

In a paper titled ‘What Future has Catholic Philosophy’, John Haldane claimed, perhaps somewhat controversially, that if St. Thomas were alive today, he would be an analytical philosopher. A rather less controversial claim would be the suggestion that if St. Thomas were alive today, he would have seriously engaged with what analytical philosophers are saying. On this count, Kerr’s book is a highly commendable illustration of what modern-day Thomism should look like.

ROBERT VERRILL OP

PASSIONS & VIRTUE by Servais Pinckaers, OP, foreword by Michael Sherwin, OP *The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D. C., 2015, pp. ix + 139, \$65.00, hbk*

Servais Pinckaers, the Belgian Dominican moral theologian and pastor, was an oasis in the barren desert of moral theology during the post-conciliar, and especially, post-*Humanae vitae* period. There was chaos and uncertainty which ran riot through the minds of seminary moral theology professors in the 1970s and 80s, and so by extension, their students, who are, lest we forget, today’s priests. The chaos was undoubtedly the result of changes in society at large, and the knock-on effects that this had on thinking within the Church. But these were changes that the Church seemed poorly equipped to address, and the discipline of moral theology seemed to creak under the pressure.

Servais Pinckaers was an oasis in such a climate, because he had by this time already examined in detail the development of the discipline of moral theology through to the post-conciliar era, and seen the roots of the current problem some way back. The problem might be summarised as follows: the early modern period marked a shift in the understanding of the moral life, from being based on an understanding of human action and human flourishing (characteristic of the patristic and especially high Middle Ages) to an understanding based largely on sin, law and conscience, with the subsequent development of casuistry. This shift, Pinckaers claimed, was to create the conditions for a lack of confidence in moral theology as a discipline, and a reductionist, atomised and unscriptural account of the moral life, all too easily rejected in a hedonistic post-conciliar society. His position was that only a return to a moral theology rooted in the Scriptures, the Fathers, and Aquinas, with an emphasis on beatitude, human action and human flourishing through the virtues, could represent the moral life in its proper context, and render it intelligible and attractive to the faithful once more. In this vision, the concerns of the theologian professor and the pastor easily converged.

The result of this examination was published at various points from the 1960s onwards in French, but will be most familiar to the Anglophone

world in the form of *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, published in 1995, and the later *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*. His influence, both implicit and explicit, may also be seen in the writings of Dominican moral theologians such as Michael Sherwin and Romanus Cessario, and undoubtedly John Paul II, in *Veritatis Splendor*, which sought to set moral theology on a new path, rooted in Scripture and tradition, and leaving behind the complex and ill-fated forays into proportionalism and other such novel systems.

Given that Pinckaers was such an important figure – and given also that the desert period is far from over, and his importance still widely unrecognised - it is especially welcome to find another of his works now available in English under the title *Passions & Virtue*. It is also of particular significance that it is a translation of his last written work, completed before his death in 2008, and eventually published as *Passions et Vertu* in 2009.

In the first two chapters, we are given a short and accessible introduction to the passions, as understood by Aquinas, which includes, as one would expect, references to his sources in Cicero, Augustine, and the Fathers. He is also aware here of Aquinas's limitations, seeing the importance of pity as a passion with firm gospel roots. What follows are chapters on love and hate, mercy and pity. Of note in the former is the short section on the difficulty of loving, which highlights the centrality of asceticism in correcting the excesses and deficiencies of passion in the matter of loving well and, in the latter, the section on the roots of the concept of mercy in the scriptures. We then have chapters that deal with desire and how it is shaped by concupiscence, how the virtue of hope shapes and directs the human emotion of hope to its proper end, and pleasure and *delectatio*, and how it differs from joy, and sadness and suffering. Again, Pinckaers picks out not only Aquinas's themes, but the wider resonances in the tradition, such as the Stoic views on *apatheia*. The last few chapters focus on virtue, but perhaps in an unexpected way. There is, for example a treatment of the virtue of humour, the virtue of silence, and the importance of rest and leisure. These chapters are an example of how easily moral theology can (and should) move seamlessly into the realm of spiritual theology and practical, useful material to shape the approach to the Christian life. Even the importance of sport, both as a part of a virtuous life and as in need of modification by virtue, is given space. The book finishes with a short treatise on prayer.

The work is brief, and printed in a small format. Each short chapter is divided into smaller sections, and given a subtitle. This means that the work is read profitably in shorter sections, interspersed with longer periods of reflection on the content, keeping an eye on the overall thread of the book.

At times, the language is stilted, though it is hard to tell whether this is an issue of translation or an issue present in the original text. Nevertheless, it remains an important addition to the Pinckaers

English-language canon. One can hope that it will be read by a wider audience, and will serve as a means of introducing his other works to the uninitiated, and that his thought will become accepted as essential reading in seminaries and places where Catholic theology is taught and studied. To this end, the more material available in English the better.

ROBERT GAY OP

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY edited by Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015*, pp. xx + 716, £95.00, hbk

One should not be tempted to judge a book by its cover, but, were one to do so in the case of this latest elegantly produced and highly attractive contribution to the Oxford University Press's series of theological handbooks, one would not be misled: favourable first impressions are more than confirmed when sustained attention is given to the text itself.

The handbook's editors set themselves an ambitious triple task, and, on the whole, they succeed in accomplishing it, providing a context in which over forty theologians from diverse traditions come together in a project which is both ecumenically generous and intellectually robust, neither overlooking the differences confessional allegiance makes to the shape of sacramental theology nor magnifying such differences polemically.

Professors Levering and Boersma sum up the threefold purpose of the volume as historical, ecumenical and missiological, and this description of the project well expresses their shared belief in the possibility of a scholarship which is simultaneously, in their own words, 'painstakingly objective' and religiously committed. Contributions from Catholic, Orthodox and a variety of Protestant sources speak of that commitment, inevitably, in different accents, but always in a way grounded in humble acknowledgment of a shared desire to explore and communicate truth. This confidence about the at least partial availability, and the academic respectability, of theological truth is audible in all the otherwise disparate voices represented in the collection, and perhaps constitutes the work's deepest unifying principle.

Slightly more than half of the essays in the *Handbook* are historical surveys, beginning with a very comprehensive set of articles on broadly biblical themes which deal with the Hebrew Bible and the inter-testamental literature as well as the obvious New Testament foci of sacramental interest, and continuing with contributions on patristic, medieval, early modern, modern and contemporary sacramental theology. In the patristic and medieval sections, due attention is given to the difference of emphases between East and West, whilst the articles on post-Reformation themes cover not only developments within Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran sacramentology but also within