

ON LOVE AND VIRTUE: THEOLOGICAL ESSAYS by Michael S. Sherwin, O.P.,
Emmaus Academic, Steubenville, 2019, pp. xix+286, \$34.99, hbk

Michael Sherwin OP is intrigued by the notion of love as charity – as a theological virtue which serves as lynchpin for the spiritual life. Thus, his new collection of essays, *On Love and Virtue*, like his earlier *By Knowledge of Truth and Love*, draws the reader into the heart of Catholic spirituality. Yet unlike his earlier monograph, this work assembles writings previously published in journals or delivered as talks. All are interconnected, as the title suggests, by the realities of love and virtue. Following two loosely connected introductory chapters, the core text includes five distinct chapters on love united by a historical thread, and a second section of five chapters on virtue.

Following the teleological structure of Thomas Aquinas's *prima secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, Sherwin begins with the end. He touches on Thomas's teaching on beatitude as a means of undermining dissenters of every era, including those who argued for a purely natural happiness. By way of response, Sherwin affirms the necessary relationship that exists between natural and supernatural happiness and between happiness and the moral life, concluding that nothing created can fulfill man's deepest desire. In the second essay Sherwin surprisingly selects Robert McNamara and the Vietnam War as a means of contextualizing contemporary errors on love and virtue. He argues that US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's 'technical rationality' failed for the same reason that contemporary understandings of love fail – both reduce the irreducible. Thus, twentieth-century 'utilitarian calculus' was applied indiscriminately for war and sexual reproduction, following the principle enunciated by Cervantes: *El amor y la guerra son una misma cosa*.

Sherwin's survey of key errors leads into a proper discussion of love. Chapter Three, analyzing Chaucer's first song of love in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and Chapter Four, a profound historical study defending Augustine's teaching on love, demonstrate the author's depth of analysis and breadth of interpretation. Together, these essays create a backdrop highlighting distinctive elements of Aquinas's teaching, specifically distinctions in defining love: 1) *complacentia*, 'with pleasing assent', preserving concomitantly necessary aspects of passion and of will; 2) *dilectio*, 'pleasing to', implying choice; and 3) *amor concupiscentiae* (proper to desire), subordinated to yet underlying 4) *amor amicitiae* (proper to friendship). Such distinctions serve not only to interpret Chaucer's teaching on the instability of *amor concupiscentiae*, but also to demonstrate how Aquinas preserved and developed the riches of Augustine's theology of love rooted in hope.

In the subsequent chapters on love, Sherwin first analyzes the concept of *love* in the Angelic Doctor's commentaries on the Scriptures. He then illustrates John Chrysostom's masterful transformation of the fourth-century social concept of patronal friendship into virtuous love between God and

person, and of person for person in imitation of God's love. Chapter Eight returns to Augustine, this time, analyzing friendship with the Bridegroom (cf. *Jn* 3:29). Though applicable to all Christians, Sherwin underscores the pastoral perspective emphasized by Augustine. The final section on virtue follows logically upon the understanding of love both as the first movement of the passions and as the primary Christian virtue. The first article of this section serves as a short introduction, laying out fundamental elements of the discussion of virtue today – specifically on virtue as habit, on the role of knowledge and emotion, and on the necessity of infused virtue for the Christian life.

Chapter Nine is a well-known article published in *The Thomist* in which Sherwin attempts to lay out the distinct nature and necessity of the infused virtues. Matt Talbot provides an apt example not only of the reality of infused virtue in act, but perhaps more importantly, of the interplay between acquired and infused virtues. The debate, while not new, is still relevant, touching upon the ever-new question of the relationship between nature and grace. The subsequent chapter, a reprinted article of 2012, parallels Sanford's *Before Virtue: Assessing Contemporary Virtue Ethics*. Both address: 1) the return to virtue ethics inspired by Anscombe, Geach, MacIntyre, *et al.*, and 2) the subsequent failure of moral theologians who missed the mark. Some ignored or misinterpreted Anscombe's demand for 'an adequate philosophy of psychology'. Others, as Sherwin notes, failed to distinguish between popular virtue ethics and true virtue rooted in Scripture, the Fathers, and Aquinas. Still others stumbled in the face of 'moral elitism'. Here again, Sherwin renews the call for a return to virtue which avoids error by grounding their theology in the Scriptures and Catholic moral theology as taught by the likes of Augustine and Aquinas. Paralleling an earlier chapter on love, the author includes a discussion of Aquinas's scriptural commentaries, this time on virtue. All texts are read in the light of a pithy Thomistic phrase in *Super II Corinthians*: fire growing in water (*ignis in aqua crescit*). This vivid image serves to help us grasp the reality behind Paul's paradoxical teaching that virtue is 'made perfect in weakness' (2 *Cor* 12:3).

The work ends with Christ, which again reveals structural similarities between Sherwin's work and the *Summa Theologiae*. He concludes the discussion of the life of virtue rooted in charity with a *tertia pars*, a demonstration of how Thomas 'portrays the Father as a teacher and Christ as what is taught' (p. 225). Christ manifests himself not only as a model of virtue, but as the model of the teacher of virtue – the master of the art as he demonstrates by his manner of *examinatio de dilectione* (*Super Ioannem* 21.3 – p. 231). Christ's teaching is not merely about knowledge. Masterfully weaving the theoretical and practical together, Sherwin concludes by referencing the intimate connection Thomas proposes between Christ the Teacher and the Apostolic mission. Delving into the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Sherwin shows how Thomas believed that those who possess the Spirit's gift of love in Christ become the friends of Christ.

Thus, virtue which begins as *amor concupiscentiae* truly becomes *amor amicitiae* – and these friends, ‘by living well’ and ‘by teaching well’ will become *magistri orbis terrarum* (*Super Ioannem* 6.1 – p. 246). This work will surely help others to enter into that friendship.

CATHERINE JOSEPH DROSTE OP

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF MARY edited by Chris Maunder, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2019, pp. xx + 702, £110.00, hbk*

It seems quite difficult to do justice to a collected volume of this size and breadth of subject in such a short review, particularly as Chris Maunder has gathered together so many different contributions from various backgrounds. The first thing to say is that this is not a textbook on mariology and it does not trace, in any systematic way, developments in mariology or consider doctrinal or dogmatic definitions regarding the life and role of the Blessed Mother. In some sense this perhaps makes this collection slightly different to other Oxford Handbooks on, for example, the Trinity or Christology, which are framed in terms of the history of dogma from the Scriptures, through the Fathers, to the Middle Ages and beyond. To be sure, something of this clearer approach remains in the volume’s division into Eastern and Western Christianity, as well as a consideration of Mary from a Reformation and Counter-Reformation perspective. In these sections there are good introductory chapters from Andrew Louth on patristic and contemporary Orthodox considerations of Our Lady, as well as John McGuckin’s introduction to *Mary in the Hymnody of the East*. For the West, good contributions come from Matthew Levering on *Mary and Grace* and Robert Fastiggi on *Mary in the Work of Redemption* and *Mariology in the Counter Reformation*. However even these contributions grouped under Eastern and Western Christianity do not give a doctrinal history but seem rather to focus on the liturgical celebration of Marian feasts or the devotional practices of particular Christian communities throughout history and in different cultural settings. In many of the contributions, authors simply highlight the difference between Eastern and Western theology on questions like the Immaculate Conception, and after highlighting the difference, do not go on to clarify what these differences actually are, nor do they fruitfully engage with the opposing view. In this sense the volume is something of a lost opportunity.

More fundamentally the different approach taken by Maunder means that this volume loses something of the coherence which the more standard structure provides. But on the other hand, taking this different approach, which focuses more on piety, liturgy, and cultural appropriation of the person of Mary, offers a more varied perspective on the topic. So while those hoping for a systematic exposition of mariology will be