

editors of conference volumes think of providing, but their presence here will greatly enhance the usefulness of the volume.

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OXFORD

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*A companion to medieval Christian humanism. Essays on principal thinkers.* Edited by John P. Bequette. (Companions to the Christian Tradition, 69.) Pp. viii + 354 incl. 1 ill. and 1 table. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2016. €199. 978 90 04 24845 8; 1871 6377 *JEH* (69) 2018; doi:10.1017/S0022046917000896

Christian humanism is a slippery term that functions as an ideal (often in contrast with what is labelled as secular humanism), but has been interpreted in many different ways over the centuries. This volume, edited by John P. Bequette, offers a series of fifteen essays on a range of thinkers, from Augustine to Julian of Norwich, to whom the label can be applied. Each chapter defends in one way or another how their subject contributes to humanist tradition, although not many of them tackle the broader question of what this post-medieval category might mean. There are no contributions on the Greek Christian tradition, reinforcing an impression that ‘Christian humanism’ is a uniquely Latin perspective. The challenge with this kind of volume is to avoid an uncritical Christian triumphalism that implies that humanism is an uncontested category, owned by the Latin theological tradition. The interest of this volume lies in the diversity of approaches to human dignity taken by thinkers in the Latin Christian tradition.

The opening chapter by David P. Fleischacker claims that Augustine offers ‘profound and lasting formulations’ of the human person, and indeed ‘the very mode’ by which subsequent analysis could be made. He argues that Augustine relies on four key heuristic canons or assumptions: the incorporeal reality of being and truth, the incorporeal elements of human nature, the habits of human nature, and the dialectical development of these habits. Fleischacker’s exploration of interiority as a key element in Augustine’s thought is helpful, but it does not explain the more pessimistic attitude to unaided human capacity taken by Augustine in his interpretation of St Paul’s teaching about natural human capacity to understand the divine. In many ways, the contributions to this volume deal with a range of attempts to respond to that critique offered by Augustine.

Bequette’s own contribution explores the particular way in which Bede develops Augustine’s understanding of six ages of history as a metaphor for understanding human development as itself a humanist perspective. Whether Augustine really did have a theory of man as a microcosm is debatable. His understanding of the soul as the image of God moves away from any sense that God could be grasped through nature. More perhaps could be made of the way Bede merged Augustine’s interiority with a greater interest in the natural world, mediated for example by Basil on the Hexameron. Benjamin Brown astutely picks up on a competing humanist perspective offered by Anselm of Canterbury with his focus not on sin, but on the capacity of the soul to pursue God through reason, free choice and love. Aage Rydstrøm-Poulsen argues that William of Saint-Thierry, known as a stern critic of Abelard, was himself fascinated by exploring the capacity of human

nature to unite with the divine, perhaps glossing over the question of sin. A quite different humanism is presented by Eileen Sweeney in her elegant essay on what she calls Abelard's Christian Socratism, namely Abelard's resistance to claiming a final resolution on any issue. Her reflection on Abelard's presentation of Socratic ignorance through the biblical figures in his Laments for Heloise and the figure of the Jew in his *Collationes* helps us appreciate his interest in rejecting facile claims to final truth, whether in the human person or in understanding the divine. David Appleby's effort to connect dignity and bodily necessity in Bernard of Clairvaux picks up on the centrality of the soul in his thought, although without fully exploring his debt to Augustine in thinking about the body. Andrew Salzmann sides with those who argue that Hugh of Saint-Victor offers in his *Didascalicon* a restorative programme of acquiring wisdom through the liberal arts, rather than simply in an Augustinian mode as a propaedeutic to Scripture.

While useful, the absence of any account in this volume of how Thierry of Conches or Gilbert of Poitiers interpreted Christian humanism suggests a decided preference for the Augustinian strand within twelfth-century thought. John T. Slotemaker uses Peter Lombard's return to Augustine's noetic explanation of the Trinity within the soul as itself re-asserting tradition through a scholastic perspective, against those (like Abelard) who focused more on seeing the Trinity through the universe. J. Stephen Russell writes about a similar return to the noetic in the writing of Aelred of Rievaulx, but here focusing on his *Dialogus de anima*. Implicit, although not developed, is awareness that Aelred applies an Anselmian rationality to the soul, where Bernard of Clairvaux focused more on Augustinian themes of its desire for God. There are just two papers on those vast and prolific classic thirteenth-century figures, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. Benjamin Smith considers the distinctively intellectual emphasis in Thomas's exposition of the soul in its recreation of the divine image, without explaining the extent to which he was debating alternative perspectives, not least that of Aristotle, who offered a vision of the human person very different from that of Augustine. C. Colt Anderson offers Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaemeron* as not simply a reassertion of Augustinian themes, but as itself an *apologia* for scholastic learning. However, Bonaventure focuses not on creation as drawing the soul to contemplate divine wisdom (in a way that builds on the Victorine perspective, but now theorised in terms more familiar to his own audience).

The implicit theme of manifold Christian humanisms continues in the final chapters. Nancy Enright writes on Dante's awareness of his debt to Virgil as providing literary inspiration, even if he could not become redeemed by grace. Richard H. Balzacchelli offers a more daring and debatable claim that Duns Scotus promotes awareness of female participation in generation through his reflection on the Virgin. Ian Levy reminds of Wycliff's appreciation for Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux. J. A. Jackson celebrates the evident humanism in the way Julian of Norwich sought to combine sensuality and spirituality. This volume celebrates rather than questions the concept of Christian humanism, but in a way that will provoke further reflection.