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Main content

Article Preview :

Michael J. Dodds

The Unchanging God of Love: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability.

Washington, DC: Catholic University of America

Press 2008.

Pp. 286.

US\$34.95 (paper ISBN-13: 978-0-8132-1539-6).

Aside from its specific focus on the notion of divine immutability in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, this book more generally explores the function of philosophy in theology. Dodds explains that Aquinas held divine immutability not only as a tenet of Christian faith, but as a notion entirely coherent with the metaphysics of subsistent being (*ipse esse subsistens*). Contrarily, many contemporary theologians hold that divine immutability implies an uncaring, indifferent God. Hence the motivation for this revised edition of Dodd's book, which was originally published in 1986.

Dodds begins by examining immutability as perceived in finite creatures before proceeding to show how immutability is predicated analogously of God. Utilizing over thirty synonyms for immutability, Aquinas sometimes applies these synonyms to perfections in creatures and other times to imperfections. Mobility, for example, is a perfection within the hierarchy of animate beings, but a defect in love which calls for the steadfastness and fidelity of an intelligent being. Similarly, human knowledge requires the cooperation of both passive and active intellects, and therefore it involves a mixture of mutability and immutability. In the case of finite beings, whether or not mobility is preferable depends on the kind of motion and the being of which it is affirmed or denied. Since mobility is required by the very nature of living things, their motion allows them to imitate divine perfection and mirror the infinite goodness...

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