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REVIEWS

The Notion of Heresy in Greek Literature in the Second and Third Centuries By Alain Le Boulluec, edited by David Lincicum and Nicholas Moore, translated by A.K.M. Adam, Monique Cuany, Nicholas Moore, Warren Campbell, and Jordan Daniel Wood, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022, pp. 736, £150.00, hbk

We are offered at last a translation into English of the landmark work of Alain Le Boulluec, originally his doctoral thesis published in two volumes in French in 1985, analysing how 'heresy' was a notion developed essentially by Christians writing in Greek in the second and third centuries, as they struggled to establish 'orthodoxy' against rival groups and competing conceptions of Christian faith and practice. Walter Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* had to wait the same length of time for an English translation in 1971; just as that translation gave new impetus to research in the field of ancient Christian heresy/orthodoxy in the 1970s and 1980s, it may be hoped that this translation of Le Boulluec's work will do the same for our generation.

This English edition renders Le Boulluec's text in its entirety in a single volume. An editorial preface is provided by David Lincicum and Nicholas Moore, and the author himself adds a new introduction outlining how research has evolved since 1985 and offering a retrospective analysis of minor flaws or omissions in his original thesis. Two questions arise for the reviewer: Does the translation do justice to the original work? And is the thesis persuasive?

It is not easy to sustain a team effort of translation without inconsistencies and varieties in style or quality, but the editors and translators are to be commended for a remarkably coherent and accurate result. Still, several problems remain. Inconsistencies do occur, such as rendering the name '*Père du Tout*' variably as the 'Father of All' or 'the father of the entirety' (pp. 212–3). Also, in translating French to English, it is tempting to take the literalist shortcut, and one can often hear the underlying French turn of phrase where a more idiomatic English expression would be preferable.

There is, however, a more serious concern where some passages make an incoherent use of an important term. This results from the editorial principle to use existing published translations of ancient works into English, where available. The quotation of the ancient text occasionally does not match the discussion that follows. For instance, *charin* is translated as 'bounty' when it needs to be 'grace' (*grâce*) to match the ensuing commentary (p. 54). Elsewhere (pp. 274–5), Clement's term *perilēptikōs* is translated as 'comprehensively', but the author explicitly goes on to explain that this malleable term in this case means 'superficially'. More confusingly, we hear of 'Baptist Pharisees' as a single party in a quotation from Justin's *Dialogue*, 80, presumably copying from Thomas B. Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr* (FC 6, 1948), but the discussion then treats 'Baptists' and 'Pharisees' as distinct parties (pp. 69–72).

Now for the thesis itself. Across 600 pages, we read how four major figures of the early Church – Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen – reshaped existing

Greek and Jewish notions of philosophical 'schools' and 'sects' (*haireses*), teachers and 'successors' (*diadochoi*), rationality and ethics, to forge a distinctly Christian notion of 'heresy'. The term *hairesis* has various meanings in the New Testament alone: it can designate different 'groups' in Judaism, and the Christians are called 'the sect (*hairesis*) of the Nazarenes', a term Paul rejects (*Acts* 24:5, 14), referring it instead to dissident factions among Christians (e.g., 1 *Cor* 11:19). Le Boulluec charts in great detail how *hairesis* develops into a distinctly pejorative term in the second century, when Christians become an organised society, losing hope of an imminent *Parousia*, and adopting pagan models of thought to address the wider world.

Justin Martyr is trumpeted as the single originator of this Christian notion of 'heresy', who labels heresies according to their founders in a debased parody of philosophical schools. The key shift, the author argues, is Justin's focus on doctrinal truth, against which errors must be judged 'heretical'. This doctrinal concern is inherited by Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen, even where they diverge on certain questions and strategies: Irenaeus stresses the 'rule of faith' common to Christians around the whole world against the specious arguments (*pithanologia*) and distortions in gnostic Scriptural exegesis; Clement is remarkably indulgent towards philosophers in his search for true knowledge (*gnosis*); Origen advocates sanctions such as excommunication but advises caution before condemning anyone as heretical. Yet there are common themes: heresies are blasphemy, an opposition to God; heresies twist the meaning of Scripture; heresies are assimilated to paganism; heresies lead to moral corruption; above all, heretics claim the name 'Christian' but have no right to do so.

Thus, the notion of heresy was a polemical tool 'invented' to exclude certain beliefs, and those who propagated them, from the Christian fold. The fundamental 'heresiological paradox', argues Le Boulluec, is that the more these 'orthodox' writers sought to exclude 'heretics' as an alien 'other', assimilating them to pagans, Jews, and to one another, the more it is obvious that heresy was a problem *internal* to Christianity. In depriving heretics of a legitimate claim to be called 'Christian', the orthodox party unwittingly revealed that heretics were already Christians, simply holding differing views and practices.

This 2022 English edition reminds us that the great merit of Le Boulluec's work was to have shown the inner workings of the polemical tactics of the early orthodox writers. In 1985, this thesis appeared fresh and exciting; now nearly 40 years on, however, it may seem somewhat predictable and dated, enjoying a kind of new 'orthodoxy' of its own among many scholars of early Christianity.

Perhaps it is time for a re-appraisal. Le Boulluec seems to consider 'polemic' as merely a pejorative term; he prefers to seek 'forms' rather than 'content' and to speak of 'heresiological representations' rather than accept any 'essentialist' categories. But the author's frequent denunciations of the orthodox writers as 'unfair', 'tendentious', 'insidious', even 'malevolent', start to grate on the reader. The author protests that '[his] aim here is not, of course, to transfer the "truth" from one side to the other' (p. 225) yet we are left with the suggestion of a conclusive reversal: 'what if the logic of the "lunatic" is right, what if the "heretic" is telling the truth' (p. 589).

Perhaps we should let the orthodox writers speak with their own voice again and note how sincerely and truthfully they engage with their opponents. The lack of extant heretical texts leads Le Boulluec to depend on arguments from silence to assert discrepancies with heresiological accounts. But, if we take the example of Irenaeus, we

know from the Nag Hammadi papyri that he quotes his gnostic sources verbatim, and he is vindicated regarding heretics' selectivity of the Scriptures (pp. 189–90) by the fact that Marcion's canon does eliminate parts of Paul and Luke (as corroborated by Tertullian, *Praescr.* 38). Moreover, Le Boulluec misses the fact that Irenaeus's principle of explaining a difficult Scriptural passage by clearer ones (pp. 241–2) is taken over from Homeric discourse; it is not a merely apologetic or heresiological tool but a venerable and positive interpretive norm.

Perhaps we can also listen more carefully to some otherwise lost voices, such as the victims of the sexually predatory gnostic Mark the Magician. Irenaeus's strong denunciations of Mark cannot be dismissed as mere 'rumours' or 'gossip' (pp. 131–2), for he relies on the testimony of converts who had themselves suffered abuse. Today, we are more likely to be sensitive to that link between moral deviance and doctrinal deviance: witness the recent case of the Dominican Philippe brothers and Jean Vanier, even within the Church.

Overall, this is an impressive work of erudition and a great achievement in translation. The complicated discussions and use of Greek terms untranslated would put this out of reach of many undergraduates, but for fellow researchers, there is a wealth of information and analysis, which should spur new reflection on a contested theme.

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Thomas Aquinas as Spiritual Teacher Edited by Michael A. Dauphinais, Andrew Hofer OP, and Roger W. Nutt, Sapientia Press at Ave Maria University, Florida, 2023, pp. xii+366, $39.95, pbk

This substantial volume assembles some 13 papers in celebration of the 80th birthday of Archbishop Joseph Augustine Di Noia OP. In one of the best (pp. 303–19: '*Quantum Potes, Tantum Aude*'), he himself argues in favour of the 'mystagogy' (p. 318) latent in St Thomas's exposition of *sacra doctrina*, an idea which, as one recalls, was not of great importance in the heyday of pre-Conciliar neo-Thomism. The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (as he discloses) is at work on a programme of renewing liturgical formation throughout the Church, with the 'modest collaboration' of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the CDF), of which he is currently Adjunct Secretary.

Born in the Bronx, Archbishop Di Noia studied with the Dominicans at Providence College, Rhode Island, before joining the US Eastern Dominicans. In 1980 he earned a doctorate at Yale ('Catholic Theology of Religions and Interreligious Dialogue'), for which he records gratitude for guidance by George Lindbeck and William Christian, the best-known Yale professors at the time. He taught dogmatic theology at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington for 20 years and served as editor-in-chief of *The*