

the world, i.e., the rejection of *natura pura*, gives license to a secular agenda intent on banishing Christian interaction in public life and relegating religion to the purely private, emotive and subjective realm.

Natura Pura is a unique, foundational and crucially important text. Long demonstrates that discussions surrounding *natura pura* are not to be considered the purview of arcane, scholastic riddles about a hypothetical, but are a necessary philosophical and theological abstraction offering insight into creation, providence and the real order in which we find ourselves. An account of *natura pura* informs metaphysics, natural philosophy, anthropology, and ethics. When we ask, 'Who is Christ?' the answer is, of course, 'God and Man'. But, what is man? And more importantly, asks Long, *quid sit Deus?* He writes, 'To deny the role of natural knowledge here would appear suicidal for Christian truth' (210). The author succeeds in his goal of offering a Thomistic *vade mecum* for the foundational place of speculative inquiry into the 'whole ontological density of nature' as essential to the theological and philosophical task.

GERALD BOERSMA

JESUS OF NAZARETH: PART 2. HOLY WEEK: FROM THE ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM TO THE RESURRECTION by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *CTS*, London and *Ignatius*, San Francisco, 2011, pp. xvii + 362, £14.95 hbk.

In this second volume of his *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict, writing in his personal capacity as Joseph Ratzinger, turns his attention to the events of Holy Week and Easter. It is an ambitious project, which he carries out with characteristic clarity, simplicity and profundity.

His overarching purpose – reflecting a motif expressed in speeches and writings over many years – is to offer an exegesis which 'without abandoning its historical character' (p. xiv) has nonetheless rediscovered its identity as a theological discipline. Yet Benedict is subtle enough a thinker, and receptive enough to historical-critical questions, to recognize that this is not a straightforward procedure. It is an 'art' as much as a 'science', and an artist needs insight and imagination in order to accomplish his or her task effectively. Thus, while the reader will certainly find careful discussions appropriate to a more scientific analysis, there is far more to enthuse the soul, and indeed the mind, in an account which refuses to treat Jesus of Nazareth simply as an object of historical curiosity.

The book traces the events of the Passion from the triumphal entry to the crucifixion and burial, and from there to the Resurrection, with an epilogue exploring the meaning of the Ascension. From a historical perspective, this structure is enabled by the fact that the chronology of the gospel passion narratives is much more stable than for other parts of the Jesus tradition. Where they are at variance, as on the date of the crucifixion, he follows a good number of recent scholars in opting for the Johannine chronology.

Nevertheless, even in the details of the narratives, Joseph Ratzinger exhibits a preference for what Luke Johnson calls a 'hermeneutics of generosity or piety' over against a 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. This does not mean that he underestimates the historical difficulties of the gospel traditions. Again and again, he shows awareness of the complexity of the text's tradition-history, and of particular redactional emphases. Thus he describes Jesus's eschatological discourse as 'woven together' from individual strands of tradition. He notes that Matthew is 'certainly not recounting historical fact' in asserting that 'all the people' called for Jesus to be crucified (Matt. 27:25), but offering a theological aetiology to account for the tragic events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem. Indeed, his subtle

exegesis of this highly problematic verse has rightly earned praise from Jewish scholars.

Rather, he is concerned to establish the 'broad outline' of the events, in order to 'ascertain whether the basic convictions of the faith are historically plausible and credible when today's exegetical knowledge is taken in all seriousness' (p. 105). If there are rare occasions when he appears to gloss over historical difficulties regarding particular events or sayings – the text-critical issues relating to Jesus' 'word from the cross' at Luke 23:34, for example – these moments should not detract from his overall purpose, which he eloquently demonstrates throughout the book.

Moreover, his dual hermeneutic means that he refuses to accept a fundamental distinction between a 'historical Jesus' and a 'Christ of faith'. He presents a robust case for Christology not beginning with the Church but rather within the vision and sayings of Jesus himself. In other words, he challenges an older scholarly presupposition (happily itself critiqued from within the scholarly community) that interpretation is some kind of 'add-on' to originally un-interpreted 'facts'. Thus his reading of the Passion story is rooted in the conviction that the prophets (notably Isaiah and Zechariah) profoundly influenced Christ's own thinking. The impact of the Zechariah is reflected both in Jesus' choice of a donkey to enter the holy city and in his self-understanding as the shepherd whose sheep will be scattered.

This book is full of real didactic gems, a sign of the teacher at work. His definition of John's conception of 'eternal life' is both succinct and memorable. The chapter on Gethsemane offers a master class in patristic theology in its elucidation of Christ's divine and human wills, as well as drawing out the theological significance of the varying postures of Jesus at prayer as described by the different evangelists. The chapter on the Resurrection deals deftly with unsatisfactory theological understandings (whether crudely materialistic or overly 'spiritual') of what Christ's resurrection means, and manages to encapsulate the Church's faith in one profound phrase: 'Jesus' Resurrection points beyond history but has left a footprint within history' (p. 275).

Overall, there is a strongly 'Johannine' character to Pope Benedict's book, a perspective suggested from the start by his framing of the passion story by John's chronological scheme. However, this is more than a reflection of his interest in distinctly Johannine traditions, such as the foot-washing, the 'high-priestly prayer' or the 'seamless robe'. Rather, his method is particularly reminiscent of the fourth evangelist, whose 'spiritual gospel' represents a profound interweaving of history and theology. Like John, Joseph Ratzinger is interested in understanding the events of the Passion and Resurrection as it were 'from the inside'.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, there is a strongly Germanic feel to the volume, reflected in its bibliography. Few scholars from the non-German-speaking world feature in the main body of the text: rare exceptions include John Meier, whose multi-volume *A Marginal Jew* is cited approvingly, and C.K. Barrett, whose vintage commentary is clearly a favourite. But there are others from the wider circle of recent scholarship on both Jesus and the gospels who would also have been creative conversation partners.

More positively, Benedict invites us to rediscover the wisdom of exegetes far older than Barrett or Bultmann. This extends not only to his significant engagement with patristic exegesis, but also to his use of medieval commentators such as Rupert of Deutz, and Reformation interpreters like the sixteenth-century Lutheran David Chytraeus (the first to describe the prayer of John 17 as the 'high-priestly prayer'). Reference to the latter (Dietrich Bonhoeffer is another) is an indication of the extent to which this twenty-first century Pope has engaged in the exegetical task within an ecumenical context.

In the end, what kind of book is this? As the author notes, its genre is difficult to classify. It is not straightforwardly a historical study of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor is it a study in Christology. A closer fit, he suggests, might be a 'theological treatise on the mysteries of the life of Jesus' (p. xvi) of the sort classically presented by Aquinas. Even this is not an exact fit, however, given the very different context within which it was written. However it is categorized, Benedict's book invites us to imagine a broader conception of what 'history' might mean than the rather reductionist understanding which sidesteps questions of theology and truth. 'Salvation history' may be nearer to what he is articulating, with its interest in the inner logic and meaning of the events describes. The Passion and Resurrection narratives, for all their historical foundation, are the fruit of profound ecclesial reflection, as the early church 'penetrated more deeply into the truth of the Cross' (p. 229). While historians and Scripture scholars have much to learn from this profound volume, its primary focus is to offer an account of the events and sayings for those who seek a personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. In this it succeeds masterfully.

IAN BOXALL

LIGHT AND GLORY : THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST IN EARLY FRANCISCAN AND DOMINICAN THEOLOGY by Aaron Canty, *The Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2011, pp. xi + 266, \$ 69.95 hbk*

What happened at the Transfiguration? What did it 'mean'? What did it teach theologically or pastorally? Patristic exegesis provided a basis of doctrinal understanding for the enquiring theologian and the topic was of especial interest in the East in succeeding centuries. The preoccupation of the earliest Christian writers tended to be with the rebuttal of Gnostic claims about the meaning of the Transfiguration. The Gnostics claimed that at the Transfiguration the physical body of Christ was made spiritual and denied his humanity. Origen tried to find a way to emphasise the spiritual dimension of what had happened without slipping into dualism. There was a strong interest in the East in the Transfiguration as a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The Cappadocians explored the idea that the 'glory' with which Christ shone was his divinity made visible. Some of these ideas found their way into Western exegesis through the Latin Fathers, but in the nature of things, their nuances in the Greek were hard to render and imperfectly transmitted. The contribution of the medieval West and in particular that of Franciscan and Dominican theologians has not previously been traced. This is the subject of Canty's new study.

He approaches his story chronologically as far as possible, taking each theologian in turn, from Hugh of St. Cher, to Alexander of Hales, Gueric of St. Quentin, John of la Rochelle, Albert the Great, Bonaventure and finally Aquinas. There is a sensitivity throughout to the significant shifts of emphasis from a Christology in which the Saviour's earthly and human life are emphasised, to the more abstract metaphysical concerns of high scholasticism.

The problem is that medieval study of the Transfiguration does not readily form a coherent story. It was touched on, even wrestled with, by these authors, but it never developed, at least in the West, the clear focus which would have made it a major topic of controversy. And there was nothing like controversy for prompting the scholastic inventiveness which was capable of really taking the theology forward. Nor does there seem to have been the prompting of a pastoral need to be met. This remained something of a peripheral subject.