



Torstein T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, x-243 pp.

The publication of Tollefsen's 2000 doctoral dissertation is a welcome addition to scholarship dedicated to patristic metaphysical thought. It is becoming clear that the great metaphysicians are those who not only offer a theory about the structure of reality and about our knowledge of reality, but are those who present reality according to an *exitus* – *reditus* framework. God not only creates beings according to his divine exemplars, but also orders them to himself and governs them according to his providential plan.

Chapter One is a brief introduction to Maximus' writings, his philosophy and his philosophical sources. Tollefsen notes that with the exception of E. Perl's 1991 dissertation on *Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, Deification in Saint Maximus the Confessor*, the Neoplatonic background of Maximus' thought has suffered from neglect.

Tollefsen tries to remedy this neglect by dealing with the history of the theme of divine exemplarism in Chapter Two. And so, before dealing with Maximus' doctrine of creation (pp. 40-63), Tollefsen presents a synthetic historical overview of exemplarism from the platonic cosmology in the *Timaeus* to the theories of the Cappadocian fathers (pp. 23-40). He points out that according to Maximus, even though beings are known eternally,

they do not exist eternally (p. 48). In light of this, an argument for the temporal beginning of creation is developed, based on motion: "everything that is in motion has a beginning, because everything that is in motion has a cause, and everything that has a cause has a beginning" (p. 51). Furthermore, only that which is unmoved is infinite, and thus matter is not eternal since a "totally realized infinity" could never be material (p. 53).

Creation, for Maximus, is freely brought from non-being to being by being willed by the Creator. The divine *logoi*, in Tollefsen's interpretation of Maximus, are not just God's knowledge of creatures, but also "function as divine acts of will at the moment for the actualization of the divine plan" (p. 62).

Chapter Three takes up the theme of the *logoi* in relation to created beings. Tollefsen divides the chapter into four sections. He first focuses on the Logos as the center of all the *logoi*: for the end or purpose of creation is the mystery of Christ (p. 66). Second, he interprets the *logoi* as divine intentions for created beings which institute an immanent order among beings. Third, he argues that there are principles of order or laws that govern the relations between beings. And this opens up to a consideration, in the fourth section, on the ontological constitution of created beings.

As I said earlier, the great patristic and medieval thinkers present reality as proceeding from God according to his wisdom and goodness and as returning to God in different ways according to

their nature. Maximus is shown to complement the procession (*próodos*) and conversion (*epistrofé*) of creatures with another structure comprising a moment of expansion (*diastole*) and one of contraction (*sustolé*). Tollefsen emphasizes that *epistrofé* is best translated as “conversion” and not as “return” since “according to Neoplatonic doctrine what is generated in the metaphysical process does not literally *go back* to the higher principles. Rather what is generated *turns towards* the principle from which it came, and as a result of this ‘turning towards’ it receives some further ontological determination” (p. 72). Here there is a clear reference to the Proclian doctrine that every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and converts to it: “The *remaining* is to be understood in the sense that the cause is the necessary and sufficient reason for the existence of the effect. The quality that produces and characterizes the effect is perfectly present in the cause. The *pro-cession* accounts for the fact that cause and effect are different entities, while the *conversion* means that the effect is constituted as an entity by its turning towards the cause and by the reception of its quality from it” (p. 73).

As reality proceeds from God there is a type of *expansion* and as it converts to God there is a type of *contraction*: “In the process of expansion, God, by the *logoi* of specific and generic being, distributes the essences from the highest to the lowest kind of beings” (p. 79). In the contractive moment, “created beings are brought together in community within the species and genera and in the end are unified in the highest *logos* of essence” (p. 79). Tollefsen highlights that the *logoi* in Maximus are not the universals in themselves, but are rather principles of immanent universal arrangements (p. 91). Christ, in Tollefsen’s interpretation,

is not the highest universal, but rather the one who holds all of the *logoi* together.

God is argued by Maximus to be the beginning, middle and end of every created being. This triad, which describes the *external* metaphysical condition of every being is complemented by another triad, focus on what is *immanent* to the creature: essence, potentiality (power), activity (actuality). The two triads are closely connected: “an essence is the origin of a potentiality, that in relation to essence and actuality constitutes a *middle*. This potentiality has its *end* or *consummation* in actuality” (p. 115). Although deification is a *natural* consummation for spiritual created being, this natural consummation is not within the power of the created being as such (p. 116). Here, “natural” means that it is the fulfillment of the divine intention of creation: “being is created with a natural *potential* for deification” (p. 116).

Chapter Four considers the relationship between divine essence and divine activity and introduces the theme by presenting its development in Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) and in theologians before Maximus. Tollefsen holds that in Maximus’ theory the dependence of creatures on God is expressed by means of participation and by the fundamental distinction between “works that God began to create” (creatures as participating beings) and “works that God did not begin to create” (participated beings). The latter are described as “God’s eternal manifestation of Himself to Himself *ad intra*” (p. 161).

This divine activity of God’s essence becomes participated at an appointed — time: “The divine activity, as God’s *works*, become ‘participated beings’ to creatures when creatures are brought from non-being to being, but also in the preservation of beings and in their fulfillment in a special kind of participation

when they reach their final purpose in God. The ontological status of the created world is determined by its participation in the divine activities" (pp. 161-62). The participated beings like "Goodness", "all Life", "Immortality", etc. are not hypostasized as separate realities. Rather they are comparable to what Dionysius expounded in *De Divinis nominibus*. Maximus' theory differs from that of Dionysius with regard to participation in Goodness, since, for Maximus, *Being* is the most fundamental and inclusive "participated".

Tollefsen finds that only two scholars on Maximus (Lossky and Perl) have distinguished between divine activities and the *logoi*. The distinction, he recognizes, is not explicit in Maximus' work. In synthesis, while the *logoi* are God's intentions through which all creatures receive their generic, specific and individual essences and are acts of will instituting essence; the divine activity is the "manifestation of God's power as Being, Goodness, etc." (p. 170-71). In creating intelligent beings God communicates to them the gifts of being and eternal being. In the creative order, created nature is constituted as "image" by participation in divine being and Eternal being; in the redemptive order, deified nature is perfected as "likeness" and brought to salvation through participation in Goodness and Wisdom (p. 171). The *logoi* are involved in both orders: "By the *logoi* God diversifies the possible relations that creatures might have to Him, because through these *logoi* He regulates participation according to nature, according to merit and according to deifying grace" (p. 174). A threefold *logos* is distinguished and it is the incarnate Logos who opens up the possibility of joining the *logos* of being with the *logos* of well-being and

the *logos* of eternal well-being (p. 182). This triad of *logoi* (being, well-being, eternal well-being), the threefold structure of the intelligent created being (essence, potentiality, activity) and the three stages of spiritual development (*vita practica*, *vita contemplativa*, *vita mystica*) are also argued by Tollefsen to be interconnected (pp.184-89).

This interplay between divine immanence and transcendence brings up the problem of participation, which is the theme of Chapter Five. With regard to the Maximian concept of participation, Tollefsen argues that "creatures emerge into the presence of being by the actual reception of the divine activity to the degree delimited by the *logoi*" and that the created essence does not exist by a created being (*esse*), but by the reception of God's activity as Being (p. 220).

On the whole, Tollefsen's work is an excellent introduction to the concepts, problems and context of the metaphysical thought of Maximus. Tollefsen moves easily between Maximus' various works: *Ambiguorum, Capita theologica et oeconomica, Mystagogia, De charitate* and *Opuscula theologica et polemica*.

I found Tollefsen's explanation of Maximus' theory on participation in Eternal Being somewhat confusing and had to reread pages 171-175 together with pages 210-220 to get a clearer picture. On page 171, referring to rational and intelligent creatures, he writes that "created nature is constituted by participation in the divine Being and Eternal Being", but on page 220, he writes that created being "is deified by the reception of God's activity as Eternal Being". In the latter case, it would have been better to incorporate the term "Eternal well-being" and refer to an earlier

theme on participation in Goodness and in Wisdom.

That being said, I eagerly look forward to reading Tollefsen's 2012 book, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford), which contextualizes Maximus' contribution to our understanding of the realization of God's plan of creation and salvation.

Jason A. Mitchell, L.C.

Philippe Chenaux, *Il Concilio Vaticano II*, Carocci Editore, Roma 2012, 189 pp.

Il libro del professor Chenaux analizza sinteticamente e storicamente l'evento del Concilio Vaticano II, coprendo tutto il periodo temporale che lo ha contraddistinto, dalla fine degli anni cinquanta (ciò che lo ha preceduto e preparato) alla fine degli anni settanta (ciò che è stato recepito e attuato), utilizzando un linguaggio ad un tempo semplice e scientifico e uno stile narrativo che lo rendono accessibile anche a coloro che non sono particolarmente edotti sull'argomento.

Il libro si compone di dodici capitoli, dei quali l'ultimo è una sorta di conclusione che tenta un bilancio sulle fonti e la situazione attuale delle ricerche storiografiche sul Concilio.

Nei primi due capitoli l'autore tratta brevemente la situazione della Chiesa ereditata da Pio XII: una Chiesa trionfante? una Chiesa onnisciente? Una Chiesa assediata?, e l'analisi dei movimenti che l'hanno contraddistinta sotto i pontificati di Pio XI e Pio XII: liturgico, biblico e patristico, mariano, ecumenico e per l'apostolato dei laici.

Nei successivi due capitoli il prof. Chenaux espone, sia l'idea conciliare di

Giovanni XXIII, asserendo che ciò che è sicuro è che solo nei primi giorni del suo pontificato (settembre 1958) egli inizia a pensare alla convocazione di un Concilio, in parte per ispirazione divina e anche a seguito della conversazione con alcuni cardinali, sia la preparazione del Concilio nelle sue fasi antepreparatoria e preparatoria.

A questo punto si entra nel vivo del testo attraverso i due capitoli volti a trattare, sia i partecipanti al Concilio, sia lo svolgimento dello stesso. L'autore sottolinea la dimensione mondiale dell'assemblea conciliare, dotata di potere deliberativo, che mai si era vista nella storia, composta oltre che dai padri conciliari, anche dai periti, dagli osservatori non cattolici e dagli uditori laici. Quindi passa ad analizzare i singoli periodi del Concilio e le loro intersessioni.

Molto interessanti sono i due capitoli successivi, denominati "la Chiesa ad intra" e "la Chiesa ad extra", che evidenziano i principali dibattiti dottrinali della storia del Concilio Vaticano II: ad intra il dibattito sulle fonti della rivelazione e sulla collegialità dei vescovi e ad extra il rapporto Chiesa-mondo e sulla libertà religiosa. Tali capitoli consentono di osservare la storia della redazione dei testi e le intenzioni di coloro che li hanno scritti.

I capitoli nono e decimo evidenziano alcuni aspetti immediati dell'epoca postconciliare, estremamente ottimistica ed euforica, sia in merito al dialogo: tra la Chiesa cattolica e le altre Chiese e comunità cristiane, dialogo con gli ebrei e dialogo con i comunisti, sia in merito alle prime riforme istituzionali volute da Paolo VI, riguardanti la liturgia e la Curia romana.

A seguito di questa euforia però, il professor Chenaux evidenzia nell'undicesimo capitolo, anche la cosiddetta crisi cattolica (della fede, del

Magistero, del clero e del laicato organizzato) che ha contraddistinto il periodo postconciliare, che motiva con le espressioni di padre Congar per il quale “molte realtà preoccupanti si annunciavano già negli anni cinquanta” e del teologo Routhier per il quale “la recezione di un Concilio è necessariamente un tempo di crisi, di apprendistato e di tirocinio”.

L'ultimo capitolo funge anche da conclusione, ed è insieme bibliografico e progettuale. Evidenzia come negli ultimi venti anni il Concilio sia divenuto oggetto di storia e si sia intrapreso un suo studio sistematico e metodico, volto alla storicizzazione del Vaticano II, che ha condotto all'individuazione di due criteri di interpretazione: il Concilio come evento e il Concilio come rottura.

L'autore sottolinea uno dei principali limiti della storiografia del Concilio, ovvero il suo carattere trionfalista, basato sull'opposizione tra due schieramenti composti da una maggioranza progressista e una minoranza oscurantista. Ma la storia teologica del Vaticano II è ancora da scrivere, afferma Chenu, e almeno quattro problematiche sono a tutt'oggi ancora aperte: il ruolo del papato e degli ambienti romani, il contributo delle scuole teologiche, il ruolo dei corpi intermediari e la questione della informazione e dell'opinione pubblica.

Il libro, informativo e formativo insieme, si chiude quindi con un invito ad approfondire e a studiare ulteriormente l'evento del Concilio Vaticano II senza cedere alle due tentazioni di coloro che o desiderano sganciarlo completamente dal passato o tentano invece di farne rientrare gli insegnamenti nell'alveo della continuità.

Angela Tagliafico

Thomas White, O.P., *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity. A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology*, Sapientia Press, Ave Maria 2009, xx-320 pp.

Fr. Thomas White's *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity* is divided into four parts and eight chapters. In the first chapter, White presents a Thomistic natural theology that avoids the dangers of theoretical agnosticism and metaphysical apriorism (onto-theology). He discusses the Catholic response in Vatican I (1870) and *Aeterni Patris* (1879) to the challenges of modern thought. White then covers the challenges of Post-Kantian thought and the insufficient approach of R. Garrigou-Lagrange. This opens up to the Heideggerian critique of natural theology as ontotheology. In response to this critique, White emphasizes how the metaphysics of Aristotle and Aquinas does not begin with a theory of possible being, but rather begins with knowledge of real, existing beings. Aristotle and Aquinas “seek to determine the structure of reality, not by recourse to a mentally immanent system of laws of thinking, but by recourse to a study of the intrinsic and extrinsic causes of being. In doing so, both thinkers appeal to an analogical understanding of the predication of ‘existence’ that avoids any appeal to a logical theory of univocal concepts” (p. 26).

White distinguishes, with Aquinas, between the way of inquiry (*via inventionis*) and the way of judgment (*via iudicii*). “The first *via* concerns the genetic order of discovery of things as known for us (*quoad nos*), while the second concerns the order of nature, or perfection, concerning things as they are in themselves (*per se*)” (p. xxix). According to White, a valid Thomistic account of our natural knowledge of God *in via inventionis* contains at least the following five elements: a realistic

ascription of existence and goodness to the very being of things; an analysis of the immanent causes of the interdependent beings we experience; the possibility of demonstrative reasoning from effect to cause; an ontological analysis of personal actions; the human inclination of the human mind to seek to know the first and final cause of all things, along with the recognition that the philosophical account is imperfect and ordered to a higher wisdom (p. 28-30).

Part Two deals with Aristotle's wisdom (Chapter Two) and Aquinas's wisdom (Chapter Three). White presents the historical contexts of their work and seeks to identify their respective structures of analogical causal analysis of being.

Chapter Two includes a synthetic presentation of the first twelve books of the *Metaphysics* (p. 45-64). Here White tries to show a "triple unity" in Aristotle's metaphysical thought between the causal study of being as the most universal science, the place within this science of the final cause, which alone permits wisdom and knowledge of the good, and the analogical knowledge of being that this causal study implies, permitting an analogical metaphysics and sapiential theology (p. 46). The study of the categories in Book VIII is argued to concern the formal cause of being *qua* being, the study of potency and act in Book IX is said to concern the final cause of being *qua* being (p. 52). White's brief presentation of Book XII emphasizes the ontological foundations of Aristotle's argumentation: the primacy of substance with regard to accidents; the primacy of actuality over potentiality; and the primacy of separate substances over physical substances. Aristotle's argument for the existence of God is summarized as follows: "The substantial and accidental ontological

dependencies present in moving beings (themselves both in act and potentiality) imply, therefore, the necessary existence of a transcendent unmoved first mover who is without potentiality, being pure actuality and necessarily subsistent" (p. 62). Aristotle is able to identify first act (substance-in-act) and second act (operation) in the primary being. God's operations of knowledge and appetitive delight are identical to his eternal, living being: "God is subsistent contemplation. In his actuality he is therefore his own final end, and he is this perfect realization of being substantially and simply" (p. 63). This presentation allows White to argue that Aristotle's wisdom avoids the pitfalls of ontotheology: first, God's ontological priority does not entail a *logical* priority of the notion of God; second, Aristotle's metaphysics does not begin with God, but rather with substance, act and potency, and allows beings to be studied according to their causal intelligibility and thus suggest the need of a transcendent causal horizon; third, religion is not imposed on philosophy; and, fourth, Aristotle's metaphysics is a contemplative understanding of God's nature that transcends technological and cosmological models (p. 64-66).

Chapter Three argues for an appropriation and transformation of Aristotelian metaphysics by Aquinas as a "metaphysics of creation" with an explicit theory of theological analogical predication. While Aristotle's metaphysics was presented in reference to a Platonic historical setting, Aquinas's metaphysics is addressed in its Christian theological context (the interdependent relationships of grace and nature, of revelation and reason). For Aquinas, God does not come under the subject of metaphysics; only *sacra doctrina* studies God as *immediate* subject by virtue of

revelation (p. 80). Three important elements in Aquinas' natural theology are then addressed: first, the doctrine of participation in regard to finite beings as dependent, compositions of *esse* and essence and God as subsistent being; second, the perfection of the primary cause (p. 86-87); third, the doctrine of analogy as that of *ad alterum* attribution; and fourthly, the attribution of personal operations to God (p. 94-96). White concludes the chapter arguing that because of these elements, Aquinas's methodological procedure is not ontotheological.

Part Three considers three "cases": those of E. Gilson (Chapter Four), J. Maritain (Chapter Five), and K. Rahner (Chapter Six). Each chapter is divided into a brief exposition of the author's metaphysical thought and followed by some critical reflections. One of the differences between the authors is the use of different types of analogy: Gilson relies on Aquinas's analogy of one to another (*ad alterum*); Maritain favors the four-term analogy of proper proportionality; Rahner is argued to depend on the analogy of many to one (*multa ad unum*). White holds that there are significant traces of aprioristic reasoning in each of the three authors, due to the neglect of the causal study of being.

In Chapter Four, White characterizes Gilson's proposal as "Theological". Gilson, according to White, attempts to demonstrate the real distinction in light of the demonstration of the existence of God. This demonstration of the created character of being is said to presuppose the illumination of revelation (p. 119-120). White also faults Gilson for his exclusive emphasis of *ad alterum* analogy.

White addresses Maritain's use of *resolutio* in Chapter Five, noting that Maritain mistakenly identifies the epis-

temological *resolutio* (of notions to first notions) with the metaphysical *resolutio* (of composed beings to principles and causes). This problematic understanding of metaphysics, White writes, is related to Maritain's understanding of the analogy of being (p. 145). Maritain tends to substitute the study of intrinsic causes of being *qua* being, with a study of the transcendental notions.

White's presentation of Rahner, highlights the absence of a causal analysis prior to the elaboration of a discourse about God. Rahner focuses instead on the immanent structure of the transcendental subject and attempts to move from the order of thought to divine being. In his critique, White holds that Rahner and Maréchal do not adequately respond to the Kantian impasse to metaphysical realism. Secondly, the absence of a causal analysis of subject and actuality does not allow for an adequate discussion of the relationship between "first actuality" and "second actuality" and consequently the problem of spiritual operations (p. 190). White concludes that "Rahner's analysis seems to *presuppose* what it sets out to demonstrate: the a priori (unthematized) apprehension of infinite *esse*" (p. 191).

The last two chapters, in Part Four, offer reflections on the order of metaphysical inquiry and the doctrine of analogy. In Chapter Seven, "From Omega to Alpha: Toward a General Order of Metaphysical Inquiry", White considers a proper order of investigation for the progressive discovery of the existence of God. Four basic "building blocks" are presented for this metaphysical inquiry: first, how knowledge of existence by judgment gives rise to scientific and causal reflection on being; second, the order of a Thomistic causal study of being and the consequent analogical

knowledge of being; third, the integration of Aristotle's causal analysis with Aquinas's metaphysics of the real distinction in a philosophical science of being; fourth, the derivation of a posteriori arguments for the existence of God based on the causal and structural study of being. A fifth section in the chapter seeks to answer the objection that the capacity for metaphysical argumentation about the natural knowledge of God is exercised rarely and by few people.

Chapter Eight, "*Analogia sapientiae*", addresses the problem of the human natural capacity for and ordering to sapiential knowledge of God. White explores three aspects of this knowledge: first, the analogical consideration of God derived from creatures as an ultimate positive knowledge, composed of a negative moment, a *via negationis*; second, the analogical positive knowledge of God as subsistent wisdom and personal truth; thirdly, the understanding of the human person seen in light of God as a being that is open to and ordered to divine wisdom. He concludes the chapter, by showing the analogical similitude between the manifestation of God's wisdom in nature and in the works of grace as well as the overlap between Thomistic philosophy and Christian theology.

A very positive evaluation of White's *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity* is warranted. The book is a fine contribution to Thomistic metaphysics. It reads easily and addresses the main points of the various and complex arguments succinctly and adequately. White's presentations and critiques of Gilson, Maritain and Rahner are enlightening due in part to the concise and synthetic manner of the exposition.

As a possible drawback, I note that White says in the introduction that he did not choose other representatives of mod-

ern Thomism, and mentions Cornelio Fabro by name. I found that choice unfortunate since many elements advocated by White are also Fabro's position: in particular, the movement from the argument for the real distinction to the demonstration of the existence of God (according to the principles of the Fourth Way), the relationship between the analogy of proportionality and the analogy of attribution (*ad alterum*), and *resolutio* as causal analysis. One difference between Fabro and White regards latter's use of the judgment of existence in metaphysics.

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