Schrader inadvertently pointing to a Thomism even more Christocentric than either the Salmanticenses or Garrigou-Lagrange proposed?

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**THE ABUSE OF CONSCIENCE: A CENTURY OF CATHOLIC MORAL THEOLOGY** by Matthew Levering, *William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2021, pp. viii + 360, £36.99, hbk*

In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein diagnoses one of the principal sources of philosophical illness: 'A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example' (*PI* § 593). Matthew Levering in *The Abuse of Conscience* sets out to diagnose a main cause of theological disease; the one-sided diet that results from an overemphasis on conscience at the expense of a wider account of how grace transforms human conduct.

Levering's diagnosis is made through the history of a century of moral theology, beginning with a chapter on 'Conscience and the Bible', which examines how Catholic and non-Catholic theologians in the twentieth century up to Vatican II understood the role of conscience in the bible. Theologians who elevated conscience to give it a central place in their reading of Scripture, such as Tyrrell and Bultmann, are contrasted with theologians who sought to overcome a one-sided emphasis on conscience by giving greater emphasis to other elements of the moral life; such as Congar, who read Paul as emphasising the virtues of prudence and charity. This is by no means intended to be an exhaustive survey of pre-Vatican II biblical scholarship, but the eight figures represented provide a good overview of the state of scholarship from this period.

Similarly, the second chapter, which looks at the central role conscience plays in pre-Vatican II moral manuals, provides a valuable sketch of the state of Catholic moral theology prior to the Council. Levering is quick to point out that the manualist tradition is often far richer than the caricature of a rule bound and inflexible imposition of external law will allow. He concludes, however, that despite various developments in the tradition the central paradigm of the individual in conscience under the judgement of an external law continued to dominate the manualist presentation of the Christian life.

Not all moral theology prior to Vatican II, however, remained bound to this paradigm. In chapter three Levering presents the work of five Thomist theologians who prior to and after Vatican II worked to renew the role conscience plays in moral theology. Four of the five are Dominicans and the other theologian, Eric D'Arcy, is concerned with re-evaluating an aspect of Aquinas's understanding of conscience, rather than with the overall role of conscience in the moral life. The most familiar and influential of the four Dominicans is Servais Pinckaers, but his work drew upon the works of earlier Dominicans to renew moral theology through an account of the virtues and grace. (Interestingly, Pinckaers worked on Henri De Lubac's theology of grace for his STLic. thesis, so not all of his sources were Dominican).

Those who are influenced by Pinckaers, and for whom the revival of virtue ethics has passed firmly into the mainstream of their theological horizons, can be somewhat surprised to discover that for much of Catholic moral theology conscience remains the central concept. Levering in the introduction to the book expresses his own surprise on discovering the prevalence of conscience-based reflection in much of contemporary Catholic moral theology. At no point does Levering deny that conscience plays an important role in the Christian life, his concern is to ask why conscience remains at the heart of the mainstream of Catholic moral theology despite the abandonment of the manualist tradition.

Chapter four provides the answer to this question. In this chapter Levering examines the huge influence that twentieth-century German thought continues to have in the Catholic Church. Post Second World War-German Catholics, predominantly through Rahner, turned to sources outside the manualist tradition to bring about a renewal in moral theology. The manualist emphasis on external conformity to law was seen as promoting an immature attitude to faith, which provided little resistance to the Nazi regime. Catholic theologians led by Rahner advocated a new approach to the Christian moral life, which emphasised inner responsibility and growth rather than exterior conformity to law. Levering presents four figures who influenced this new direction in theology: the philosophers Heidegger and Jaspers, and the theologians Bonhoeffer and Barth. Although the influence of Rahner on moral theology is often not appreciated, through the post-Vatican II work of Fuchs and Häring the new emphasis on inner authenticity contrasted with external conformity has had a profound influence. The pre-Vatican II focus on conscience remains at the centre of Catholic

moral theology, only now the determining factor is not law, but the developing sense of the faithful as they mature in their Christian lives. The old law-bound Church with authority exercised top-down is contrasted with the newly developing Church of the faithful, who live out their lives in authentic discipleship, taking responsibility for their lives and as they grow in maturity. The final figure in Levering's German pantheon, Joseph Ratzinger, although influenced by the German tradition, moves away from conscience-based morality by arguing for a primary level of recollection of God's truth prior to the formation of conscience. Rather than contrasting authority to freedom, Ratzinger argues that freedom is not autonomous, and that the formation of conscience depends upon a truth that is exterior to us, but which accords with our desire for happiness (p. 189).

Levering's book provides a wealth of material which not only helps the reader to assess the role of conscience in contemporary Catholic moral theology, but also provides an overview of key developments in moral theology over the last one hundred years. The conclusion contrasts two contemporary theologians, James F. Keenan SJ and Reinhard Hüter; but I am sure that Levering would be the first to say that there is far more that can be said about where moral theology goes from here. Levering has provided a diagnosis of contemporary moral theology and the problems which come with a one-sided diet. The challenge is now to provide nourishment for the faithful by furnishing a varied diet; rooted in Scripture, tradition and the best of philosophical reflection.

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**NEO-ARISTOTELIAN METAPHYSICS AND THE THEOLOGY OF NATURE**  
edited by William M.R. Simpson, Robert C. Koons, and James Orr, *Routledge*,  
2022, pp. 446, £118.82, hbk

Although by no-means insignificant, the number of Christian theologians and philosophers who embrace neo-Aristotelian metaphysics is still relatively small. One of the goals of this book is, therefore, to encourage a greater interest in neo-Aristotelian metaphysics, and it does this by bringing together a series of sixteen essays that highlight what neo-Aristotelianism has to offer in contemporary debates in the philosophy of science and religion.

Since the rise of the modern scientific world view and the abandonment of Aristotelianism, the Christian world view has come under a lot of pressure. The medieval Church of course had its own struggles to face, but