

repeats this idea in a more general form: “While we might see certain ‘instincts’ as ‘drives’ towards the good, they are pre-rational” (259n3). However, the hylomorphic structure of the human person, in my view, entails that the inclinations that man shares with other creatures are subsumed into the reality of the rational soul—the form of human being—and thus can never be simply pre-rational in his case. While the natural inclinations are not the result of deliberate choice, they do nevertheless seem to pertain to what Thomas means by simple willing (*simplex voluntas*).

One final observation: this book is written by a philosopher. Its deliberations begin in earnest with a discussion of “thick” and “thin” concepts, a distinction gleaned from analytic philosophical analysis. The first thinker quoted in this regard is Bernard Williams, an analytic philosopher. Given the sharp distinction between philosophy and theology that is the hallmark of much contemporary philosophy—lamentable and all as it is—it would seem that, as a matter of strategy, it would have been more effective for the author to keep a distance from quoting Catholic Church teaching. At any rate, as John Paul II points out in *Fides et Ratio*, a harmony obtains between faith and reason so that right reason naturally coheres with what the faith teaches us. A chance to evangelize contemporary culture has perhaps been lost precisely by the author’s explicit recourse to faith. This would be a pity, since his obvious philosophically ecumenical spirit deserves to be reciprocated. N·V

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**Priestly Celibacy: Theological Foundations** by Gary Selin (*Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016*), 210 pp.

PRIESTLY CELIBACY IS one of the more intriguing topics in Western Culture for a number of reasons, the largest being our preoccupation with ideas about and experiences of our human sexual power. A culture so obsessed with sexual activity becomes equally obsessed with those who choose to abstain from it. This cultural stance gives rise to a cynical curiosity about celibates, one that asks repeatedly, “how could you possibly live such a life?” and in the end says, “I don’t believe you are living such a life; no one could.” Selin’s book may not heal such cynicism, but it will anoint the intellect with a balm, making such cynicism difficult even to contemplate. Celibacy *is* livable—but

in a supernatural way. Specifically, celibacy is livable for normal men who have first become stunned by the depth and beauty of Christ and have heard him ask one question: “May I live my spousal mysteries over again in your body for the sake of the Church?” Hence, the normal is taken up into the supernatural.

When I was a teenager, I used to think men became priests, and hence celibate, because they “couldn’t get girls to like them,” because they thought, “I cannot get married; I might as well become a priest.” This was the “plan B” theory of celibacy. Were there men who chose celibate priesthood as “plan B”? Probably there were—and still are. But in light of Selin’s work, we see clearly how such a choice is not the gift that is being offered to priests. The gift that a priest is receiving and the choice he is making in response is a positive one, not a negative one. The gift is a man’s choice to allow Christ to live his spousal mystery over again in his body, as Blessed Dom Marmion once said so beautifully. The celibate priest receives a gift. It is the gift of participation in Christ’s own availability to serve the needs of his Bride, the Church. The priest is taken up into the spousal mysteries of Christ, his relationship to the Church, and his own carrying into the present a foretaste of heavenly freedom. With the celibate priest, Christ shares his own singular heart, thus effecting a living configuration between priest and Christ, a dynamic self-giving of priest toward the Church, and a prophetic sign for the baptized to contemplate as it hints at the single-heartedness of all in heaven.

Selin’s work could usher in a new day in seminary curriculum on priestly life and identity. Building upon the classic studies of celibacy by Cochini, Heid, and now John Paul II, along with the Second Vatican Council and Paul VI, Selin unveils an image of celibacy that carries profound theological depth and surprising personal and spiritual promise. In under two hundred pages, the author explores the theological history of celibacy, placing its vibrancy within close proximity to the mystery of Christ’s self-donation to his Church. For Selin, following *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965), celibacy exists as a supernatural good within a Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological context. Viewing it from within such a context is the good news for seminary studies, as this book gives the reader a clear and engaging intellectual grasp of the nature of this disciplined charismatic life. Selin acknowledges the institutional benefits of priestly celibacy for the Church, but what comes to the fore most in his research is the personal motivation for such a life. This emphasis upon a mature personal motive for entering the celibate priesthood reveals

more clearly the true divine intent behind such a call: personal happiness in the service of the Church. Celibacy is not superior to marriage in some moral way (i.e., “universal call to holiness”), but it remains a gifted theological life offered to those who can “accept it” (Matt 19:12). Selin reviews the anti-corporeal corruptions of some views of celibacy, articulates the meaning of “ritual purity,” and describes how celibacy is the priest’s own embrace of purity of heart. This purity of heart is a gift from God and is effected in practice through the priest’s charitable presence in ministry.

The book also traces the history of clerical continence as it paved the way for celibacy becoming the priestly norm in the Latin Church, secured by the teachings of the Council of Trent. Rather paradoxically, as celibacy becomes the presbyteral *norm*, there blooms a deeper theological grasp of its gifted nature, rather than it simply being a disciplinary imposition. As the theological history unfolds (papal teaching, Max Thurian, Odo Casel, Cardinal Alfons Maria Stickler, etc.), Selin does an effective job of helping the reader notice the ever-growing clarity in the Church’s mind that celibacy is a man’s share in Christ’s own embrace of loving availability to the Father and the Church. And further, due to the rich historical and theological research on celibacy, the Church comes to grasp that celibacy secures a deeper freedom in priests so they can abide in “close identification with Christ.” What Selin gives to seminarians and their formators is a context within which to explore the gift of celibacy as an opening to both intellectual and affective union with Christ.

Selin recognizes that celibacy is neither part of the essence of priesthood nor necessary for its functioning, but rather a way of embodying priesthood that yields rich veins of spiritual ore benefiting both priest and Christ’s Bride, the Church. Priestly celibacy is a share in Christ’s own radical availability to serve the needs of the Bride, and consequently, the priest becomes oriented to Christ as to a font from which he receives the grace to live such radical availability himself. This availability benefits the Church as it receives the ministrations it desires from a man who is possessed by the singular heart of Christ in his own love of the Bride. Finally, the celibate priest carries to his people, in his own body, a sign of the relative value of all that is on earth. In his priestly celibacy, he prophetically points to the fulfillment of all human desire; fulfillment ultimately reached in God alone. The celibate presents to the married layman a true revelation that, after death, the believer is no longer taken up into sacramental marriage, but into its origin: the marriage between

Christ and his Church. Though it is a rich analogy, the nuptial image for priestly celibacy is not sufficient to express the mystery of priestly self-sacrifice, so Selin also explores the meaning of priesthood under the rubrics of Head–Body distinction, Friend of the Bridegroom, Spiritual Father, and Good Shepherd.

The book unfolds in four chapters, tracing the development of priestly celibacy, its place in magisterial teaching, its intellectual and spiritual renewal when understood in its Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological meanings, and its relationship to the Eucharist, on which I will make one further note. In light of the eschatological truths present in both priestly celibacy (Christ’s own way of being among us and his Bridegroom status in Heaven) and the Eucharist (the anticipation of heaven and the wedding feast of the Lamb), the priestly identity is less ambiguously grasped in the celibate state than in the married priesthood. In the celibate state, the priest clearly is configured to the Christ, who is for the one Bride, the Church. As Benedict XVI noted in *Sacramentum Caritatis*: “The choice of celibacy has first and foremost a nuptial meaning; it is a profound identification with the heart of Christ the Bridegroom who gives his life for the His Bride” (§24). This truth is most clearly expressed as the celibate priest is taken up into the Eucharistic sacrifice as one who is configured to Christ’s own self donation to the Bride. It is this donation that fuels the pastoral charity that is a priest’s own way of being.

This book is a positive, inspiring, and scholarly feast with which the seminarian and priest can study and pray. It contributes a dynamic and fascinating theological understanding of priestly celibacy as it focuses us upon celibacy’s hope: to share in Christ’s own holy way of living and serving. N&V

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**Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation, and the Vision of God** by Simon Francis Gainé, O.P. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), viii + 221pp.

AT THE OUTSET of the first chapter, Simon Francis Gainé asks: “Was the Word made flesh blessed from the very first moment of the incarnation with the vision of the essence of the triune God in his human mind?” (3). In particular, did Christ possess the beatific vision