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## ANNOTATION

Piderit, John J. and Melanie M. Morey, eds. *Teaching the Tradition: Catholic Themes in Academic Disciplines*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Ready access to millennia of Catholic wisdom is a challenge to anyone's sanity and discipline, whether an academic or a student. Our spiritual hunger, voluminous sources over centuries, and digital speed can create a frustrating chemistry. Piderit and Morey deliver brief, jargon-free essays from 21 scholars who write from several disciplines.

The university is celebrated as an effective platform that connects Catholic wisdom to everyday life. Faculty are respected for their disciplinary commitments and not as persons destined "to spend time in seminaries or motherhouses" (7). Thus, both the art and the practice of Catholic wisdom within academic disciplines are considered. This is not simply a cookbook for curricular enthusiasts. It is a guidebook for teaching academics, regardless of their institution's affiliated religious congregation. Piderit and Morey argue that an integrated academic experience will produce a satisfying framework for understanding personal faith commitments as well as clarity about how faith informs reason rather than erasing or reducing it. Their anthology is divided into four parts: 1) foundations [of Catholic theology, anthropology and philosophy]; 2) the Catholic intellectual tradition in the humanities; 3) religious themes related to the sciences; and 4) the good life in the professions.

David Gentry-Akin from Saint Mary's College of California launches **Part 1** by blending spiritual experience, religious practices, and fundamental Catholic theology. He weds the classroom and the chapel. The femininity of Mary, the Mother of God, is studied, respectful of the popular piety that Christians display. Subsequently, Thomas Rausch, S.J.'s essay discusses the free-willed person in relationship to God the Creator, contrasting Catholic and Protestant perspectives. He describes Christian terms of interpersonal revelation from God to humans, including an emphasis on the essential vocation of persons to live in a community modeled on the community of God in the Holy Trinity.

Given these fundamentals of Catholicism, three essays then consider the disciplinary natures of theology and philosophy that integrate Catholic academic studies. Lawrence Cunningham proposes theology as academic study and teaching, distinct from pastoral or catechetical practices. He lists characteristics that dovetail with other disciplines, emphasizing the Holy Trinity and the church. He conceptualizes essential Catholic beliefs and illustrates how several thinkers have made them intelligible. Overall, and mindful of Rausch's theological anthropologies, Cunningham shows how Catholic theology explains, enacts, and promotes holiness. Part 1 concludes with two chapters on Catholic philosophy by Brian J. Shanley, O.P. and David B. Burrell, C.S.C. Overall, the authors explicate the teaching of St. John Paul II's encyclical *Faith and Reason* (1998) that "faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." Shanley provides an overview of integrated faith and reason across centuries, including St. Thomas Aquinas's ways for theology to

incorporate philosophy. Burrell excavates the current relevance of thirteenth-century Aquinas for us, showing how linguistic creativity and intercultural dialogue anticipate postmodern interests. Elsewhere, Burrell's analysis is complemented by a next generation classroom-scholar, Holly Taylor Coolman (*America Magazine* [12-18 August 2014]).

**Part 2** explores Catholic themes in literature, hermeneutics, politics, history, mathematics, and art. Here, this guidebook turns from foundations in Catholic theology and philosophy to intellectual connections with disciplines, including eight essays in the humanities. For example, Glenn W. Olsen's essay on "History in a Catholic Framework" discusses the Enlightenment hermeneutic of inevitable human progress and the Christian interpretive principle of providential drama. This contrast approximates an early Christian difference between Eusebius (Christian successes attest to God) and Augustine (Christian struggles attest to God). Olsen favors the latter, detailing current historical questions of secularization, globalization, and inculturation. Overall, he asserts that a Catholic framework for history should consider a culture's capacity to recognize God's work in Christ. This emphasis on providential drama, rather than only disciplinary norms of objectivity, is a substantial complication for Catholic historians.

**Part 3** relates religious themes to sciences, including psychology, evolutionary biology, environmental studies, and physics and astronomy. For example, William Stoeger, S.J. argues that current science and Catholic revelation cohere well, as long as each is properly understood. He explores misunderstandings and presuppositions of each realm in "Physics and Astronomy in a Catholic Framework." Stoeger, an astronomer and priest, links his discipline and the aforementioned foundational essays in Catholicism by Burrell, Cunningham, and Rausch. He considers popularly perceived conflicts between science and religion, noting corruptions of each realm's legitimate presuppositions by corresponding caricatures. Conversely, he explains the complementary competencies of each, more often describing the Catholic use of science. Stoeger concludes with a clear and detailed correlation of science's Big Bang and religion's Creation from Nothing. This is a fascinating analysis, not least because two thirds of Americans believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but are evenly split whether it is literally true or not (Pew Research Center, "Beyond Red versus Blue," 26 June 2014).

**Part 4** addresses "The Good Life in the Professions," including economics, education, medicine, and law. Patrick McKinley Brennan's "Law in a Catholic Framework," for example, analyzes Modernity v. Catholic tradition. He examines the necessary foundations of law, contrasting modern principles of voluntarism (consent of the governed) and positivism (recognized procedures and legislation) with Catholic assertion of Divine Wisdom that is manifest in the natural law (good ends to which humans are naturally inclined). This analysis includes the dramatic case of Buck v. Bell (1927), in which the United States Supreme Court and Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes upheld the State of Virginia's law for compulsory sterilization of mentally challenged persons. Thomas Aquinas is Brennan's champion in his probing integration of the complexities and nuances of the morality of laws that order communities of persons.