

sees in the thought of Thomas Aquinas the insight that human action is both transitive and intransitive – transitive insofar as it goes beyond the person and expresses itself and effects the world, ‘produces’ the world in some sense, and intransitive in that it remains in the subject and forms the subject’s immanent value. Such an understanding protects against utilitarian approaches to ethics (less popular in the academy but dominant in public policy decision-making) and takes account of just how profound human acts are.

From here we are able to approach the spiritual nature of man, also explored in this clear and well-organised book. There are useful discussions of Wojtyła’s philosophical anthropology, a kind of multi-disciplinary approach that Anglo-American philosophers can learn from, as well as valuable chapters on Transcendence, Integration and Participation. This is exactly the kind of book that students eager to learn more about Wojtyła should really get hold of. It is a good starting point and I hope that it introduces Wojtyła’s thought (in depth and not just through vulgarisations of his *Theology of the Body*) to a new generation who did not grow up with John Paul II as Pope.

ANTHONY MCCARTHY

THE THEOLOGY OF LOUIS MASSIGNON: ISLAM, CHRIST, AND THE CHURCH
by Christian S. Krokus, Foreword by Sidney H. Griffith, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2017, pp. xvii + 245, \$65.00, hbk*

Writing about Louis Massignon (1883–1962) is no easy task, and the book under review bears witness to both the complexities of his character as well as of the multi-layered meaning of some of his controversial statements.

The author’s method is that of letting Massignon speak for himself thereby allowing the reader to know precisely what he said. In doing so, however, quite a few readers are in for some shock therapy. Massignon is an orthodox and sincere believer in the articulation of his personal faith. But the presentation of this faith could at times turn out to be very nuanced especially when the issue revolves around the relationship between the Church and Islam. Consequently, it could easily be subjected to misinterpretations – if not also extrapolations – of his teachings to the detriment of genuine and honest interreligious dialogue. His ‘interiorist method’ (p. 44), as Krokus describes it, is one case in point. Massignon is neither clear nor systematic in the presentation of his ideas. Here, perhaps, the author might have been better advised to place footnote 135 of Chapter Five (which clarifies this issue) in the text itself and in an earlier part of the book than on page 165. This would spare quite a few readers much anxiety and anguish.

Massignon was certainly a man of profound erudition and insight, as well as a consummate believer and a deeply spiritual man. But he is also as a man of disarming simplicity, that could sometimes be misinterpreted as naiveté. Some of his assertions and positions would appear to be a trifle exaggerated if not outrageous. Just to quote a few examples: the identification of Jesus in agony in the garden with the 'Īsā of the Qur'an (pp. 84–86; 213); the identification of Mary's (and Jesus's) protection from Satan with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (pp. 86–89); his image of Islam as 'the angelic lance that has stigmatized Christianity', which Krokus interprets as Islam menacing the Church 'by preventing its mission to convert the world, thereby forcing the Church into ongoing self-examination and critique' (p. 164); and Massignon's insistence that members of the Badaliya sodality that he founded together with Mary Kahil in 1934 should recite the *Fatiha* before the Crucifix at the beginning of their meetings. Krokus mentions the concern raised by a few regarding this decision. The issue here is not merely the accusation levelled at him by some that he was attempting a *communicatio in divinis* (pp. 216–217). With reference to the last verse of the *Fatiha* there exists a *hadith* quoted by both Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud and narrated by 'Adi b. Hatim (and inserted as a footnote in some translations of the Qur'an) in which Muhammad is purported as identifying those who have incurred God's anger with the Jews whereas those who have gone astray are the Christians.

Also, perhaps Massignon was too Pascalian in when he refers to the God of the philosophers, including Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas among the latter (pp. 48–52; 181). Almost all mediaeval Muslim and Christian philosophers were also people of profound faith who merely wished to undergird the beliefs of their respective religions with more solid foundations. Aquinas was a mystic in his own way. His Eucharistic hymns express this most profound mystery with almost childlike joy and wonder.

Krokus traces well the stages of development of Massignon's thought vis-à-vis his appraisal of both the Qur'an and Islam. In his early writings one finds instances wherein it appears that Massignon attempts to force his own mystical interpretation on the Qur'an in the light of his studies on al-Hallaj against what the author refers to as 'traditional Muslim apologetic' which is bitterly criticized (pp. 111–122). The author explains this initial attitude as 'the defensive enthusiasm of the recent convert' (p. 134). This mystical approach will be the one that he will continually embrace in varying degrees throughout the rest of his life. Here one wonders whether the Qur'an does indeed lend itself completely to an exclusively mystical interpretation. The author also affirms that in his early writings Massignon sees in the Qur'an not only 'authentic ground for mystical-spiritual development' but also a crypto-Christian message that only 'Catholic teaching and practice' can unravel. Among these one finds the fall of Satan, the Immaculate Conception, and even

the Eucharist (pp. 129–130). In the words of Krokus himself, Massignon's early writings are 'an exposition of the Christian eyes through which he would continue to seek understanding of Islam's relationship to the mission of the Church' (p. 133).

The author affirms that in his mature years Massignon gave a more positive appraisal of Islam and attempted to interpret it allegorically in the light of Christian faith and practice. Here one wonders as to the reasons behind this gradual shift. Krokus refers particularly to Massignon's 'affection for Muslims' unshakeable faith in the one God., Islam's 'insistence on the importance of liturgy as the only real lasting thing because of its potential orientation toward transfiguration', and the sacrifice that takes place during Id al-Adha as 'analogous to participation in reception of divine descent at the Eucharist' (p. 136).

Faced with such an affirmation one needs to tread very carefully. It appears that during this latter period Massignon at times reads too much into Muslim faith and ritual, attempting to find parallels everywhere with the Christian faith. He considers Islam as being '*on the way to being theological*' (p. 138) because 'it is not yet admitted to full and explicit Catholic communion, awaiting perfection, perhaps eschatological, in Christian charity' (p. 139). This process takes place in the hope that Muslims 'will one day return to the homeland', meaning that 'Islam will assume its proper place at the Abrahamic table alongside Jews and Christians' (p. 140). Krokus will again take up this issue and expand it in the chapter that he entitles 'The Abrahamic Schism' which Massignon sees as the separation and mutual isolation of the Children of Isaac from the Children of Ishmael (pp. 167–189).

The chapter on Badaliya (pp. 190–225) is rich and revealing since Krokus demonstrates all his ability in providing valuable insight into Massignon's profound spirituality and breadth of vision. Krokus describes the Badaliya sodality as 'the organ Massignon developed in order to participate intentionally, concretely and ecclesially in a Christian mission of substitution for Muslims' (p. 198). Its purpose would be that of living 'the Trinitarian missions of self-emptying love and knowledge as the means for inviting, attracting, and welcoming Muslims, and they would become spiritually dependent upon Muslims by offering their own lives to God as a way of redressing in love whatever might be lacking in Muslim prayer and belief' (*ibid.*). This developed during crucial period of the Pan-Arabism movement as well as the struggle for independence of many Muslim countries from their colonial masters.

When one looks at the present geo-political and religious situation one is bound to pose the question: Had Massignon been alive today, what direction would his ideas have taken?

JOSEPH ELLUL OP