

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS. By Thomas, Gabrielle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv + 196. £75.

In this book, Thomas seeks to challenge the predominant scholarly view which regards Gregory as identifying the *imago dei* with the noetic soul, arguing instead for a broader, more ‘dynamic’ understanding which views the *imago dei* as extending to the body (which ‘visibly images’ God) and which views the human image as capable of growing in divinity (through *theosis*) or losing its divinity (through sin) – a dynamism which renders the human image ‘divine yet vulnerable’. At the heart of this dynamic understanding of the *imago dei* is Christ, the identical image, after whom the human image is made and who (with the Holy Spirit) enables the human image to grow in divinity. In making this argument, Thomas does an excellent job of drawing attention to certain underappreciated themes in Gregory’s thought. Perhaps her most notable contribution is to highlight the importance of angelology and demonology to Gregory’s theology. Thomas also succeeds in demonstrating Gregory’s engagement with extra-biblical Jewish theological and exegetical traditions. Future scholars should follow her lead in paying attention to the possibility of Jewish influence on Gregory’s thought. Other aspects of Thomas’ argument are less convincing. To take one particular example, Thomas appeals to *Carm.* 1.1.10 as evidence that ‘Gregory depicts Christ’s flesh as God’s *Eikon*’ (p.50). Thomas translates the relevant passage as follows: ‘the flesh, then, is both God’s housemate and [God’s] icon’. This is an odd rendering of the Greek, since it treats the genitive form *sarkos* (flesh) as the subject of this particular line of poetry; a more natural rendering takes the nominative forms *psyche* (soul) and *nous* (intellect) from the immediately preceding line of this poem as the subject of this line. Read this way it is the noetic soul — not the flesh — which is the *imago dei*, as Gregory

explicitly states elsewhere in his writings (e.g. *Or.* 28.27; *Carm.* 1.1.8). The reader, then, must treat Thomas' presentation of the evidence with caution. Nevertheless, the student or scholar of early Christianity who reads with a critical eye should find this volume to be a stimulating and insightful contribution to the field.

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