zones of punishment and the divine throne room. The sins punished are mainly those of lay people and secular clergy rather than of monks, and primarily concern social and ecclesiastical order. Thus, in the *Theotokos*, the multitude (*ho plethos*) of sinners is immersed in a boiling river for eavesdropping, slandering, quarrelling, fornicating, ploughing or reaping beyond their furrow, weighing falsely, or taking interest; others are set upon clouds or benches of fire for failing to wake on Sundays or rise upon the entry of the priest. Interestingly, only a few — among them the Jews, those who commit incest with close relations or godparents, and women who 'suffocate babies' — are consigned to the 'outer fire' which is 'everlasting' (§23). This raises the intriguing question, never directly addressed by the texts, whether the majority of punishments witnessed are eternal or temporal: whether the place described is hell, Hades or even — contrary to (at least modern) Eastern Christian orthodoxy — purgatory.

This is compounded by other potential marks of a distinctly Eastern medieval outlook; above all, the role of Mary as intercessor for mankind before a distant, imperial, angry God. In one of *Theotokos'* most vivid scenes, Mary, moved with pity for her punished children, asks the Archangel Michael to 'command the armies of the angels and raise [her] up to the height of Heaven and break [her] through into the presence of the invisible Father' (§26), where she sways a reluctant 'Master' first not to forsake those who call upon her name (§26), and then to grant rest to all souls in torment during the fifty days of Easter (§29). In *Anastasia*, the visionary similarly returns with the divine message, 'I wanted to destroy you utterly from the earth, but through the entreaty of my wholly undefiled mother … I was reconciled' (§48). (Not to appear too lenient, God hastens to warn that 'whosoever does not believe these things, and blasphemes, shall have the curse of the 318 God-bearing Fathers, and his portion shall be with Judas'.)

The bulk of Jane Baun's work is a comprehensive study of the Apocalypses of Anastasia and Theotokos. Her guiding argument is that the texts present 'another Byzantium' not only in the sense of projecting a heavenly version of the earthly Empire but also — and here more fundamentally — in the sense of constituting a different type of historical evidence from that which has shaped the study of medieval Byzantine society and culture so far. These 'paracanonical', popular texts, whose provenance and concerns lie outside the world of the urban and monastic elites, reveal an 'other' Byzantium of local communities characterised by a high degree of social cohesion and self-reliance, and by a distinctive religiosity shaped by their experience of a distant imperial administration and focused on the preservation of social, moral and ritual norms within the community. The author deftly deploys a wide range of arguments — generic, cultural, sociological, and textual — in favour of her thesis, and grants the reader a rich sense of the texts within their literary, social and cultural contexts. This is not a work of theology, and Baun serves the theological meat of the texts strictly as *hors d'oeuvre*, but she leaves no doubt that it has the making of a feast.

JUDITH TONNING

DEIFICATION AND GRACE by Daniel A. Keating (*Sapientia Press*: **Naples FL, 2007). Pp. 124, £16.94.**

The doctrine of deification has become popular – even fashionable – in many scholarly circles, but it is just not evident to most people outside those circles what 'deification' actually means. For whatever reason, this doctrine is more evidently in need of explanation than most Christian beliefs. In this volume, Keating attempts to make the meaning of deification available to an educated but

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non-specialist audience (the book is intended for 'college, university and seminary courses, as well as [. . .] educated readers of all ages'). Though a considerable knowledge is there in the background, Keating omits many details, in order to provide a concise, informed and illuminating account of a central Christian teaching.

Keating addresses many of the issues that could reasonably be expected to be addressed in an introductory work. Several main convictions shape his exposition.

The first is that, contrary to a stubbornly recurring judgement otherwise, deification (as classically formulated) is grounded in and closely aligned with Scripture. At its simplest deification means that, through the indwelling of the Spirit, God himself comes to live effectively within us. Salvation entails participating in the life of God itself. As Keating shows, the terminology of deification was first employed to describe a specifically biblical understanding of our adoptive sonship in Christ, through the Spirit. Deification was the fruit of the Fathers' efforts to defend and explain the content of Scripture against what they perceived to be its distortions. Chronologically, the much-championed Neoplatonic use of the terminology of divinisation in fact *followed* Christian usage.

Keating handles the scriptural material deftly and sensitively, paying particular attention to how the Fathers read the scriptures. He draws on recent studies to show how the specifically Jewish context may be even more important than the Graeco-Roman environment for the emergence of the notion of deification. Surprisingly, a short verse from the Greek text of the Old Testament – Psalm 82.6 ('God stood in the congregation of the gods') – turns out to have been a primary spur and warrant for the development of the technical terminology, rather than a means of justifying alien conceptions. Contrary to some longstanding assumptions otherwise, another verse – 2 Peter 1. 4 ('partakers of the divine nature') – does not seem to have played a significant role in the development of the language of deification.

A second conviction that shapes Keating's work – and one that gives this book its overall structure – is that, if deification is to be understood at all, it must be understood within the creedal confession of the church and within the practice of believers. The doctrine is neither an exotic discovery, nor an alternative path to God. It depends entirely on the specific confession of a Trinitarian God, the Incarnation, and the indwelling Spirit in the Church. In fact, in the Fathers, the language of deification is typically found in contexts where they are defending and explaining the full divinity of the Son and the Spirit (and so, the doctrine of the Trinity).

Keating provides enlightening and stimulating explorations of the historical development of the doctrine. He shows its interrelatedness with the Fathers' sacramental theology and elements of Christian asceticism and prayer. He further demonstrates how deification makes sense of various rich ethical notions: our transformation in the image of Christ, Christian 'perfection' or maturity, our share in the suffering and death of Christ.

In his exposition of the historical development, Keating draws widely on Fathers from the West as well as from the East. By this means he gradually reveals the reasonableness of a third conviction (again in line with recent studies). That is, that the doctrine is not the exclusive patrimony of the Eastern Church and just an eccentricity of certain theologians in the West. Perhaps Keating's most notable conclusion is that deification lies at the patristic root of both Eastern and Western theological traditions. Keating shows how the notion did not, in fact, die in the West. Moreover he repeatedly, and without hesitation, moves from quoting the Greek Fathers to quoting Aquinas. He shows that the patristic notion has a lively presence in Aquinas, who not only employs some of the characteristic vocabulary, but – more importantly – expresses and develops its content. Keating also identifies how aspects of deification can be found in key

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Protestant reformers and theologians (Luther, Calvin, Wesley). At no point does he deny the real differences between Eastern and Western understandings of this teaching, he simply reveals the striking similarities on essentials.

A concise account of this kind necessarily leaves out many things (as Keating is well aware). Unsurprisingly, he scarcely touches a series of thorny questions about grace (although the word does figure in his title, oddly). A particular difficulty with treating deification systematically, as though it were a single doctrine, is that this tends to flatten differences in terminology and understanding between different authors. This is a pity, because a good deal can be learnt – both about the author and the tradition – by observing which strand of the tradition a given author grasps and which he neglects. On occasion, Keating might have done more at least to register the differences in language between the authors he quotes.

On the other hand, Keating had to choose among his difficulties, and it is hard not to feel that he chose wisely in his basic options. More specialist books deal with what is deliberately omitted here (see, for instance, Norman Russell's work). At the end of the day, it is a relief to find a book written by a very competent scholar that addresses people who are less than competent scholars, in a way that is both engaging and enriching. Such books are needed to help reveal to the non-specialist how and why the classic shape of Christian thought provides the most satisfying interpretation of the Bible. They are also and especially needed to puncture silly or trivial caricatures of Christian talk about God and faith. It is to be hoped that, in writing for this audience, Keating will help to bring this understanding just a bit further into the marketplace.

ALISTAIR JONES OP

SWEET AND BLESSED COUNTRY: THE CHRISTIAN HOPE FOR HEAVEN by John Saward. (*Oxford University Press*: **Oxford, 2008). Pp. 195, £8.99.**

Under review is the paperback edition of John Saward's *Sweet and Blessed Country*, which first saw the light of day in 2005. It is a treatise on eschatology in the classical manner of Latin theology, though it still bears the marks of its literary origins as conferences given to the monks of Pluscarden, the natural ambience of which is charmingly indicated at the book's beginning and end. Written in a style which combines Scholastic clarity (and, often, terminology) with the affective warmth of Cistercian and Franciscan mysticism, it consists, after an introduction, of four chapters dealing in turn with: the vision of the triune God; the Paschal mystery and its sacrament, the Mass, considered as 'opening heaven's gates'; Hell and Purgatory; and the place of the Mother of the Lord in movement towards, and enjoyment of, the vision of God. This concluding Marian chapter may seem strangely devised, and even more curiously located, until one realizes, half-way through the introduction, that the book is conceived as a commentary on an eschatological 'icon': *The Coronation of the Virgin* by the mid fifteenth century artist Enguerrand Quarton.

This painting was commissioned as an altar-piece by the Charterhouse of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon; its iconographic themes were specified by the patrons, and thoughtfully executed by the artist, who added a number of telling details – such as a Carthusian embracing a Greek monastic (these were the years immediately after the Council of Florence) – which enhance the spiritual value of the artwork as a whole. More is the pity that Oxford University Press have failed to reproduce it in its entirety. Even what is offered (on the front cover) is too small in scale and fuzzy in its printing for some of the features discussed by Saward to be identified at all easily.

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