

Spirit. That is to say, lectures *de ecclesia* should not focus only on the highly complicated historical and social institution, which of course the Catholic Church is; ecclesiology has to be presented throughout in the context of Pneumatology, and thus of the charismatic.

Just as fundamentally, the book is pervaded by the hopes for Christian unity that were raised by the Second Vatican Council. In connection with the Eastern Church, for example, the Cardinal recalls the lifting of the excommunications of 1054 on the penultimate day of the Council, declaring them to be 'erasureable from the memory of the Church' (p. 27). This was a 'prophetic act', so he avers, without (however) doing much to assess the implications: how 'wrong' the Church could turn out to have been, how such an 'error' could be erased from memory, and so on.

Some readers (like this one!) are likely to move rapidly through Kasper's admirably comprehensive and basically very conventional account of the nature of the Church in order to see how he deals with the notoriously 'sensitive' issues on the agenda. For example, as regards the famous rejection of '*est*' in favour of '*subsistit in*' in the final version of *Lumen gentium*, Kasper holds that the change 'annuls the strict identification of the Church with the Catholic Church': 'The Catholic Church is where Jesus Christ is present', quoting St Ignatius of Antioch. This does not relativize let alone withdraw the Catholic claim: 'It was to say that outside the Catholic Church there was not simply an ecclesiological vacuum' (p. 160).

As regards the ordination of women in the Catholic Church the Cardinal is firmly opposed: 'the most painful setback' ecumenically was the Anglican decision to ordain women as bishops (p. 29); with their sacramental understanding of ministry neither the Catholic Church nor the Orthodox could do so (p. 237); the discussion will go on, far greater ecclesial roles must be 'given' to women; but we have to stick to the 'biblical gender symbolism', however alien it becomes in our culture (p. 238).

Obviously the book contains much else that could give rise to debate. While the translation is never unintelligible, it often reads rather oddly: apart from some ugly misprints, such as Friedrich von Hügel (p. 206), and mistakes in the Latin ('*extram ecclesiam*' repeatedly), it has to be said that the syntax is wayward, for example with the definite article occasionally intruding ('the Opus Dei', 'the Catholic Action') while being just as unexpectedly absent ('Phanar'). Such blemishes do not mean that this is anything but the best book on Catholic doctrine of the Church currently available.

FERGUS KERR OP

**SPEAKING OF GOD IN THOMAS AQUINAS AND MEISTER ECKHART: BEYOND ANALOGY** by Anastasia Wendlinder, *Ashgate*, Farnham, 2014, pp. xi + 217, £60.00, hbk

In a culture of chatter, blogs and tweets it is both refreshing and challenging to encounter a studied examination of language, of how we speak about reality and about God. For far too many people what we say is about political power, an unbridled freedom of speech that has no control, no restraints. From violent racial riots to murderous fanaticism we see that our language about ultimate values, about absolute realities, can be explosive. What we say and how we say it, especially when speaking about God, is such a foreign concern to many modern readers. Sadly this excellent book by Anastasia Wendlinder will be dismissed by

some because discourse today has become meaningless spin. But for Aquinas and Eckhart our speaking about God was important because it was relational, it brought us to God.

Wendlinder sets forth her thesis telling us: 'It is the task of this book to show how Aquinas moves us beyond conventional views of 'analogy' when articulating the creature's relation to its Creator, and how Eckhart then employs this dynamic analogical usage to detach us from any conception of God that may hinder us in developing the 'Christian forms of life' that will lead us closer to God' (p. 24). She does this by first exposing the inadequacy of conventional definitions of analogy (p. 14) that reduce the Creator to a created thing. Borrowing from Kathryn Tanner the notion of 'non-contrastive' (*Christ the Key*, 2010) she underscores the importance of religious language preserving the Creator-creature relation, calling for a 'different 'universe of discourse' that moves beyond our normal mode of describing relationships within the world' (p. 15).

In order to appreciate both Aquinas and Eckhart, Chapter 2 provides a context for these two thinkers fashioned by their Dominican life. I believe all too often this formative element unfortunately is over-looked by many scholars. Wendlinder enables us to see that for both Aquinas and Eckhart theology is ordered to preaching, '... learning to speak about God in order to draw closer to our ultimate Source...' (p. 64). Chapters 3 and 4 provide an engaging treatment of Thomas Aquinas's monumental work the *Summa Theologiae*. These two chapters form the real heart of Wendlinder's work and provide a reading of Aquinas everyone should appreciate, drawing together his thought and his Dominican life. 'The Dominican approach of study through contemplation grows out of the friar's religious practice, thoroughly based on and guided by Scripture: silent prayer, divine liturgy, sacraments, acts of charity, preaching' (p. 67). For Aquinas, according to Wendlinder, analogy is '... a linguistic tool protecting the Creator's transcendence-in-immanence' (p. 102). This principle is applied to her reading of the *Prima pars* questions 1–13 and provides a transition into Eckhart's 'dynamic analogy' (p. 156) bringing '... hearts and minds to full awareness of God's presence and the possibilities of absolute union with God' (p. 157). For Eckhart and Aquinas analogy, as they use it, safeguards the Creator-creature relation, the absolute transcendence and otherness of God from all created reality and the immanent intimacy of God to His creation. The shared understanding of Eckhart and Aquinas is often rejected by scholars who oppose these Dominicans as a negative theologian versus a positive theologian. Wendlinder rightly notes that '... closer examination of Aquinas' development of analogy reveals it not to be a positive theology but apophatic, rejecting both positive and negative attribution; moreover it transforms attribution altogether' (p. 159).

The three chapters on Aquinas and Eckhart are the pearl of great price found in this work and stand out in the literature on these two Dominicans. They eclipse what might be considered minor deficiencies in the brief and at times disconnected final chapter which bravely attempts to transpose Aquinas's and Eckhart's insights '... to teach contemporary students of faith...' (p. 191). It is a valiant effort to bridge the medieval and modern worlds but it could have benefitted from finer brush strokes. I readily concede the challenge of relating these profound thinkers to a post-Enlightenment world and a Millennial Church, but doing so requires finding proper cognates if it is to be done well. For example on pages 196–198, treating medieval Christian forms of life, Wendlinder contrasts a post-Vatican II understanding with what she takes to be a medieval understanding of eucharistic theology. Unfortunately this section relies on poor generalizations guided by Luther's critique, and never even mentions both Aquinas's and Eckhart's understandings of the eucharist. This, I believe, would have benefitted both her argument for non-contrastive understanding as well as her goal to allow Aquinas and Eckhart to teach contemporary students of faith.

As a Dominican, schooled in the same forms of life that shaped Aquinas and Eckhart, I would not want my last word to be on what is a mere speck of criticism in light of this work's excellent contribution. Aquinas and Eckhart shared a common vision best understood in their particular understanding of analogy and Dominican preaching. I give the last word to Wendlinger: '... this is the preacher's soteriological calling, to gather believers into Christ. Eckhart, through practical exercise of Aquinas' analogy, lends a new and dynamic meaning to Augustine's repose of the restless heart. The heart at rest in God is a silent heart, but not a speechless one, until it has completed its last earthly beat' (p. 189).

MICHAEL DEMKOVICH OP

**EXPLORING LOST DIMENSIONS IN CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM: OPENING TO THE MYSTICAL** edited by Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore, *Ashgate*, Farnham, 2013, pp. 242, £60.00, hbk

**CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM AND INCARNATIONAL THEOLOGY: BETWEEN TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE** edited by Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore, *Ashgate*, Farnham, 2013, pp. 256, £65.00, hbk

These two volumes contain a series of articles which grew out of a conference on Christian Mysticism held at Keble College, Oxford. They also form the first volumes in a new series, *Contemporary Theological Explorations in Christian Mystics*.

The aim of both the conference and the series is to bring mystical texts produced throughout the centuries into mainstream theological discourse, as an additional resource for the study of major theological topics. The Introduction by Louise Nelstrop sets out an overview of this project. George Pattison, in his contribution, sees mystical theology opening up theological discourse to the possibility of moving beyond a purely intellectual engagement with the divine to one that demands a response of the whole person. Oliver Davies stresses that mystical theology is much more than an intellectual apologetic or language game, while Johannes Zachhuber looks at some of the reasons for the traditional distrust of mysticism in some churches. The main ground for this distrust appears to be an assumption that a direct, personal sense of connection with God bypasses any need for solidarity with other Christians, and renders one indifferent at best to corporate forms of worship and liturgy. However, this presupposes that the God the mystic feels in touch with is not the incarnate God of the gospels, dwelling in his body, the community of Christian believers. It is therefore appropriate that the second volume is precisely on incarnational theology.

The contributors in both volumes include major established theologians, some at the cutting edge of their particular topics, such as Johannes Hoff on Nicholas of Cusa or Ben Morgan on Eckhart. There are also relative newcomers such as Philip McCosker, also writing on Cusa. They are united, however, in the tone of excitement their papers all share at exploring somewhat dangerous and easily misunderstood territory. The papers show an awareness of how the history of modern interest in mysticism, starting with William James in the early twentieth century, has bequeathed to us categories of thought and sets of terminology that, while helpful in opening up the field to modern scrutiny, can obscure for us what the mystical author is actually trying to say. Many of the papers, for instance, query the notions of gender bequeathed to us by the feminist/women's studies aspect of much of the scholarship that brought the medieval female mystics to modern attention, or the Jamesian emphasis on the private experience of the