Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation: Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century.* Translated by Gerald Parks. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. pp xxv + 322.[1]

Reviewed by Lea F. Schweitz, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

In *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, Maria Rosa Antognazza draws together Leibniz's writings on two of the central mysteries of the Christian faith in order to develop a chronological account of the reciprocal relationship between Leibniz's revealed theology and his philosophy. Written in four parts, the book begins with Leibniz's early writings (1663-1671) emphasizing the *Demonstrationum Catholicarum Conspectus*. It continues with two sections on middle writings explicitly concerned with the Trinity and Incarnation (1672-1692) and English Trinitarian polemics (1693-1705), and it concludes with an examination of faith and reason in the context of the *Dissertations historiques* of Mathurin Veyssières de La Croze, the Socinians, and the "Preliminary Discourse" of the *Theodicy* (1706-1716).

The first and final parts highlight the polemic against the Socinians (who rejected teachings on the trinity and incarnation as irrational), and they make for a helpful set of bookends from which to see the complexities of Leibniz's thought. For instance, his commitment to the possibility of the mysteries of the Christian faith, his denial of double truths (that is, any one issue having two truths - one philosophical and one theological), and his view that faith is in conformity with reason appear early and remain relatively constant. In comparison, although Leibniz's views are consistently Trinitarian (despite the accusation of some correspondents), his Trinitarian formulations undergo various applications, interpretations, and re-interpretations. The Socinian frame provides a useful tool for helping the reader track the subtle shifts that occur over the course of his long career. Each of the four parts contain a wide sampling from Leibniz's writings, thick descriptions of the authors with whom Leibniz is conversing, and ample contextual information about the issues and debates with which he is engaged. Gratefully, this resource is now available to English-language scholars.

When Antognazza's book first appeared in 1999 in Italian as *Trinitá e Incarnazione: Il rapporto tra filosofia e teologia rivelata nel pensiero di Leibniz*, Robert Adams praised the work in the pages of the *Leibniz Review* as an "elegant work of philosophical scholarship" that delivers "an impressively comprehensive account"

of Leibniz's views on the trinity and the incarnation "from the beginning to the end of his career."[2] Furthermore, he observed that "Christian theology is one of the most neglected aspects of Leibniz's thought" and recognized that Antognazza's book goes a long way toward rectifying this neglect.[3] Eight short years later, I wondered to what degree this continues to be true in English-language scholarship on Leibniz. What I found was that Leibniz's Christian theology continues to suffer from relative neglect. When Leibniz's theology is addressed, typically the contributions fall under one of two broad themes: his metaphysics of theism[4] (with an especially lively current discussion around issues in divine causation[5]) or his views on divine knowledge[6] (particularly in relation to freedom[7]). These are important issues in the Leibnizian corpus, but they are generally unconcerned with his theology as Christian theology.[8]

One recent exception to this general state of affairs is a collection of articles published in 2002 in the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*[9]; Antognazza's book is another.[10] Neither the collection nor the book ignores the tensions that emerge when taking seriously Leibniz's theology, but they stand out in the literature as investigations explicitly interested in his Christian theology. In Donald Rutherford's introduction to the 2002 collection, he writes that the subject of the papers is the Leibniz who intended his philosophy to be "unquestionably both theistic and Christian."[11] This is a Leibniz who has received much less attention, and it is the Leibniz who is the subject of *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation,* as well. As a result, Antognazza's work, in addition to being a valuable resource in its own right, continues to fill an important gap in the scholarship on Leibniz.

By focusing on aspects of Leibniz's Christian theology, Antognazza's work opens the door for additional advances in the scholarship on his work. In this review, I am particularly interested in her understanding of the reciprocal relationship between Leibniz's revealed theology and his philosophy and the curious ecclesiastical puzzle that arises in the context of this relationship.

The fact that Leibniz's theology garners less attention might imply that its place in Leibniz's thought as a whole is secondary, but Antognazza's work proves otherwise. Her work not only serves to alleviate a general inattention to theological matters in Leibniz's thought, particularly matters of Christian theology, but also it challenges our understanding of the very place that his theology holds. On Bertrand Russell's model, Leibniz's traditional, public theology was strictly separated from his private, rational Spinozism; he attempted to minimize the relevance of theology in Leibniz's thought by denying its authenticity. In sharp contrast, Antognazza's reading brings

Leibniz's theology into a reciprocal relationship with the rest of his thought.

In her conclusion, Antognazza writes: Leibniz's defense of the Christian mysteries in general and the Trinity in particular "seems to have deep roots, roots that do not cling superficially to the dictates of court orthodoxy but instead penetrate to the heart of Leibniz's philosophy" (168). Her reading of Leibniz's engagement with Trinitarian conceptions of God is neither as a philosophical obstacle to be accommodated by his metaphysics nor simply ignored as an entirely separate domain, but rather it is an opportunity to further his thinking with and through a problem that claimed contemporary, cultural urgency.[12] Particularly in her reading of Leibniz's view of the analogies of the Trinitarian nature of the Creator as reflected in creation (that is, the *analogia Trinitatis*) and in the connections she sees between his views of universal harmony and the Trinity, theology becomes increasingly central and connected in a reciprocal relationship to the rest of Leibniz's thought.[13]

I find her arguments convincing for several reasons. First, they take seriously Leibniz's consistent and firm denial of two truths and the pervasiveness of harmonic relations in his thought. Second, they are confirmed by others who also see increasingly intimate connections between Leibniz's theology and other aspects of his thought. For instance, Jeffrey McDonough in the context of Leibniz's views of creation, conservation, and concurrence draws together Leibniz's metaphysical and theological commitments. He concludes that with respect to his views of creation, conservation, and concurrence Leibniz was almost certainly right in being convinced that "with sufficient care, the strands of his metaphysical and theological commitments can be neatly woven together."[14] Similarly, in the context of Leibniz's combinatorial approach to possibility, Ohad Nachtomy brings together Leibniz's logic and theology. Nachtomy writes: "It seems to me that the notion of God as a thinking agent plays an important role in his logic – a role that cannot be dismissed merely on account of Leibniz's theological assumptions."[15] However, the strongest argument for a reciprocal relationship emerges in Antognazza's discussions of Leibniz's strategy for defending the possibility of Christian mysteries.

Leibniz's "strategy of defense" has two goals: to maintain the mysterious nature of the Christian mysteries and to provide a defense against the objection that the Christian mysteries – as mysteries – are entirely beyond reason's reach. According to Antognazza, Leibniz's strategy of defense answers "how reason can judge what by definition exceeds its limits of comprehension" (164). The strategy itself is a two-part strategy, as follows:

> The dogmas accepted and handed down through the centuries by the church can legitimately be held to be true (even if they surpass the limits of human reason) until it has been proved incontrovertibly that they are self-contradictory. And it is here that the basic role assumed by reason lies: in the defense of such dogmas from the charge of being contradictory, so that one is justified in maintaining their possibility until the contrary is demonstrated (19-20).

The two-part strategy requires the presumption of the truth of the claim being defended on the one hand and defenses against any argument that the claim is contradictory on the other hand. If both conditions are met, one may maintain the possibility of the claim's truth and the strategy of defense has succeeded.[16]

In Leibniz's strategy of defense, there is evidence of his commitment to the conformity of faith and reason. However, the relationship of conformity is not a transparent one. One way to conform is simply to co-exist independently, but this is a weaker sense of conformity than what is apparent in Leibniz's strategy of defense. Here we find that faith provides part of the content that reason is marshaled to defend. One must take care here. Leibniz understands both the content that faith provides (i.e., the claim that one may presume to be true) and the defense that reason marshals (i.e., arguing against accusations of contradiction) in very particular ways. Even with this caveat, Leibniz's strategy of defense exhibits more than the simple co-existence of faith and reason; their interdependence bespeaks a stronger sense of conformity. On this stronger model of conformity, faith and reason have fair amount of reciprocity.[17] There is more to be said to flesh out the details of a strong Leibnizian sense of conformity and the nature of the relationship's reciprocity, but these brief comments indicate how Antognazza's work provides resources for a more fully integrated picture of Leibniz's various and varied intellectual pursuits.

Leibniz's strategy of defense reveals the strong sense of conformity that exists between faith and reason (and ultimately theology and philosophy), but it also raises a curious ecclesiastical puzzle: just how traditional is Leibniz's theological thinking? One might think that this puzzle is little more than a historical curiosity. As I will argue in the final section of this review, Antognazza's work raises the stakes for solving this puzzle. By arguing for a stronger sense of conformity between faith and reason, she moves theology toward the center of Leibniz's thought making it more than an interesting (or disconcerting) sidebar. However, even if this turns out to be a mistaken view of the place of theology in Leibniz's thought, Antognazza's view of his strategy of defense has implications for our understanding of how traditional his theology is. For our purposes, it is the initial

presumption of truth that bears on this ecclesiastical puzzle.

According to Antognazza, the presumption of truth appears early in Leibniz's thought (17-18) and remains, playing a central role in his later years (164). As we saw from the passage above, one of the necessary conditions for presuming a dogma to be true seems to include being "accepted and handed down through the centuries by the church" (20). If a claim has been accepted and handed down, it may be legitimately held as true until the claim in question is shown to be incontrovertibly self-contradictory. Antognazza claims that the importance of the role of tradition and the presumption of truth marks the primary difference between Leibniz and the Socinians. Whereas for the Socinians authentic revelation is determined primarily by human reason's decision about the rationality (or irrationality, as the case may be) of the content of revelation (and irrational dogmas are rejected), Leibniz puts the matter differently. He gives tradition a primary role in determining what is or is not authentic revelation (19). Neither the lack of concrete examples nor being "above human reason" is sufficient to deny the presumption of the truth of a claim which has been accepted and handed down by the church. All of which is to say that the presumption of truth, i.e., the first-part of Leibniz's two-part strategy of defense, is an indispensable part of his thinking. It is here that our puzzle about the ecclesiastical nature of Leibniz's theological thinking emerges.

There has been a long-standing ambivalence about Leibniz's confessional stance and commitment to tradition.[18] As Rutherford reminds us, in Leibniz's own day his Lutheran contemporaries called him a *Loevenix*, or, *Glaubt nichts* - believes nothing.[19] More recently, the focus on the metaphysics of Leibniz's theism and his reunification projects tend to minimize the confessional or specifically Christian features of his thought. Yet, on Antognazza's reading, it makes a difference just how "traditional" Leibniz's theological formulations are because it is by being authorized by tradition (whatever this turns out to mean for Leibniz) that such claims warrant an initial presumption of truth. This fact has implications for understanding Leibniz's theological claims.

Take, for instance, Adams's claim that Leibniz shifts the Trinitarian doctrine to a "more modern and less traditional conception."[20] In conversation, Antognazza has noted her agreement with Adams on this point, and she has provided a helpful clarification about the relation between tradition's authorization and the meaning of the claims authorized. According to her, even with this shift in meaning, Leibniz need not be seen as departing from the traditional teaching of the church, if the traditional teaching of the church means "the affirmation of the Trinitarian

nature of God rather than a specific theological-philosophical explanation of the possible meaning of this mystery."[21] She rightly reminds that the dogmatic framework identifies the claims to be affirmed (and presumed true), and there may be (indeed have been since the Patristic period) a number of different explanations of this mystery co-existing simultaneously under this dogmatic framework, i.e. in the tradition. This is to say that Leibniz may be shifting the meaning to a less traditional conception without strictly departing from the tradition (which would have thereby jeopardized the presumed truth of the doctrine).

However, on my reading, there are still some ambiguities surrounding the use of tradition in this context. If abiding by the church's traditional teaching means affirming, for instance, God's Trinitarian nature (and not a specific meaning/explanation of the doctrine affirmed), what does it mean here to be more or less traditional? The puzzle is whether tradition is something that one is either in or out or whether tradition is something of which one may be more or less. This puzzle will not be solved here, but the puzzle itself reveals the ambiguities of the ecclesiastical features of Leibniz's thought which have yet to be worked out. As Leibniz shifts the meanings of traditional doctrines, there arises a unique opening to look further into the puzzling mechanics of early modern ecclesial meaning-making. Given that the presumption of truth plays a key role in Leibniz's strategy of defense, a claim with Antognazza persuasively argues, and given that the presumption of truth depends in part on the authorization of tradition (even as a range of views may be tolerated), we are confronted with an opportunity for future research into the boundaries of tradition in the time between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. This opportunity confirms Rutherford's assessment that in matters of religion Leibniz's thought remains a "topic ripe for future study."[22] The fact that Antognazza's rich text helps us to see some of these matters with increasing clarity is one reason among many that the work is such a welcome addition.

Lea F. Schweitz
Systematic Theology/Religion and Science
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
1100 East 55th Street
Chicago, IL 60615
lfschwei@uchicago.edu

Notes

[1] Originally published in Italian as *Trinitá e Incarnazione: Il rapporto tra filosofia e teologia rivelata nel pensiero di Leibniz* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1999).

[2] For the full review, see Robert M. Adams, "Review of Antognazza's *Trinitá e Incarnazione*," *The Leibniz Review* 10 (2000): 53-59. In addition to the well-deserved praises, Adams raises some important questions about Leibniz's various formulations of the persons of the Trinity as subsisting things, as involving an essential relation, and as being constituted by or through relations.

[3] Ibid.: 53.

[4] On Leibniz's metaphysics of theism, see e.g.: Robin Attfield, "Leibniz, the Cause of Gravity and Physical Theology," *Studia Leibnitiana*, 37:2 (2005): 238-244; Mogens Lærke, "*Quod non omnia possibilia ad existentiam perveniant*: Leibniz's ontology of possibility, 1668-1678" *The Leibniz Review*, 17 (December 2007): 1-30; Christia Mercer, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).; Ohad Nachtomy, "Leibniz on Possible Individuals," *Studia Leibnitiana*, 34:1 (2002): 31-58; Justin Smith, "Confused Perception and Corporeal Substance in Leibniz," *The Leibniz Review*, 13 (December 2003): 45-64; and Justin Erik Halldór Smith, "Christian Platonism and the Metaphysics of Body in Leibniz," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 12:1 (February 2004): 43-59.

[5] On divine causation, see e.g.: Donovan Cox, "Leibniz on Divine Causation: Creation, Miracles, and the Continual Fulgurations" *Studia Leibnitiana*, 34:2 (2002), 185-207; Emily Grosholz, "Theomorphic Expression in Leibniz's 'Discourse on Metaphysics'" *Studia Leibnitiana*, 33:1 (2001): 4-18; Sukjae Lee, "Leibniz on Divine Concurrence," *The Philosophical Review*, 113: 2 (April 2004): 203-248; Jeffrey K. McDonough, "Leibniz: Creation *and* Conservation *and* Concurrence" *The Leibniz Review*, 17 (December 2007): 31-60; and Ezio Vailati, "Leibniz on Divine Concurrence with Secondary Causes," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 10:2 (June 2002): 209-230.

[6] On divine knowledge, see e.g.: Endre Begby, "Leibniz on Determinism and Divine Foreknowledge" *Studia Leibnitiana*, 37:1 (2005): 83-98 and Michael V. Griffin, "Leibniz on God's Knowledge of Counterfactuals" *The Philosophical Review*, 108:3 (July 1999): 317-343.

[7] On freedom, see e.g.: Jack Davidson, "Leibniz on the Labyrinth of Freedom: Two Early Texts" *The Leibniz Review* 13 (December 2003): 19-43; and "*Video*

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Meliora Proboque, Deteriora Sequor: Leibniz on the Intellectual Source of Sin" in *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom*, eds. Donald Rutherford and J.A. Cover (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 234-254; Michael J. Murray, "Spontaneity and Freedom in Leibniz" in *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom*: 194-216; and Nicholas Rescher, "Leibniz on God's Free Will and the World's Contingency" *Studia Leibnitiana*, 34:2 (2002): 208-220.

[8] This is not to say that Christian theology is entirely absent; it appears most explicitly in Smith's "Christian Platonism and the Metaphysics of Body in Leibniz" and Davidson's "*Video Meliora Proboque, Deteriora Sequor*: Leibniz on the Intellectual Source of Sin." In addition, there are helpful sections in the introduction to *The Leibniz-Des Bosses Correspondence*, eds. and trans. Brandon Look and Donald Rutherford (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[9] The collection can be found in the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2002). It includes the following: Donald Rutherford, "Introduction: Leibniz and Religion"; Christia Mercer, "Leibniz on Knowledge and God"; Ursula Goldenbaum, "Spinoza's Parrot, Socinian Syllogisms, and Leibniz's Metaphysics: Leibniz's Three Strategies of Defending Christian Mysteries"; Paul Lodge and Ben Crowe, "Leibniz, Bayle, and Locke on Faith and Reason"; Maria Rosa Antognazza, "Leibniz and Religious Toleration: The Correspondence with Paul Pellisson-Fontanier"; Michael J. Murray, "Leibniz's Proposal for Theological Reconciliation among the Protestants"; Jeal-Pascal Anfray, "God's Decrees and Middle Knowledge: Leibniz and the Jesuits"; and Mark Kulstad, "Exploring Middle Ground: Was Leibniz's Conception of God ever Spinozistic?"

[10] Also see Antognazza's article-length treatment of related issues in "The Defence of the Mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation: An Example of Leibniz's 'Other' Reason" *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 9:2 (June 2001): 283-309; and "Leibniz '*de Deo Trino*': Philosophical Aspects of Leibniz's Conception of the Trinity" *Religious Studies: An International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 37:1 (March 2001):1-13.

[11] Donald Rutherford, "Introduction: Leibniz and Religion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2002): 523.

[12] For additional arguments defending related claims, see Goldenbaum, "Spinoza's Parrot, Socinian Syllogisms, and Leibniz's Metaphysics: Leibniz's Three Strategies of Defending Christian Mysteries."

[13] See esp. ch. 1 (pp. 9-11), ch. 8 (pp. 108-110), and ch. 13 (167-168). It is interesting to note that the issue about the relationship between reason and revelation

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subtly appears in the titles. In Italian, the subheading puts philosophy and revealed theology in relation (*Il rapporto tra filosofia e teologia rivelata*). In the English translation of the subheading, reason and revelation are put side by side with a simple connective 'and' (Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century).

[14] McDonough, "Leibniz: Creation and Conservation and Concurrence," 55.

[15] Nachtomy, "Leibniz on Possible Individuals," 33, ftnt 12.

[16] For more on presumption in the context of the possibility of the necessary existence of God, see Robert Merrihew Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 192-213.

[17] For more on the conformity of faith and reason, see Lodge and Crowe, "Leibniz, Bayle, and Locke on Faith and Reason."

[18] Goldenbaum is a rare exception in this. See Ursula Goldenbaum, "Leibniz as a Lutheran," in *Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion*, ed. Allison P. Coudert, Richard H. Popkin, and Gordon M. Weiner (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 169-92.

[19] Rutherford, "Introduction: Leibniz and Religion," 523.

[20] Adams, "Review of Antognazza's *Trinitá e Incarnazione*," 57.

[21] Personal Correspondence.

[22] Rutherford, "Introduction: Leibniz and Religion," 530.