

elements would stretch the resources of Kiel's already-terse argument, but their omission results in an immanentist eschatology. Still, together with its approachable style and good pedagogical sense, the relative brevity of Kiel's argument may render it useful for undergraduate Scripture study, particularly in relation to Christian ecological ethics.

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Dying and the Virtues. By Matthew Levering. Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 2018. xi + 348 pages. \$45.00.

Though Christians can trust that “God made not death” (Wis. 1:13), and we are assured of Christ's victory over death in the Paschal Mystery, we nevertheless continue to ponder and fear the process of dying, as well as continue to raise perennial and difficult questions, such as “Why must God redeem us through suffering?” or “What kind of country might we expect on the other side of death?” Do we see suffering and death as blessed opportunities to actively prepare ourselves for the eternal life promised for us by God in Christ?

Matthew Levering dedicates the first half (chapters 1–5) of his work to the first set of questions, exploring the role that virtues such as love, hope, faith, penitence, and gratitude play in the dying process. The second part addresses the “difficult questions” concerning death and suffering through the lens of the virtues of solidarity, humility, surrender, and courage. By establishing the framework of these nine virtues, he consciously places the new contribution in this book within both the larger *ars moriendi* tradition (which he treats explicitly in the second chapter), and within its revival in recent years through the work of theologians such as Allen Verhey and Christopher Vogt.

Levering contributes in a new way to the recent appropriations of the older *ars moriendi* tradition, whose goal was to help Christians to die well (especially by arguing that the best preparation for a good and virtuous death was a good and virtuous life). He draws upon a diverse set of authors, reaching beyond Christian theological sources by engaging the New Age movement, medical professionals, philosophers, and also returning to the Church Fathers and the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas. He continually places these figures in dialogue both with one another and, more importantly, with the Scriptures.

While the earlier *ars moriendi* tradition drew variously upon Stoic resources, medieval *exempla* of saints, and contemporary stories that were meant to engage their readers' and hearers' imaginations, Scriptures were sometimes relegated to a secondary role. Here, Levering offers a supplement by beautifully weaving biblical reflections into each of his chapters, each of which engages several authors, gathered around the virtue at hand. He begins the book with a reading of Job as

a story not so much about the suffering of the innocent, as about the enduring love of God despite the prospect of annihilation by death. "We must learn that even if death looks like annihilation, we are not wise enough to know what death is unless God reveals it to us," and we must "seek to receive what God has willed from creation to give us: his divine love" (28). From the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), read in conjunction with Ezekiel's prophetic remembering of Israel's sins (Ez. 20), and the meditation on faith in Hebrews 11, we learn that death offers the *moriens* an occasion to remember sins with deep penitence "in order to render oneself fully open to receiving and sharing God's mercy" (78). Further, Levering argues that Jesus's passion was the "eschatological tribulation" that was meant to bring about the ransom, restoration, and New Exodus for the people of Israel, and we see that the humility that Jesus exhibits, and which we are called to imitate in death, is "the interior reversal of the self-deifying pride that is at the root of human violence, greed, lust, and oppression" (120).

Of particular note is Levering's discussion of redemptive suffering, the first difficult theme of the second part of the book (chapter 6). He draws upon classic Pauline texts (cf. Col. 1:24; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5) to argue the importance of a topic that is both lacking and contested in contemporary literature on death and dying. Yet, Levering creatively draws upon the liberation theology of Jon Sobrino, S.J., and the mystical experiences of Saint Faustyna Kowalska, putting these figures into dialogue with one another to show how suffering is a "sharing in Christ's crucifixion, a situation that urgently calls for solidarity in love" (109). Levering returns to this theme in a more liturgical key when he argues in his conclusion that the "virtues of dying are those that enable us to exercise" a "priestly offering," which is a sacrificial role into which we have been placed "as dying members of Christ's body" (168). The liturgical rites such as the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, therefore, take on a central function in teaching the self-surrender in which Christ makes of the sick "a holy offering to the God who loves them" (147).

Levering's book is supplemented by substantial endnotes, which make up almost half of the page count, and which often carry forward arguments, or engage in a substantial way with his secondary literature. This work is a welcome contribution to an area of increasing importance in contemporary moral theology.

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Books about methodology are among the most difficult to write. They always strive to propose an ingenious, new method that stays