

Book Reviews

Guillerma Díaz Muñoz, *Teología del misterio en Zubiri*, paperbound, Herder (Barcelona), 2008, 221 pages, 17.8€.

The author of this fine book, Guillerma Díaz Muñoz, is well-known to readers of *The Xavier Zubiri Review* for her contributions to Zubiri research and exposition in both mathematics and theology. The subject of the present work is Zubiri's essay "El ser sobrenatural: Dios y la deificación en la teología paulina", originally published in *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios* in 1944. But it is not just an exposition of this seminal essay by Zubiri; rather it is an exposition of the essay's themes in light of Zubiri's later philosophical development and his great theological trilogy *Hombre y Dios*, *Problemas fundamentales de la historia de las religiones*, and especially *Cristianismo*. Thus it develops some of Zubiri's most penetrating insights into Christianity and what is really essential to the Christian faith. She notes:

Zubiri maintains that Christianity consists in acts that are "numerically identical" to those constituting Christ's own life, which culminated in His death and resurrection. The action that founded Christianity, by Christ, does not consist primarily in the creation of an organization with some doctrines, rites and moral norms, but in the action of forming "not symbolically, but really and truly" His death and resurrection itself in the being of the disciple. Christ founded Christianity primarily by *making* Christians, i.e., other "Christs, sons, as He is, of the Father". [p. 94-95, reviewer's translation].

Thus the book looks deeply into the relationship of sacramental theology with the life of a Christian, and in particular, how the sacraments—especially the Eucharist—are essential to the very nature of Christianity:

Zubiri, starting from his eminently Paschal conception of Christianity, sets out to demonstrate that the mass and the Eucharist are the real heart of the Christian mystery. And to do this he points out that in them there is an intrinsic relation between the death and resurrection of Christ on one hand, and the death to sin and regeneration of the Christian on the other. [p. 96, reviewer's translation].

The book begins with a discussion of the relationship of Zubiri's thought with that of the *Mysterientheologie* of Odo Casel (1886-1948) and Viktor Warnach (1908-1970), both associated with the Benedictine Abbey of Maria Laach near Andernach, Germany. (The Abbey is well-known for its leading role in the Liturgical Movement of the first half of the 20th century.) Professor Díaz Muñoz has made an in-depth study of Zubiri's research into the work of these two Benedictines, as well as his own commitment to a spiritual way of life through his profession, together with his wife, as a Benedictine oblate in Paris in 1938. As background to Zubiri's original essay, the book also includes a very enlightening discussion of *mysterion* in St. Paul's thought and its importance in the work of the Eastern theologians especially. The word *mysterion* was translated by the Latins as *sacramentum*, which does not really capture the original meaning (a *sacramentum* was an oath taken by Roman soldiers), though it does avoid the associations of *mysterion* with the Eleusinian rites of Demeter or Ceres. The book includes the complete text of the original essay, as it appeared in *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios*, and a useful bibliography.

Overall this book is an invaluable addition to Zubiri scholarship which should be read by all with an interest in any aspect of Zubiri's philosophy, but especially those with an interest in his theology.

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Francisco Ortega, *La teología de Xavier Zubiri*, Huelva: Editorial Hergué, Second edition, 2005, paperbound, 397 pages, 15.05€.

This book is an exposition of Zubiri's major theological ideas, including the relationship of Zubiri's thought with other well-known theologians. Though the book was published several years ago, it is reviewed here because of its relevance for the systematic theology project discussed in the Editorial. The author of the book carefully prepares the ground for his explanation of Zubiri's theology by first discussing Zubiri's philosophy of sentient intelligence and essence. He devotes considerable space to this (about 150 pages), putting Zubiri into historical context.

The main part of the book is its detailed exposition of Zubiri's theology (about 150 pages). It is divided into four main sections, as is appropriate for the subject: the theological dimension, the human person and religion, the Divine person (absolutely absolute reality), and faith (man's access to God). The exposition is extremely well done and easy to comprehend. It takes the reader carefully through the steps from the basic human experience of reality and the power of the real, the notion of religion and that of deity, and shows how all of these are linked. As an example consider the following:

In summary, the form of reality which every man adopts is grounded in the power of the real manifested in sentient intellection. Man is a mode of being that is absolute but which is relative to the real in which he is. This we call "religation"...Man has to adopt one form of reality among others that are possible. This is not an obligation (an ought); rather he inevitably begins to do it because he is an open energetic system (though substantive) insofar as he receives an input which destabilizes the energetic equilibrium of his system. To restore it he must realize an output. (p. 209, reviewer's translation)

We must search in every case for a viable response to any input, and the experience of this search, of the groundedness (fundamentality) of the power of the real, Zubiri terms "theological experience". *Theological* of course is distinguished from *theological*. As the author points out, *theological* refers to manifestation of the power of the real, whereas *theological* pertains to God as ground of the power of the real, and is thus a later conceptual development. As the author explains,

...deity is experienced as religating power. And what is the ground of this power? God. Deity is the way of access to God. To be sure, deity is not something distinct from the world and real things. Deity is reality in its condition as religating power. And this is not some isolated fact, whether the atheist would like it so or not; rather it is inscribed in things. For Zubiri the history of religion has been the slow and progressive discovery of the dimensions that the power of the real possesses. (p. 211, reviewer's translation).

As is also appropriate in any theological discussion, the author explains Zubiri's distinction between *being* and *reality*, as is of great importance to our understanding of deity and God. "God cannot be apprehended primordially as "subsistent being" or "supreme being" (as St. Thomas and Duns Scotus presumed), but as supreme reality. For this reason Zubiri says that God is beyond being." (p. 241-242, reviewer's translation). After a discussion of the ways of justifying the idea of God, the author goes on to cover the characteristics of Divine reality (as they can be known) and then faith as a surrender, as a "giving oneself up to". He notes:

Faith is not just assent to the truth of a statement, any more than revelation is a solemn judicative dictate that is communicated externally. Revelation is the manifestation of the reality of God, and faith is a surrender which admits this revelation; therefore one adheres to this faith inasmuch as it is a personal, transcendent and transcendifying font of all that there is. (p. 270-271, reviewer's translation).

The last part of the book discusses Zubiri in the context of several 20th century theologians including Brunner, Bultmann, Tillich, Bonhoeffer, and Rahner. Others such as Barth are discussed in various places in the text of this part and other parts.

There is far too much in this book to summarize here, and that is not the point of a book review in any case. The book is highly recommended to all who are interested in Zubiri's thought, his theology, or theology in general.

Thomas B. Fowler

Note to readers: both of these books can be purchased online from Casa del Libro, Madrid, www.casadellibro.com.