

INTRODUCTION: THE SPIRIT OF UNITY



The Spring 2023 issue of *Communio* revolves around the theme “The Spirit of Unity.” The gift of the Holy Spirit establishes the Church in the unity enjoyed by the divine persons in accord with Christ’s prayer to the Father “that they may be one even as we are one” (Jn 17:22). How is this ecclesial oneness, as a sharing in the communion of the blessed Trinity, borne out in the midst of division within the Church, or in the Church’s relationship to the community of creation it presupposes and to the cultures and religions to whom she bears Christ?

“Since the Holy Spirit is not a spirit of contradiction, the Church does not fall into false doctrine.” **Matthew Levering**, in “The Church as Temple of the Spirit: Is There Room for Magisterial Error?,” draws on a host of theological authorities to affirm that the visible Church is formed by the Holy Spirit so that she can authentically transmit the fullness of Christ in her doctrine. On this foundation, Levering posits that the confession of the Holy Spirit as a divine person compels us to believe that even as a pope can err in some teachings he could not “reverse (whether intentionally or by mistake) an infallibly taught dogma of the ordinary universal Magisterium.” Levering concludes that such a doctrinal account of doctrine must inform the theologian’s patience, circumspection, and hope in the act of voicing dissent.

Antonio López examines the Paschal mystery as a trinitarian event in “Transforming Suffering into Redemptive Love: Reflections on the Holy Spirit’s Role in Christ’s Sacrifice.” Attending to the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the Cross,

we recognize Christ's suffering as the revelation and enactment in time of the eternal love that God is, on the basis of which our reception of grace has the form of adoption into Christ's own doxological self-offering to the Father in the Spirit. "Thanks to the Spirit's coworking of the Paschal mystery, Christ's unique sacrifice founds the definitive covenant between God and man."

Gavin D'Costa enumerates major approaches to the world religions within recent Christian reflection in "The Holy Spirit and World Religions in Theology and in the Magisterium." D'Costa highlights how the third divine person's presence in non-Christian religions is expressed by leading the practitioners of those religions to salvation in Christ. But he urges theologians to ponder difficult questions this claim raises: "Is implicit knowledge of Christ, through participation and response to the Spirit's activity sufficient to attain the beatific vision? Or is some explicit trinitarian knowledge required for the consummation of the final destiny?"

In "The Sacramental Principle," **Jonathan Martin Ciraulo** maintains that the recognition of the material world as a bearer of divine presence is in practice inseparable from participation in the Church's sacramental liturgy. In receiving through theurgy God's communication of his own life, the Christian is habituated to grasping creation as an order with its own integrity to the depths of which God freely condescends while remaining graciously transcendent. "Sacramental communion is a participation in the life of God in Christ because there is already a communion of beings with being, a participation of the finite in the infinite, though this initial participation is oriented positively toward that more perfect, eucharistic communion."

In "Covenant Love: A Symbolic Reading of the Song of Songs," **Nina Sophie Heereman** unfolds how the Song of Songs was composed over generations with Israel's experience of redemption in view. Hence, with regard to this work "[w]e are not dealing with a theological projection onto a merely secular love poem, but with a single process that interweaves the human and the theological from the beginning." Focusing especially on the "Wedding of Solomon" cycle at the center of the poem, Heereman shows how the Song's celebration of human marriage is at once illuminated by and mediates in turn Israel's contemplation of her

spiritual and cultic bond with God from Mount Moriah to Mount Sinai to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Anselm Ramelow discusses the incoherence of a scientific denial of free will in “Delimiting Freedom: Aquinas between Brain Science and Choice Gone Wild.” Aquinas enables us to see that free choices are fundamentally immaterial because they are purposefully ordered to their universal good through particular means. At the same time, Aquinas grants both that the conditions of choice can be determined by material factors, and, even more significantly, that prior choices shape the context of our future action. Yet even this does not present a case against the reality of freedom: “[W]ith such a history our freedom *increases*, because much of the prehistory that influences our choices will be of our own making.”

In *Retrieving the Tradition* we publish **Jean Daniélou’s** “Current Trends in Religious Thought,” an essay in which the author asserted the challenges and prospects for Catholic theology in the middle of the twentieth century. Daniélou called at once for the Church to renew its awareness of God through reinvigorating the ties between theology and biblical exegesis, on the one hand, and, on the other, to wrestle with themes brought forcefully to light by modern philosophy and literature, such as the realities of history and subjectivity. With these two tasks in mind, Daniélou suggests that “theology must finally, in order to be living, respond to a third demand: it must take into account the needs of souls, to be animated by the spirit of the apostolate, to be thoroughly engaged in the work of building up the body of Christ.”

In *Notes & Comments* we present two essays that receive seminal works in the Christian intellectual and spiritual tradition. First, in “Julian of Norwich’s Divine Autobiography,” **Jeremiah Barker** presents Julian’s *Showings* as a retelling of God’s loving entrance into human suffering for the sake of bringing the Church into his suffering love. This work therefore represents “an instance of divine and human co-authorship, an instance of synergism at its eschatological height.” Barker stresses how the cosmic vision that Julian receives necessarily passes through her beholding of and partaking in the Passion of Christ crowned with thorns, so that her own self-confession comes to be radically united to the triune God’s declaration of love for her and for all.

Finally, in “Twice-Told Tales on *The Scarlet Letter*: Assessing a Reassessment,” **Robert Alexander** disputes the claim put forward in a recent periodical that Nathaniel Hawthorne’s masterpiece should be read as a study of clergy sexual abuse. Alexander responds that such an interpretation of *The Scarlet Letter* falls into the kind of misreadings that the novel dramatizes and judges throughout. Instead, at issue in the novel is a longing for the liberation from sin that comes through the confessing penitent’s sharing in the action of the Cross, and the way in which the community itself can be sustained by openness to such conversion. In this light, Alexander argues, “*The Scarlet Letter* can be seen as a refounding, an attempt on Hawthorne’s part to address and ameliorate the problems mentioned above by introducing *back into* the American founding a spirit it lacked.” □

—The Editors