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Hunter, Justus: *If Adam Had Not Sinned.* The Reason for the Incarnation from Anselm to Scotus. – Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press 2020. 257 S. (XVII). In. \$ 75,00 ISBN: 978-0-8132-3285-0

Justus Hunter aims to reframe the debate surrounding the question: “If Adam had not sinned, would the Son have become incarnate?” (xiii). The current debate, as H. presents it, is between Thomists and Scotists, with Thomists answering the question negatively and Scotists answering positively. By presenting the historical sequence of positions and arguments on the question from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, H. claims to show “that the responses given by Thomas and Scotus are substantially reconcilable” (xiv).

The first and last chap.s of the book present systematic arguments to develop both the question and its possible answers. The first chap. articulates the three forms that the question can take (14). The form that gives H.’s book its title is the hypothetical question: “If humanity had not sinned, would God have become incarnate?” H. calls the second form the primacy question: “What is the primary reason for the incarnation?” This question of primacy has an effect on the hypothetical question: If the primary reason for the incarnation is to remedy the effects of sin, then a sinless world would have less need of it. H. calls the third and final form the general question: “How can we determine reasons for divine operations *ad extra*?” The answer to this third question determines the kind of answer one can give to the first two questions, because the incarnation is one of these “divine operations *ad extra*.” The middle four chap.s present the systematic arguments of the first and last chap.s in a historical sequence, beginning with Anselm in the twelfth century and ending with Scotus on the cusp of the fourteenth. Although Anselm does not address the hypothetical question (35), he receives an entire chap. of his own because he makes deductive arguments about what God can and cannot do in creating things. The second of the four historical chap.s is devoted to Robert Grosseteste, who uses these deductive arguments to answer the hypothetical question (72). The third and fourth of the historical chap.s examine the respective Dominican and Franciscan contributions to the thirteenth-century debates over the question at the Univ. of Paris. The final chap. of H.’s book reframes this historical sequence of moments as a set of systematic arguments that can be understood independently of the historical progression.

H.’s introduction claims that the central chap.s of the book present the debates over the motive for the incarnation in a sequence of three historical moments (xiv). In the first moment, “theologians supplied deductive arguments for the conclusion that the Son would become incarnate in any possible world.” In the second moment, theologians “rejected the deductive arguments of the first moment in order to secure God’s freedom over creation.” In the third and final moment,

theologians “preserve divine freedom, but also appropriate the arguments of the first moment as arguments from congruity or fittingness.” That is, for theologians of this third moment, one can prove that the incarnation is fitting, but not that it is necessary. As it turns out, H. does not give equal weight to each of these three moments. More than half of the historical chapters that form the center of the book are devoted to the first moment. That is, more than half of H.’s narrative concerns the theologians who either supply or support deductive arguments for the incarnation. Chap. Two, on Anselm, provides the support for such deductive arguments. Chap. Three presents Grosseteste making such arguments himself. And the first half of Chap. Five presents the Franciscans who draw on Grosseteste and Anselm’s arguments in a slightly different context. This leaves only a chapter-and-a-half for the remaining two moments. The first half of Chap. Four (and a few pages in Chap. Five for Odo Rigaud) contains the second moment, and the third moment is covered in the second half of Chap. Four and the second half of Chap. Five. The structure of the book, then, suggests a different theme than the one H. explicitly articulates. Instead of three moments, we have two: theologians who make deductive arguments for the incarnation and theologians who do not. H. can claim that Scotus and Aquinas are reconcilable because they both fall into the latter camp.

Certain critical statements throughout the book reinforce this sense that there are two moments at stake, not three. A short section entitled “Questioning Hypotheticals”, which proves critical for understanding the movement of the book as a whole, casts doubt on the deductive arguments of Anselm and Grosseteste. H. begins this section by noting that “history has not been kind to the hypothetical question and responses of Grosseteste and others” (101). Namely, later thinkers, including contemporary writers, worry that speculating about what God would do in non-factual situations is an indication of pride. H. characterizes the problem as “the tendency of theologians, in response to the hypothetical question, to formulate assertions concerning the divine will and intentions that arrive at certainty” (102–103). H. provides several ways of avoiding this problem, drawing on the work of Juniper Carol and Dominic Unger. And H. himself provides a “cautious” reading of Grosseteste that avoids the problems of a “confident” reading. But this cautious reading of Grosseteste does not win out. The final paragraph of the book states that “the Grossetestean arguments should be put to rest,” while “the debates that have emerged between the Thomists and Scotists [...] should continue to flourish” (231). This nicely summarizes H.’s approach to the history he has described, as a critique of attempts to say what God must do, in favor of attempts to say what is fitting for God to do.

As a work of history, H.’s book makes an interesting contribution to our understanding of the debates on the reason for the incarnation in the Western Europe of the High Middle Ages. As a work of contemporary systematic theology, it is an important response to previous work on the question of the incarnation by Edwin Chr. van Driel and Marilyn McCord Adams, both discussed briefly by H. (23–26). The density of the later chapters may overwhelm the non-specialist, but the early chapters are accessible and appear tailored for the non-specialist. Technical terms such as “compossible” are carefully defined and illustrated with examples (16–17). The book loses some of its accessibility in the historical chapters, as when H. introduces Peter Abelard without a first name or explanation of who he was or when he lived (115). And the non-specialist’s eyes may glaze over when reading statements like “Bonaventure gives five reasons in support of his claim,” or clauses that begin with “the nine arguments he supplies against this position” (184). But small gems of careful definition may be still found here and there in the historical sections, such as H.’s elegant

division of “fitness” into three kinds in Anselm, along with a few cogent references to secondary sources (56-68). H.’s concern to define fitness is not incidental to his larger project. The entire book may be most usefully read as a study of arguments from necessity versus arguments from fitness, as applied to the specific example of the reason for the incarnation.

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