

allow 'narrative' to take precedence over the ontology that the historical saving acts show forth.

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THE CHRISTIAN MORAL LIFE: DIRECTIONS FOR THE JOURNEY TO HAPPINESS by John Rziha, *University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 2017, pp. 368, £41.50, hbk*

Professor John Rziha's book *The Christian Moral Life: Directions for the Journey to Happiness* is the fruit of a common experience had by many an academic moral theologian: giving a talk to a parish on moral theology. While many parishioners want to know what is perceived to be the 'right answer' to some of our searching human questions, or want to know what the Church teaches on specific prickly subjects, Rziha names what many moral theologians have long noticed: that there is in general a lack of knowledge and interest in the principles of moral theology. To remedy this lack Rziha offers his book as an 'introductory text' for moral theology. The test perhaps for the success of the book is whether it works for the parishioner who would attend a lecture on moral theology.

Rziha enthusiastically begins from the conviction that moral theology is one of the primary themes of the Good News, that 'we have a wise and loving God who wants us to be happy'. It is certainly refreshing to be reminded that moral theology is good news. Starting from this premise the reader knows that *The Christian Moral Life* is not going to be about pure obedience to moral law and obligations. Although he does not mention Alphonsus Liguori the patron saint of moral theology, Rziha says that he is building upon the insights of many great Christian thinkers. However these thinkers remain in the background. Rziha is thoroughly Thomistic in his approach and this book could easily be described as directions from St Thomas for our journey to God.

Rziha divides his book into two parts, and says that in Part I he is concerned with moral theology in general and uses the analogy of a journey to set the scene. Rziha starts with what he sees as the beginning of the journey and he looks at the 'where we are' of the journey by analysing human nature in its relation to God and in salvation history. In rather broad but necessary brush strokes Rziha skims through the notion of human beings as images of God who are body and soul, reason, intellect, will and emotions. A few pages of salvation history take the reader through creation, the Fall, salvation and to our final happiness. Having looked at the beginning of the journey Rziha next considers the end of the journey, the 'where we are going' aspect in his treatment of eternal happiness, God's goal for human beings. Perhaps as a reflection of his lecturing experience Rziha takes pains to distinguish different

understandings of happiness so that the reader is clear that he is not talking about feelings of well-being but rather the act of contemplating the good that is known, loved and possessed. The remainder of the book deals with the journey itself as Rziha explains the ‘how we get there’ aspect by covering the moral principles essential for attaining eternal happiness.

Rziha begins his treatment of this stage of the journey with the moral methodology of the Bible. Here Rziha characterises in perhaps forgivable black and white fashion the Old Testament as primarily deontological, based on following God’s law and receiving material rewards and punishments, whereas he says the moral methodology in the New Testament is primarily teleological, it leads to true happiness. While Rziha ignores the complexities, ambiguities and confusion in the language of deontology and teleology, his chapter does give a sense of the deepening of the moral life through adherence to laws to a life of grace filled virtue. Looking at individual steps on the journey Rziha offers the useful Thomistic scheme of the steps of human action that can give people concrete thinking skills and he points out that faults in the steps can identify problems in reasoning that can be corrected with the relevant virtues. Unfortunately he uses the well-worn but inaccurate example of pain killers that he says both control pain but also ‘shorten the life’ of the patient to describe good and bad acts.

Rziha further explains that this stage of the journey is incomplete without an understanding of the action of grace in our lives and he follows the transforming power of grace with a discussion of the gift of the law as guidance to proper actions. As might be expected by now from the Thomist thrust of the book Rziha analyses the four types of law and how they relate. He completes this first part of his book with an introduction to the virtues and the guidance of the Holy Spirit followed by the stumbling blocks of sin, temptation and vice, that may be found on the journey. All this is set in the context of human freedom and divine causality. Significantly, Rziha also speaks about forgiveness.

In Part II Rziha pays extensive attention to the individual virtues. Rziha is keen to present the virtues in the context of other elements of moral theology, in particular the moral law and the Ten Commandments. Notably he weaves in the gifts of the Holy Spirit to ensure that the virtues and also subvirtues are not simply free floating ideals and he includes discussion of the vices that go against each of the virtues. This section of the book touches briefly on more specific moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia and war.

Despite a few typos and a disconcerting sentence on p. 87 that seems to be missing a ‘not’: money does *not* belong to someone who just happens to pick it up, the book is a good if at times challenging read. Rziha is dealing with a notoriously complicated subject and although there are some difficult passages he has translated much of the thinking of St Thomas into accessible language peppered with clear and

commonplace examples to illustrate the points made. The book includes extensive footnotes directing the reader to Church teaching and, of course, to the writing of St Thomas himself. For readers willing to persevere, Rziha comprehensively distinguishes the steps of moral life that take a person through following laws, to forming good habits and virtues, to integrating law, virtues and grace into a personal moral life.

PIA MATTHEWS

UNLOCKING THE CHURCH: THE LOST SECRETS OF VICTORIAN SACRED SPACE by William Whyte, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, pp. xvi + 241, £18.99, hbk*

What did the Victorians do for us? Apart from town planning, metalled roads, mains water and gas supplies, efficient sewerage, and the canals and railways, no one should be unaware of their legacy of church buildings. They built a vast number of churches; in the 1860s a new church was consecrated every four or five days by the Anglicans alone, not to mention those of the non-Conformists and Catholics. But that was not all, for by the 1870s the Victorians had also thoroughly restored and refurbished a third of all pre-Victorian churches, thereby preventing a significant number of them from being lost to posterity altogether.

But this is not a book about architectural styles. Professor Whyte has analysed in great detail the mindsets of those who built churches; not just the architects, but the clergy and the wealthy patrons who paid for them. Proposing to ‘see things, to feel things, to understand things just as the Victorians did’, he thereby arrives at a new way of understanding both Victorian architecture and Victorian faith. Architecture and theories of the sacred are mutually influential. Whyte demonstrates how the Victorians’ principles and aims still deeply affect the way that we see, feel, understand and even use their buildings today. Thus he argues that the Victorians bequeathed a great deal more than bricks, stones, glass, furnishings and vestments to us; they shaped the very way in which we still apprehend and use all these things in the twenty-first century, whether we approve of them or not.

Whyte begins with that peculiarly Victorian idea in architecture: the Gothic Revival. He rightly observes that this movement is not a reactionary one, for all that architects like Pugin passionately espoused Gothic as the only true Christian architectural style, whose revived majestic beauty should inspire a popular return to the religion which had created it centuries before. Indeed, even Pugin was often remarkably practical and innovative in his use of Gothic forms. Secondly, Whyte shows that the reappearance of Gothic is not simply to be ascribed to the aesthetic influence of the romantic movement, but instead can arguably be traced to a source hardly associated with aestheticism at all. J. H.