

canonical texts has been judged to be essential to Israel's authoritative scriptures' (p. 441). Depending on how broadly one understands 'elements of tension' most redaction critics could live with this statement. Is Childs hedging his bets here? I prefer to think he is too good an exegete not to pay due attention to different viewpoints in the text. As they say, the devil is in the detail and the more one delves into a biblical text, the more tricky things become. The Bible has a wonderfully wicked way of undermining our cherished hypotheses, whether they be diachronic or synchronic.

MARK A. O'BRIEN OP

THE BATTLE FOR THE CATHOLIC MIND edited by William E May and Kenneth D. Whitehead *St Augustine's Press, South Bend, IN., 2001 Pp xxiii + 538, £18.00 pbk.*

While the title of this formidable book sounds old fashioned and woolly, the thirty-one essays or conferences of outstanding thinkers featured in it are not. The essays are the result of culling by the editors from the annual meetings of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars held since 1978. They show how the undermining of Catholic theology across the Atlantic came from the failure to submit to the teachings of the sacred magisterium. As a result of the dissent which occurred, theologians failed properly to understand both the teachings themselves and the consequences of refusing to give assent to them.

Therefore, during the last two decades among theologians in the United States, if not Europe itself, *fides quaerens intellectum* has become *intellectus quarens fidem* to the detriment of the science of theology and the slow corruption of pastoral practice. It then continues to the papal magisterium's teaching negatively and then attempts to synthesise ideas completely contradictory in the name of becoming authentic, creative and original.

The last conference by the distinguished professor of the Catholic University of America, Fr Robert Sokolowski, sums up the problem when he says that reason is seen as self-authorising and autonomous, generating its own principles and not accepting anything on authority. This reason sets itself up as the beginning and the judge of thinking. In this perspective, accepting things on faith has 'the tinge of gullibility and uncritical submission, of what Kant called heteronomy, which he saw as the deepest betrayal of reason (p.528).

The Catholic professors whose writings are gathered here teach in various fields at universities and colleges both Catholic and non-Catholic throughout the United States. Some twenty years ago, a society was established of Catholic scholars which now numbers over two thousand dedicated to understanding and defending the official teachings of the Catholic Church. It was not a knee-jerk reaction to a scholarly and yet erroneous theology but a conviction among its leaders that dissenting theologians and meek if not 'milk-toast' bishops and priests who said nothing about the essentials of faith and morals, were causing an erosion of the Catholic faith among the Christian faithful as well as praxis on the individual and institutional level of the Church in the United States, or a 'reverse exodus' as Sokolowski puts it. Hence the bitter fruits of these revisionist thinkers have

influenced, if not directly caused, some of the demise of religious life and priestly vocations, the slow decay of the Catholic hospital as an authentic apostolate, closure of seminaries, grade and high schools, decline of Mass attendance and confessional practice.

While many of the authors in the book have written extensively with a high level of scholarship (their books and articles are legion), these conferences and much of their individual work have been ignored by other scholars to the left of centre. Also, rarely has the National Catholic Conference of Bishops sought their collective advice while being quite willing to have dissenters from papal teaching on many of its commissions.

The volume consists of conferences given at the annual meeting by well-known lay authors (Germain Grisez, John Finnis, Joseph Boyle, Robert George, John Haas, James Hitchcock, Janet Smith *et al*). Among the clerics there are: the late Cardinal O'Connor, Mgrs William Smith and George Kelly, Benedict Ashley OP, and Paul Quay SJ.

In addition to an understanding of the Church history of the 1960s through to the end of the 1980s, many of the themes treated are laced with biblical, philosophical and doctrinal insights that will help anyone not shaped by those intellectual battles of the recent past understand both the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and many of the encyclicals of John Paul II. It is also a work which can help preachers understand practical issues of a pastoral nature and address them from the pulpit whether on questions of social justice or sexuality.

Of special note is the conference given by Grisez before he began his monumental work, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, where he shows how his new approach to moral theology will be a much more different treatment from post-Tridentine theology. The history of the contraceptive controversy is aptly outlined by Mgr Kelly. But there are also brilliant thoughts in the book on the arts, the sciences of physics, psychology and anthropology and finally what it means to be a Catholic scholar in any university.

This reviewer finds it surprising that not one of William May's timely conferences is to be found among many others who have spoken at the conferences over the past decades. While the contributors legitimately differ among themselves on many issues within the spectrum of Catholic thought, still, they come together laying aside their theological disagreements to foster their mainline unity which this volume shows. As is said on p.xxi, the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars was not intended to supersede or take over from the regular societies and associations found in most academic and scholarly disciplines and to which members of the Fellowship often belong. The Fellowship has tried to be precisely a fellow-ship in which scholars in all fields could come together not only as scholars but also as friends and fellow workers in the same vineyard and for the mutual help on the basis of their Catholic Faith held in common.

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