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Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology, edited by **Linda Zagzebski**. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993. Pp. vi and 290. \$32.95.

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This book is a major contribution to the ongoing debate over Reformed epistemology. An earlier effort was *Thomistic Papers IV*, edited by L. A. Kennedy (1988). The time is certainly ripe for a rejoinder by Reformed philosophers.

The views represented here run all the way from vigorous defenses of evidentialism and the classical foundationalism it implies (John Greco and Hugo Meynell) to a total rejection of both (James Ross). Two of the contributors (Philip Quinn and John Zeis) put forth substantial efforts toward finding significant common ground. Four authors argue for the role of the will, but in quite different ways (Thomas D. Sullivan, Patrick Lee, James Ross, and Linda Zagzebski herself). The volume thus reveals the fertility of contemporary Catholic reflection on the nature of religious knowledge.

It has the further merit of addressing versions of Reformed epistemology other than Alvin Plantinga's, such as those of Nicholas Wolterstorff, George Mavrodes, and William P. Alston (who, while not identifying himself as a Reformed epistemologist, regards the Reformed approach as a "close relative" of his own work on the nature of religious experience). The criticism of these thinkers is searching and sustained throughout; it suggests that there exists a diversity also among Reformed epistemologists, which is obscured at the moment by the dominance of Plantinga's highly developed position. For example, Meynell reads Wolterstorff as an anti-foundationalist, in contrast to Plantinga's expanded foundationalism, while Greco points up internalist features in Wolterstorff's account that are absent from Plantinga's. All the more reason, then, for a rejoinder from the Reformed camp.

In her Introduction Zagzebski points out, quite rightly, that some of the disagreements stem from theological issues raised by the Reformation, especially over the impact of the Fall on reason and will. In addition to these theological disagreements, I would argue, the debate to this point has labored under two other difficulties. First, Catholic and Reformed philosophers write out of deeply opposed philosophical traditions. Calvin is philosophically an Augustinian, and hence a Platonist, whereas Aquinas is an Aristotelian (his difficulties in accommodating Augustinian views of reason and the soul have been duly noted). Hence, Reformed thinkers are influenced by Augustine's "divine illuminism," a non-inferential approach to the knowledge of God, whereas Catholic thinkers are influenced by Aquinas's broadly empirical assumptions, on which there is nothing in the intellect that is not first in the senses. From this principle it follows that we must infer our natural knowl-

edge of God from aspects of our experience of the world; this is just what Aquinas does in his "Five Ways," the paradigm of natural theology. But the participants to the current debate generally ignore their philosophical pedigrees.

The second difficulty arises from the serious ambiguity of the phrase *belief in God* (likewise of *theistic beliefs*, *religious beliefs*), which is seldom noted. In one sense, *belief in God* means *belief that God exists* ("thin theism," Ross calls it); here the issue is whether this belief can be properly basic or requires, for its rationality, the evidential support of natural theology. In the other sense, *belief in God* is a synonym for *faith*. In this sense a *believer* (in the way that term is typically used) refers to one who has the specific virtue identified as *Christian faith*. In this sense, *belief in God* is *trust in God*, trust based on those beliefs about God that are exclusively revealed in the Bible. Such beliefs are not natural, widely shared *theistic* beliefs; they are accepted only by those who trust in God as he reveals himself, his love, and his redemptive purpose for humankind.

The title of this book, *Rational Faith*, suggests that its authors address the latter sense of belief, not the former. What actually happens, of course, is that they address both; but they do not pay enough attention to the epistemological implications of the difference. Still, there is an implicit, two-fold thesis that most of the authors share: first, the rationality of Christian faith depends on the rationality of the belief that God exists; second, the rationality of the belief that God exists depends on natural theology. Hence the central and ultimate issue is still the one Alvin Plantinga raised in his famous paper delivered in 1980 to the American Catholic Association entitled, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology" (1980). One might wish the present authors had addressed *that* objection separately from the question of the rationality of holding specifically *revealed* beliefs.

Plantinga is partly responsible for the ongoing confusion of the two issues, in the following way. The title of his opening salvo clearly implies that his attack is limited to *natural* theology (as the necessary basis for the rationality of the belief that God exists), and not addressed to the further question of *revealed* beliefs, the acceptance of which requires *Christian faith*. In offering the Reformed alternative to natural theology, *viz.*, that belief in God's existence can be properly basic, however, Plantinga cites as examples of properly basic belief instances, not only of someone's believing that God exists in widely realized natural circumstances (beholding the starry heavens) but also of someone's believing that God exists in the special circumstances realized only by Christian believers (believing "that God is the author of the Scriptures"). This move suggests, however, that the full epistemological account of belief in both kinds of circumstances will be pretty much the same. That suggestion, it seems to me, must be mistaken. To be sure, Plantinga himself

has clearly noted this ambiguity of *belief in God*, but he writes as if the difference which these two senses suggest for the two different mental states really makes no difference for the respective accounts of their rationality. And so, for the most part, do the authors in this book. By contrast, both Calvin, whom Plantinga cites, and Aquinas, whose thought provides the general framework for most of the authors in this book, observe this difference very carefully at the outset of their most famous works (*Institutes* I.i—iii; *S.T. I.I.1*). I will return to the implications of this ambiguity in what follows.

As noted earlier, Philip Quinn and John Zeis try to meet Reformed epistemology half-way. They diverge on how to do this, although they do agree with Plantinga that classical foundationalism needs a new defense along “quasi-inductive” lines. In “The Foundations of Theism Again” Quinn, unwilling to abandon natural theology, nevertheless finds room for compromise in Plantinga’s admission that the strength of the warrant for properly basic beliefs comes in degrees. If the warrant for someone’s properly basic theistic beliefs is weak, why can’t evidentialist arguments, asks Quinn, “improve the epistemic status” that these properly basic beliefs have for such a person?

In “Natural Theology: Reformed?” Zeis finds different room for compromise. He argues for the simple compatibility of evidentialism and properly basic beliefs by appealing to Alston’s distinction between a belief’s “being justified” in the properly basic way and the “process of justifying a belief” that mounts evidence in its support. However, Zeis focusses upon the justification of revealed beliefs, which he identifies as “manifestation beliefs.” Employing a Wittgensteinian analysis, he compares the “insularity” of such beliefs to that of non-religious beliefs like “I am sleepy,” the basis for which is the privileged access we have to our inner states. Natural theology, says Zeis, offers the (public) “conceptual framework” for the existence of God entailed by these beliefs, which can only be “privately” justified.

Zeis suggests that this feature of revealed beliefs insulates believers even from each other. But the prophets, apostles, and mystics (his paradigms) didn’t appear to have this problem, and they did not engage in natural theology. Why should other more ordinary believers feel the need to do so, any more than someone who is sleepy feels the need to offer public evidence of one’s belief that one is sleepy, just because of the privileged access one has to one’s inner state? Zeis is not convinced by Alston’s elaborate case for a non-evidentialist justification of “Christian mystical practice” (*Perceiving God*, 1991).

Zeis’s deeper concern, perhaps, which Quinn shares, is the insularity of Christian “manifestation beliefs” from the beliefs shared by the company of human beings in general, especially those influenced by the indifference and even hostility of contemporary secular Western culture. The “conceptual framework” of natural theology would, of course, offer common ground to

Christian believers and secular agnostics—except, of course, that many of the latter have abandoned the foundationalism it assumes. For those who share this motivation for natural theology, however, the resort to natural theology still begs the question raised by Reformed epistemology, *viz.*, whether a common conceptual framework isn't provided just as well by a properly basic belief in God that may be altogether natural and universal among human beings. Calvin maintains that every human mind is naturally disposed to acquire a non-inferential knowledge that God exists, which he identifies as a *sensus divinitatis*.

Plantinga typically defends the weaker claim that belief in God *can* be properly basic. Identifying Calvin's *knowledge of God* as *belief that God exists* suggests an oddity, *viz.*, of ascribing the belief that God exists to agnostics and atheists. This oddity arises, however, from the currently dominant analysis of knowledge as "justified true belief." If that analysis were not ringing in our ears (and it wasn't in Calvin's), the problem would be diminished. For then Calvin's claim resembles the contemporary "hermeneutic of suspicion," but in reverse: Human beings really do know that God exists, and atheists and agnostics are only extreme cases of a general self-interested motivation to avoid acknowledging what they really do know.

Of course, this way of reading Calvin is provocative. Nevertheless, it is a plausible way of construing a second thesis in the Reformed objection to natural theology. Plantinga formulates this thesis as follows: "Believing in the existence of God on the basis of rational argument is like believing in the existence of your spouse on the basis of the analogical argument for other minds—whimsical at best and unlikely to delight the person concerned." This thesis may be called the *moral* objection to natural theology. Its point is that arguing for the existence of God on the model of natural theology, if it is for the sake of warranting one's *religious* belief in God's existence, is an insult to him. For it reflects a willful refusal to recognize his immediate presence with human beings. If, indeed, God created human beings to live and move and think in his very own presence, what could be more insulting to him than such a refusal? As provocative as this objection to natural theology is, however, none of the book's contributors discusses it; only Zeis and Lee so much as even mention it. Why has so challenging an objection been so generally overlooked?

The essays by Hugo Meynell and John Greco offer Reformed epistemologists no room for compromise. They offer vigorous defenses of the foundationalism that underlies natural theology. In "Faith, Foundationalism, and Nicholas Wolterstorff," for example, Meynell argues that the foundations of knowledge lie not in certain beliefs but in the mental operations by which we attain the "full critical certainty" of any belief. Invoking the thought of Bernard Lonergan, he identifies these operations as: attending to one's expe-

rience; considering the range of plausible explanations for the belief occasioned by this experience; and weighing these explanations to determine which one is best. But these operations resemble the three steps of Carneades' skeptical probabilism more than the traditional realistic defenses of classical foundationalism. As such, they seem more appropriate as an account of the hypothesizing of scientific theorizing than of the rather different status that religious beliefs have in human life and experience. Perhaps natural theology just is more correctly construed as (broadly) *scientific* explanation (Aristotle comes to mind) than as the warrant for belief in God insofar as it functions as a *religious* belief.

In "Is Natural Theology Necessary for Theistic Knowledge?" Greco argues for the validity of natural theology from internalist assumptions about the nature of justification. Zagzebski points out in her "Introduction" that the issue between internalism and externalism runs deep in contemporary epistemology. It raises especially the question of the role of the will in providing the rationality of belief. That topic is directly addressed by no less than four of the authors. The sticking point is Plantinga's familiar refrain that "we just find ourselves with our beliefs," which suggests that our beliefs are not a matter of deliberation and choice. Here, more than ever, as we shall see, it is important to distinguish between the two senses of *belief in God*.

Three contributors, Sullivan, Lee, and Ross, concede to Reformed epistemology that evidence is inadequate for the warrant of religious beliefs and argue that an exercise of the will can make up the difference. This is plausible for revealed beliefs, since accepting them requires Christian faith, which is a virtue; and it is with these beliefs that Sullivan and Lee are mainly concerned. In "Resolute Belief and the Problem of Objectivity," Sullivan observes that the "resolute" way in which Christians typically hold their specifically Christian beliefs goes beyond the evidence for their truth. Still, appealing to Aquinas and Newman, he argues that they can be rationally affirmed without being known, in the strict sense required by evidentialism, if there is a moral decision to believe them. Hence the role of the will; for the decision to believe them arises from an obligation we have to believe what is necessary to believe for attaining our highest good, namely, reunion with God.

In "Evidentialism, Plantinga, and Faith and Reason," Lee argues differently, in a manner that recalls William James, that the certainty of Christian faith resembles the certainties of human faith, in its exceeding the available evidence: e.g., our confidence in our friends, prospective spouses, and dangerous ventures the like the mountain climber's jumping a chasm to save his life. Like people in such non-religious situations, Christian believers base their faith in God not only on the (limited) evidence that supports their beliefs but also on some good they naturally desire (the married state, returning alive

from a mountain climb, reunion with God), which will be available to them only if they hold their beliefs with sufficient certainty to act on them.

Ross, in "Cognitive Finality," makes his concession to Reformed epistemologists from the high ground of a more radical (Wittgensteinian?) anti-foundationalism. He faults them for their residual foundationalism, for being "still attached to much narrower conceptions of human knowledge than are required now. They seem still stooped over by the evidentialist burdens they have thrown down." Ironically, he thus casts Reformed epistemologists into the same company as their other critics in this volume. But Ross himself is haunted by evidentialist assumptions, as when he writes: "In a phrase, evidence permitting, we are warranted in reliances on what is apparently for our own good." Still, his justification of theistic beliefs rests mainly on a "commitment" of the will, and he extends his "cognitive voluntarism" to the justification of "thin theism" itself. Comparing religious communities of any kind to communities of artisans or craftspersons, he argues that the beliefs possessed by members of such communities have an internal rationality created by their commitments. Moreover, he is unfazed by the "insularity" problem, the implication that the criteria for such rationality is inaccessible to anyone outside the community that shares the specified commitment.

In her Introduction Zagzebski observes that "Catholic theology has commonly maintained that the will suffered [from the Fall] more than the intellect, and that our powers of reasoning can still hope to achieve much that points the way to Christian belief." But it is not clear that Lee's, Sullivan's, and Ross's accounts reflect that view. For, according to Lee and Sullivan, the will seems quite capable of making up the inadequacy of reason, while for Ross, reason yields (almost?) entirely to the will, for establishing the rationality of religious commitment. Their common reliance on the will for the justification of belief also elevates the power of the will in a way quite opposed to the Reformed view, as we shall see.

Zagzebski contributes perhaps the most original essay to this volume: "Religious Knowledge and the Virtues of the Mind." She complains that contemporary epistemologists (not only Reformed and Catholic!) mistakenly focus on the justification of particular beliefs or psychological belief-states. She proposes that the justification of belief, like that of a moral act, lies instead in the epistemic virtue of the agent, not in some narrower quality of the belief or belief-state itself. Taking her cue from the revival of aretaic ethics, she suggests that believing, "if not quite a form of acting, is strongly analogous to it." Now epistemic virtue, like moral virtue, is voluntary, in a broader (Aristotelian) sense than the sense of a discrete choice or commitment to hold certain beliefs, as defended by Sullivan, Lee, and Ross. Her proposal is promising, therefore, because it explains how we can be responsible for many of our beliefs that we cannot at the moment decide to have or not to have.

But there are prior questions. Which kind of belief? properly basic beliefs or non-basic beliefs? the natural belief that God exists, or the revealed beliefs that require faith for their acceptance? Zagzebski's theory of epistemic virtue throws no light on the answer to these questions.

If the reference is to the Christian faith that is required for accepting revealed beliefs, her theory of epistemic virtue would seem to be relevant, for such faith is (at least in part) an intellectual virtue. Plantinga describes it: "Belief in God means trusting in God, accepting God, accepting his purposes, committing one's life to him and living in his presence." His description is loaded with volitional elements. No wonder, for Reformed philosophers agree with Catholics that such faith is a *virtue*. Here, then, Zagzebski can make her strongest case against Plantinga's "just finding himself with certain beliefs." For, notably, Plantinga has not given us the kind of "free will defense" of faith that these volitional elements seem to imply, analogous to his defense of the creaturely origin of moral evil. Why not? I think it is because his concept of faith may reflect one side of an issue between Calvinists and Thomists, deeply disputed in their theological traditions. This issue is the relation between faith and grace and its implications for an understanding of divine predestination. Surprisingly, these topics have not yet surfaced in the disagreement between Catholic and Reformed epistemologists, nor does Zagzebski mention them.

Suppose, on the other hand, the reference is to what I have called the natural belief that God exists? Part of Plantinga's point in identifying *that* belief as a properly foundational belief (I suspect) is to give it the status of a paradigmatic foundational belief for all human beings. But the paradigmatic beliefs of classical foundationalism do not seem to be voluntary, even in the expanded sense allowed by a theory of epistemic virtue. Our belief that $2 + 2 = 4$ and our belief in an external world, for example, actually seem to be involuntary beliefs, analogous to Aristotle's involuntary actions, like being carried away by the wind. Suppose the devils believe that God exists in the properly basic way; does it make sense to say their belief is voluntary, and hence the result of epistemic virtue? If not, why should it be so for human beings?

Actually, Plantinga's ascription to the belief that God exists of the status enjoyed by the paradigmatic foundationalist beliefs seems to follow from what I earlier called the moral objection of Reformed epistemology to natural theology. For, according to Calvin, the primary responsibility of human beings is to acknowledge God's presence and his claims upon them. But that responsibility presupposes their knowledge that he exists. Ignorance, unless inexcusable, obviates responsibility; but ignorance of God, for Calvin, is inexcusable. If, however, the knowledge that God exists is non-basic and depends upon the weighing of evidence, or is otherwise voluntary in the way

required by epistemic virtue, then the original responsibility to acknowledge God's presence is diminished or even eliminated by a prior epistemic responsibility. For if that prior epistemic responsibility is not clearly moral in character, human beings are at a comfortable, perhaps even exculpating, remove from the original responsibility that Calvin describes.

All this is another way of pointing out how Reformed theology teaches that the will suffers more from the Fall than reason, but (I suspect) in a sense quite different from that meant by Zagzebski, in the comment quoted earlier from her Introduction. Because of the Fall, the will not only fails to seek happiness in God but even suppresses the knowledge that God exists. (Ross rejects the universalist interpretation of the famous passage in Romans to which Calvinists appeal here.) But one cannot suppress a knowledge one does not already possess, and one cannot possess such knowledge in any original, determinative way without its being in the foundations of one's thinking. Thus it begins to look as if Reformed epistemologists not only have more confidence in reason than in the will, but also have more confidence in reason than do Catholic thinkers; for they hold—or at least Plantinga does—that belief in God's existence is an *immediate* “deliverance of reason,” while Catholic thinkers hold that it must be derived as an *inference* from something else we know.

In the book's concluding essay, “Reflections on Christian Philosophy,” Ralph McInerny analyzes Plantinga's “irenic proposal” (in *The Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship*, 1990) to mend the long-standing disagreement between Reformed and Catholic philosophers over the nature of Christian philosophy. McInerny praises Plantinga for reminding us “that the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is pre-scientific.” This means that Christian philosophers have “antecedent dispositions” antithetical to those of naturalistic thinkers. Such antecedent dispositions can lead non-Christian philosophers to “think they have proofs or disproofs when they do not.” But part of Plantinga's proposal for Christian philosophy is precisely to include the propositions flowing from these theological dispositions in its actual content. This inclusion McInerny rejects. He thinks that such antecedent dispositions as divide theistic and naturalistic philosophers can only expose what must be open questions in philosophy, and that the most the theist can do is to show, by reason alone, that these questions must remain open, so far as (presumably even Christian) philosophy goes.

Hence, Plantinga's irenic proposal is unsuccessful; the impasse between the Reformed and Catholic concepts of Christian philosophy remains. Happily, McInerny and Plantinga both acknowledge the philosophical pedigree of their opposed positions. Plantinga's “internalist” theological position (as I will call it) derives from Augustine's view of an organic relationship between faith and reason, while McInerny's “externalist” position derives from Aquinas's view of their extrinsic relationship.

The book concludes with a useful bibliography. One unhappy note: The book contains too many typographical errors. I counted 15, more than one for every 20 pages; one of the more serious of them occurs twice on the same page, 247 (“supposing” for “suppressing truth in unrighteousness”).

Jonathan Edwards: Puritan, Preacher, Philosopher, by **John E. Smith**. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992. Pp. x and 150. \$23.95 (Cloth).

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John Smith's new book is a general introduction to Jonathan Edwards. Noting that “Edwards's life was closely intertwined with the doctrines of his treatises and the rhetoric of his sermons” (1), Smith begins by examining his “life and times.” His second chapter investigates Locke's “profound influence” on Edwards (14). These and subsequent chapters stress Edwards's “empirical attitude” (6) and originality.

Smith's discussion of Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* (chapter 4) “is an expository one without critical interruptions that...are more likely to confuse than enlighten a reader” (63). His discussion of *Original Sin* (chapter 5) is also “expository” and free from “critical interruptions.” These chapters provide a reader who is unfamiliar with these works with good general introductions. Those who are already acquainted with them will learn little new.

Smith's decision to largely restrict himself to exposition in these chapters is surprising in view of his success in interweaving exposition and critical discussion in chapters 3, 6, and 7.

Chapter 3 situates the *Religious Affections* in the context of the controversies occasioned by the Great Awakening, and discusses the “signs” by which Edwards believed we can distinguish true from false affections. The key to understanding Edwards, according to Smith, is his attempt to transcend the “heart-head dualism” (31) assumed both by the Awakening's friends and by its opponents. This is an important point. Edwards has a cognitive view of the affections. They are intentional and presuppose an understanding of their object. Understanding, on the other hand, often involves appropriate affections—our grasp of religion, for example, of affections and emotions, of things pertaining to good and evil, and so on. The head and heart are logically implicated in each other.

Although the chapter as a whole is excellent, Smith's brief remarks on the new sense of the heart are inadequate. Rejecting the suggestion “that this is a ‘sixth sense’” (40), Smith identifies it with a new holy “inclination and judgement” (42)—a new understanding of the spiritual beauty of divine things which incorporates the appropriate affective response. I am uncon-