

not least, the works of Thomas should be studied with reference to the patristic sources—especially those of Greek origin. This should be done without any artificial separation of Thomas’ heritage into philosophy and theology. There is a need to investigate how the patristic theology, which already contained an interpretation of Hellenistic philosophy, influenced Aquinas’ doctrine.

Just as Thomas was recognized by the Byzantines well before he received his appreciation in the West, so the inspiration to undertake such an endeavor may come from the works of an orthodox scholar.

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Morwenna Ludlow. *Gregory of Nyssa: Ancient and (Post)modern*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Dr. Morwenna Ludlow, a renowned researcher in the history and theology of the early Christian Church, has, in her two books to date,<sup>1</sup> been engaged in developing a conception of the significance and relevance of ideas of the patristic period for modern theology. The second of these books, to which I would like to turn the reader’s attention in this review, was first published in 2007. Still, it has been reprinted twice already—most recently in the paperback edition of April 2013, presumably targeting a wider readership. This fact encourages me to ask the question: what reason has driven the publisher to want to issue it again and again?

In this comprehensive and up-to-date study of Gregory of Nyssa’s heritage, Morwenna Ludlow has tried to approach the figure of Gregory of Nyssa by relating him to the notion of “elusiveness,” which she has elevated into a leitmotif for her entire work. From the outset, the author draws our attention to the intensity and contradictoriness of the Nyssean’s thought: indeed, it is precisely the latter’s elusive character that makes his legacy attractive for both researchers of the patristic period and modern theologians. Ludlow points out that Gregory of Nyssa has attracted the

1. The first of these books is Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal Salvation: Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). The other is the subject of this review.

attention of individuals involved in entirely different branches of modern theology, ranging from conservative evangelicals to radical feminists.

The author explores the elusive nature of Gregory of Nyssa's work by emphasizing a number of discrepancies in how his treatises have been perceived. Was he simply a "descendant" of the Hellenistic philosophical tradition, or a much more complex figure? Which of the ancient philosophical schools did he adhere to? Was he a Platonist? According to the author, it is particularly difficult to unravel Gregory's Christology. Was he a monophysite, dyophysite or a forerunner of the Chalcedon council? Some researchers view him as having been a mystic, while for others he was a philosopher. Although he was a defender of the Nicean Creed, Gregory taught about universal salvation (*apokatastasis*). Despite the fact that he authored a treatise consistently defending virginity, we do know for certain that he was married. Analyzing the scientific and theological literature, Morwenna Ludlow comes to the opinion that Gregory of Nyssa should be described not in terms of "either . . . or . . . ," but in terms of "both . . . and . . . " (280).

The book is divided into four main sections: Trinitology ("The Doctrine of the Trinity"), Christology ("God Became Human for our Salvation"), gender studies ("Sex, Gender and Embodiment") and theology ("Theology"). The method of the author consists in studying different interpretations of these central themes of Gregory's heritage, and investigating how they have been presented by a wide variety of contemporary scholars and theologians, from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The wide range of issues on which authors of different studies have focused, and the diversity of their approaches, leads Ludlow to treat the tradition of interpreting the heritage of Gregory of Nyssa in a rather selective manner. Even though an enormous contribution to reconstructing and rediscovering the heritage of Gregory has been made by such pillars of 20<sup>th</sup> century patrology as Werner Jaeger and Ekkehard Mühlenberg, Morwenna Ludlow's attention is rather given over to more recent authors. Her focus on Anglophone readings of Gregory in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries is not caused, however, by a bias against continental schools of patrology and theology (which have been immensely influenced by such figures as Jean Daniélou), but by her belief that it is in this time and this ideological environment that serious changes have occurred in respect of how theological and scholarly literature perceives the heritage of the Holy Fathers, especially in the context of overcoming the opposition between Eastern and Western traditions in Christianity (7). Her aim is to under-

stand, through the prism of contemporary readings of Gregory, our relation to the ancient tradition.

The author neither challenges nor contests the value of the works of the established authors. Her object is rather to outline the productive interaction between the historical and theological readings of Church Fathers. The author admits, actually, that she is not interested in the ideas of Gregory as such (5), but only in the history of their interpretation. The book is thus part of her larger project of investigating contemporary readings of the Fathers. She discusses the relationship of these readings to the traditional normative and authoritative understanding of the legacy of the Fathers.

Ludlow's methodology is linked to the specific approach she adopts—namely, Harold Marcuse's *reception history*. This methodology consists in studying the perception of meanings and/or the objects that embody them, as well as their place within the framework of historical events, in which they are located by their interpreter. This approach retraces the diversity of historical contexts in which the observers, historians, and other interpreters were trying to understand the meaning of some given historical event or object—their ultimate aim having been that of making this event significant for their contemporaneous lives. The particular "reception history" that Ludlow investigates concerns the value attributed to Gregory of Nyssa by recent theologians and scholars. However, I am afraid that such a methodology, applied to this particular subject, turns Ludlow's book into a kind of "doxography" of the research tradition connected with Gregory of Nyssa, and this in spite of her own declaration that such an analysis promises to shed new light on some aspects of Gregory's thought.

The book's structure reflects the process through which interpretations of Gregory of Nyssa developed. In the first chapter, Ludlow deals with issues of Trinitology, as being the most foundational questions in the context of establishing the Christian Credo. The author also analyzes here the traditional interpretations of those issues. In the second chapter, Ludlow discusses readings of Gregory's Christology, contrasting those who claim that Gregory's stance conforms with the standards of the Christian dogmas with the interpretations that claim that the Nicean's views may serve as a counterexample with respect to the authoritative tradition of the Church Fathers. The subject of the third part is gender. In this, the author tends to circumvent the idea of the normative tradition of the Church. Postmodern readings on Gregory of Nyssa are comprehensively analyzed in the fourth part of the book. Ludlow discusses there various interpretations of Gregory's philosophy of language, as well as of his understand-

ing of theology. In this part, the author goes back to issues of Trinitology, discussing them now from the points of view of postmodernism and apophatic theology.

In my opinion, the analyses of the book overlook one very important aspect of Gregory's thought: his anthropological system. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that, without his anthropology, Gregory cannot be considered the prominent philosopher and theologian of his era he actually was.

In the first and fourth parts of the book, Ludlow delineates the interactions between traditional readings of Byzantine thought and its modern interpretation. She gives detailed attention to such representatives of modern science and theology as Thomas F. Torrance and John Zizioulas in the first part, and to Scot Douglass and John Milbank in the fourth. The text contains a number of quotations from their works. This detailed textual analysis of how modern authors read, quote and comment on Gregory of Nyssa is useful for demonstrating how the legacy of the Cappadocian is being used. Only this kind of analysis can show how a discussion of Gregory of Nyssa's theology shades almost imperceptibly into the commentator's own theology, or how historical investigations into the Church Fathers can come to be closely entwined with the most recent ways of practising theology.

The author tries to present the book as being neither just a compendium of opinions, nor simply a narrative of reception history. She often criticizes the authors discussed in the book, pointing to their textual inaccuracies or overreaching interpretations. In my opinion, though, this is the main weakness of the book, in that it involves confusing scholarly (patrologic) and theological approaches to the heritage of the Holy Fathers.

The author's methodology focuses rather more on the readership and interpretations of Gregory than on his own ideas. One may wonder, however, what there is to be learnt that is really new from examining the attitudes of modern theological authors towards the Tradition. The purpose of the book is to examine the Tradition in action. But it is well known that each generation understands the Scriptures through interpretations that are widely present in, and accepted by, that same generation. Morwenna Ludlow asks whether this is also true in respect of Gregory of Nyssa. But is it really the case that we ourselves can only ever read Gregory of Nyssa through the lens of modern or postmodern interpretations?

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