

generally it is. Yet not so attractive is a crotchety essay against taking interest on a loan (“Philosophers and Economists: Two Philosophers’ Objections to Usury”), which seems to ignore the changed significance of money in a market economy and the opportunity cost of lending as opposed to investing. Likewise unattractive is a highly-charged essay, “Simony in Africa”, against the then widespread African practice of not administering baptism until the catechumen had made a token but definite commitment of financial support to the parish, which African pastors sought as proof of a correct understanding of the nature of Catholic life. Anscombe charges these pastors with simony, wonders how they were able “to deceive themselves so about what they were actually doing” (p. 242), and with much demonstration laments the practice as “worse than anything that has ever been in the Church” (p. 244).

The essay displays a potential weakness in Anscombe’s distinctive approach to intention. By her own report, she became interested in intention, as a philosophical topic, through a concern to show the error in President Truman’s defense of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, viz. that his intent was *to end the war*, not *to murder civilians*. Anscombe urged against this that we can be wrong about the correct description of our actions: merely thinking that we are doing a certain kind of action does not make it so – an idea which Anscombe uses to devastating effect in her critiques of contraception as well as nuclear warfare. Yet this approach, when misapplied – as it is, we believe, in the simony essay – can lead to an under-appreciation of the role of the agent’s intention in determining the “moral species” of an action, and therefore a certain quickness in attributing bad faith. What results then is not a powerful critique, but overblown moral rhetoric – which in turn leads to a worry, felt by us at least, that through this approach lots of innocent or marginally doubtful practices are open to being counted as “worse than anything that has ever been”.

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**INTRODUCING MORAL THEOLOGY: TRUE HAPPINESS AND THE VIRTUES**  
by William C. Mattison III (*Brazos Press*, 2008) Pp. 432, £16.99

This is, quite simply, an outstanding textbook: any Catholic, or indeed Christian, teacher of an introductory moral theology course ought to welcome it with open arms. It should find an immediate place in seminaries and universities, and would be enormously helpful for those teaching CCRS (the teachers’ Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies). It is superbly organised, accessibly and elegantly written, theologically rich and balanced, simultaneously orthodox and open-minded, consistently intelligent and thought-provoking. It is a book for which both teachers and students will be profoundly grateful.

*Introducing Moral Theology* is structured around the four cardinal and three theological virtues, with four carefully placed chapters on practical topics: student drinking practices, the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, sex before marriage, and euthanasia. It begins with a discussion of the relation between morality and happiness, arguing strongly for what Servais Pinckaers called ‘freedom-for-flourishing’ (as opposed to ‘freedom-of-indifference’) and the corresponding ‘morality of happiness’ (rather than ‘morality of obligation’). A second chapter clarifies other basic concepts, most notably intention. After covering the cardinal virtues, Mattison moves to the second part of the book via an imaginative chapter on the way in which ‘big-picture beliefs’ shape specific moral views: his example is the understanding of sex in the contrasting ethics of Lucretius and the contemporary Catholic Church. He intersperses the specific discussions of the theological virtues with chapters on sin, Christ and grace, and ends by tying his

themes together with an original meditation on the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, each linked to one of his seven virtues.

The text takes seriously the points that Mattison's students themselves have raised over the years (he is now based at the Catholic University of America, having taught also at Georgetown and Notre Dame). Indeed, the chapters are often structured as replies to the strongest objections to Mattison's final position: St Thomas is his master in method as well as content. In this way, the arguments that lead to traditional conclusions are always themselves fresh and relevant to the concerns of a younger generation. Each chapter concludes with short 'study questions' to help students revise its content, with a list of new key terms, with more speculative questions for further reflection, and with suggestions for further reading. Mattison integrates his experience with an ease and maturity, and a sure-footedness of argumentation, that is particularly impressive from a scholar still only in his thirties.

Catholic moral theology must walk the tightrope between a natural law that is rational but disconnected from grace and an ethics so grounded in faith as to be inaccessible to non-believers. Mattison takes as his watchword *gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*. He first describes the cardinal virtues without dependence on revelation, but with reference to the way in which they will eventually be set in a fuller context. In the second half of the book, once theological principles have been fully taken into account, he refers back repeatedly to these virtues to show how faith can further shape them without changing their essential nature. So, for example, the virtue of temperance will for a Christian include the practice of fasting; the believer's courage will take into account the need to resist political pressure to betray the faith. Mattison pays particular attention, following Aquinas, to the 'infused cardinal virtues', that is prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude that are given by grace, rather than acquired by practice, and integrated into ultimate and not merely 'innerworldly' purposes.

The whole volume is marked by the balance and theological integration of the modern Thomist movement which Mattison follows: apart from Pinckaers, he pays tribute to authors such as Josef Pieper, Jean Porter and Paul Wadell. Thus there is no conflict between respect for (a small number) of absolute laws and an emphasis on the virtues: natural law is presented as a rich whole. There is no anxiety about the free use of non-Catholic authors. C.S. Lewis, indeed, is a major influence on the book, and for specific topics, Mattison readily makes use of non-Christian writers such as Michael Walzer. On the other hand, official Catholic teaching is used, *sine ira et studio*, and with genuine respect for its intelligence as well as its authority: the Irish Bishops' document on sex and marriage, *Love is for Life*, provides one example. (Not the least of the book's virtues, indeed, is its judicious bibliographical advice.) Similarly, there is no tension between a confident, but never strident, orthodoxy and an attentive and respectful openness to any reasoned argument, from whatever point-of-view. Students who use this as a course-book will thus be educated as much into good practices of reasoning as into the content of the arguments themselves.

Mattison invites further questions, so I leave him with two, one linguistic and one ethical. Does his preference for sticking with Latinized transliterations such as 'habit' (for *habitus*) and 'fortitude' risk making the concepts seem outdated? However, the concrete examples that illustrate his technical language, whether historical (the conversion of St Augustine) or thoroughly contemporary (campus drinking parties) show how easily Thomist language and ideas can be brought to life and made effective. Secondly, and this is a question really for the whole Thomist ethical tradition: might the canonisation of the seven virtues tend to marginalise central New Testament virtues such as gentleness and humility?

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