

## Book Reviews

**'WILL THERE BE FREE WILL IN HEAVEN?' FREEDOM, IMPECCABILITY, AND BEATITUDE** by Simon Francis Gainé OP, T & T Clark, London & New York, 2003, pp. 142, £25 hbk.

Étienne Gilson says somewhere that, while Idealists talk about philosophy, Thomist Realists talk about things. Something similar applies to the practitioners of the sacred science that philosophy serves. While some theologians content themselves with discussing other theologians, Thomist realists keep their sights on the *rei veritas*, the truth of the revealed reality that theology seeks to understand. The Thomist, too, draws on the work of other divines, especially the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, for theology, unlike philosophy, argues *ex auctoritate*; however, the realist theologian's chief interest is in the great things of the Creed – the Trinity, the Incarnation, Redemption, the Church, the Sacraments, and Everlasting Life – which the authorities of the Tradition help us to understand.

Fr Simon Gainé OP is a Thomist realist, and so, true to form, he concentrates on the revealed reality that interests him (the free will of the blessed), and refuses to be distracted by the fascinations of biography or *Dogmengeschichte*. The structure of this book, his first, resembles the ordering of an article in the *Summa*. It begins with a statement of the question as it came up on a BBC radio programme just before Christmas 1999: How can you be free in Heaven, if you can't sin there? Like a Schoolman parading the 'objections' to the thesis he wants to defend, Gainé goes on to present two extreme positions, those of the otherwise unidentified G. B. Wall and J. Donnelly. The former thinks the impeccability of Heaven requires the 'jettisoning' of freedom, while the latter wants to secure the freedom of Heaven by allowing the blessed to sin. Opposed though they are to each other, the arguments of Wall and Donnelly share a common presupposition: if you can't sin in Heaven, you're not free in Heaven. This 'either-or' is at odds with the 'both-and' of orthodoxy, for, according to Catholic faith, beatitude combines a 'glorious liberty' (cf. Rom 8:21) with a serene incapacity to sin.

In the main part of the book, as Aquinas does in the body of some of the longer articles (*quidam dicunt... alii dicunt*), Fr Gainé starts by considering various attempts to harmonize heavenly impeccability with blessed freedom. Suarez seems to be on the side of the angels, or at least of the Angel of the Schools, by maintaining that the blessed are *intrinsically* impeccable: beatitude itself makes them unchangeable in their rectitude of will. The trouble is that Suarez restricts the freedom of the blessed to a very narrow range of acts: they love God by necessity, but they do not love Him by necessity in every way in which He can be loved. Gainé is dissatisfied with a liberty of glory limited to the dullness of non-obligated acts, and so he asks: 'Is it possible to construct a theology in which freedom is again accorded a greater value, but where the Christian orthodoxy of heavenly impeccability is retained?' (p. 33). Scotus would answer yes, and so it is to him, the subtle doctor of the will, that Gainé next turns for enlightenment. If the Spanish Jesuit safeguards impeccability to the detriment of freedom, the Scottish Franciscan glorifies freedom at the expense of impeccability. According to Scotus, God removes, by an extrinsic causality, the proximate power of the blessed for sinning, while leaving intact the remote power. '[T]he retention of this remote power does not in any way lessen the happiness of the

blessed, because sin never in fact comes about on account of the divine prevenience' (p. 68).

The third opinion is that of Ockham, whose voluntarism is more extreme than that of his Franciscan predecessor. Like Aristotle and Aquinas, Scotus regards the good as the proper object of the will, but Ockham thinks the will is 'free to define the scope of its object, such that it is possible for the will to will evil as such' (p. 71). Freedom, for Ockham, is above all the freedom of indifference. What happens, then, when this naturally freewheeling freedom finds itself in Heaven? *Left to itself*, 'to its own nature and freedom', the will of the blessed would have the power to go after any object whatever; it could even 'null' God. But the will of the blessed is not left to itself. God suspends its activity; God Himself becomes the 'total cause' of the beatific act. Ironically, extreme voluntarism ends up, like other species of extremism, in destroying the very thing it prizes so highly. 'It seems that the greater a promoter of the freedom of indifference one is, the more one must either suppress freedom in this respect, like Ockham, or suppress impeccability, as Donnelly had done' (p. 84f).

Having found the first three opinions wanting, Gainé begins his solution with the help, first, of a fellow Dominican and Thomist, Fr Servais Pinckaers, and, secondly, of St Thomas himself. Pinckaers contrasts the moral thinking of the Fathers and St Thomas, which is centred on happiness and the virtues, with the moralities of the modern age, which are preoccupied with obligation and commandments. Behind each tradition stands a concept of freedom: the Ockhamist freedom of indifference is what drives the obligation theories, while 'freedom for excellence' (*liberté de qualité*) is the inspiration of the moral doctrine of the Fathers and St Thomas. Whereas the Ockhamists and obligationists feel a tension between natural inclinations and the freedom of indifference, the Fathers and St Thomas make natural inclinations the root from which the freedom for excellence draws its strength. 'Freedom is characterized here not by indifference, but by a spontaneous attraction to all that at least seems true and good. The morality based on this freedom will thus be one of attraction rather than obligation' (p. 95). In this perspective, the ability to sin is accidental to freedom, is indeed a lack of freedom. The closer we come to God, the less we are inclined to sin, for we begin to share in the freedom of God Himself.

In the last chapter, drawing explicitly upon St Thomas, Gainé completes his solution and provides the final answer to the question: 'There Will Be Free Will in Heaven'. The freedom of the blessed, which includes their freedom from the ability to sin, is a participation in the freedom of God. 'I say that there is free will in Heaven. It is a more powerful freedom than freedom had on earth, because it is a more profound sharing in the divine freedom... [T]he blessed in Heaven can no longer sin: their freedom is too perfect for that. It is perfect because they are for ever united to their ultimate end, and so their free choices will for ever be the more powerful, because, like God's, their free acts will flow from the ultimate end now possessed and from the order of which they never depart, to spread abroad the goodness and glory of God for all eternity' (p. 136).

Simon Gainé OP has written a little classic, a model of what speculative theology should be. In a style reminiscent of the late Herbert McCabe OP, he writes with simplicity, clarity, and a light touch of humour. He asks a question about a great revealed mystery and tries to answer it, as the Church and his order suggests he should, by drawing on the doctrine of St Thomas and the Thomistic school. 'Will there be free will in Heaven?' Yes, as Fr Simon Gainé has shown so convincingly. 'Will there be more books from Fr Simon Gainé?' I sincerely hope so.

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