

In the end, what kind of book is this? As the author notes, its genre is difficult to classify. It is not straightforwardly a historical study of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor is it a study in Christology. A closer fit, he suggests, might be a 'theological treatise on the mysteries of the life of Jesus' (p. xvi) of the sort classically presented by Aquinas. Even this is not an exact fit, however, given the very different context within which it was written. However it is categorized, Benedict's book invites us to imagine a broader conception of what 'history' might mean than the rather reductionist understanding which sidesteps questions of theology and truth. 'Salvation history' may be nearer to what he is articulating, with its interest in the inner logic and meaning of the events describes. The Passion and Resurrection narratives, for all their historical foundation, are the fruit of profound ecclesial reflection, as the early church 'penetrated more deeply into the truth of the Cross' (p. 229). While historians and Scripture scholars have much to learn from this profound volume, its primary focus is to offer an account of the events and sayings for those who seek a personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. In this it succeeds masterfully.

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LIGHT AND GLORY : THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST IN EARLY FRANCISCAN AND DOMINICAN THEOLOGY by Aaron Canty, *The Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2011, pp. xi + 266, \$ 69.95 hbk*

What happened at the Transfiguration? What did it 'mean'? What did it teach theologically or pastorally? Patristic exegesis provided a basis of doctrinal understanding for the enquiring theologian and the topic was of especial interest in the East in succeeding centuries. The preoccupation of the earliest Christian writers tended to be with the rebuttal of Gnostic claims about the meaning of the Transfiguration. The Gnostics claimed that at the Transfiguration the physical body of Christ was made spiritual and denied his humanity. Origen tried to find a way to emphasise the spiritual dimension of what had happened without slipping into dualism. There was a strong interest in the East in the Transfiguration as a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The Cappadocians explored the idea that the 'glory' with which Christ shone was his divinity made visible. Some of these ideas found their way into Western exegesis through the Latin Fathers, but in the nature of things, their nuances in the Greek were hard to render and imperfectly transmitted. The contribution of the medieval West and in particular that of Franciscan and Dominican theologians has not previously been traced. This is the subject of Canty's new study.

He approaches his story chronologically as far as possible, taking each theologian in turn, from Hugh of St. Cher, to Alexander of Hales, Gueric of St. Quentin, John of la Rochelle, Albert the Great, Bonaventure and finally Aquinas. There is a sensitivity throughout to the significant shifts of emphasis from a Christology in which the Saviour's earthly and human life are emphasised, to the more abstract metaphysical concerns of high scholasticism.

The problem is that medieval study of the Transfiguration does not readily form a coherent story. It was touched on, even wrestled with, by these authors, but it never developed, at least in the West, the clear focus which would have made it a major topic of controversy. And there was nothing like controversy for prompting the scholastic inventiveness which was capable of really taking the theology forward. Nor does there seem to have been the prompting of a pastoral need to be met. This remained something of a peripheral subject.

The first chapter sets out the Scriptural context, tracing the discrepancies of detail between the three versions of the story of the transfiguration in the Synoptic Gospels and the mention in II Peter 1.16–18. The three Gospels all place the story immediately after Jesus' eschatologically important saying about the imminence of the end of the world. Peter emphasises the divine 'authorisation' of the Son, the express approval by God of which he was eyewitness, so the archetypal themes of the transfiguration include ecclesiological implications.

The great contribution of Hugh of St. Cher as a Dominican theologian was to the evolution of the *Glossa Ordinaria*. When he writes on the Transfiguration his predominant interest is in the passage which describes how Jesus' garments became white as snow. What does this say about the relation of his humanity to his divinity? And insofar as the Church is his body, what is to be concluded about the way the clergy and the laity should shine? Next in this study is the Franciscan Alexander of Hales. He was drawn into scholastic analysis of the ways in which the Jesus' body of the transfigured Jesus could have 'clarity' when it was not yet glorified. He did not change. It was merely a change of appearance. Guerric of St. Quentin, the earliest of the Dominicans to frame a disputed question on the subject, takes this point forward. Can it be that there was only the appearance of clarity?

The Franciscan John of la Rochelle made use of Alexander of Hales but he developed and tried to answer a wider range of questions. He also left commentaries on the Gospels, which seem to have been written close to his death. The *postilla* on the Transfiguration in Matthew and that on the Transfiguration in Mark develop complex themes: is the Transfiguration a proof of the truth of the Resurrection? A proof of Christ's glory? A proof of the truth of the Passion? The *Postilla super Lucam* is less experimental and less demanding in the array of sub-questions in which he tests the text. Here he relies partly on Hugh of St. Cher.

With Albert the Great we move from these Parisian Masters to Cologne and other centres in German territories. Albert projected a set of six treatises which were to form a *summa*. His discussion of the Transfiguration occurs in the part which deals with the Resurrection. Bonaventure discussed the Transfiguration in the context of his exegesis rather than in works of systematic theology. Thomas Aquinas, by contrast, considered it in both as well as in his *Sentences* commentary. For all three the ramifications are more complex than in the earlier Western treatments and there are signs of the characteristic later scholastic *omnium gatherum* of all there is to be said about a matter, listed by arguments for and against.

This useful study is sometimes a little mechanical. This is perhaps an unavoidable consequence of the decision to take each medieval author in turn, and then ask what he said about the Transfiguration and where. There is a helpful tracing of some of the borrowings from earlier medieval work, but the framework of the book makes it difficult for Canty to bring out the changing patterns of emphasis as the debate about the Transfiguration developed. Indeed, was there a debate? There emerges a range of preoccupations, from the incarnational to the eschatological and the ecclesiological. There is puzzling over such technical scholastic questions as the role of the human soul of Christ in mediating the glory of his divinity to his human body. It is a pity that the index is confined solely to proper names and does not allow a comparative search of the themes which emerge. The book lacks an overarching synthesis of what these medieval enquiries really achieved as a counterpart to the more adventurous spiritual journeyings of Eastern theologians.

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