an ultimate source (although God is, of course), doesn't give enough recognition to the historical originality of its moral teachings. Respect for individual lives, integrity of marriage, necessity of forgiveness, care of the downtrodden: this adds up to a tradition which could scarcely have been arrived at without revelation. Apart from this, the case is well argued that in all our interpretation of the data of the Bible and tradition we have to bring our prior moral judgments into play. The relationship is a dialectical one.

Chapter 2 presents a renewed natural law theory, to be based on accurate scientific knowledge about rational human needs, and a set of criteria are offered for arriving at this. Good is to be defined as that which is capable of satisfying rational needs. The ultimate authority in ethics is the "vast body of ordinary, non-moral facts about human needs learned through our scientific and informal reflections". Moral principles of various kinds – he distinguishes three basic kinds on p. 104 – have to be assessed according to their correspondence with this truth, independently arrived at.

Chapter 4 offers a set of conditions for any legitimate appeal to Church authority. I feel there are some logical difficulties here which are not thoroughly discussed. The first condition is that the question must be one which we have not settled satisfactorily for ourselves. But what is the test for satisfactoriness? Is it agreement with the authority? Can there be a satisfactory moral conclusion that does not agree with it? I can't hold the position that I ought always to trust in my own well-considered judgment except when it disagrees with authority, because that is saying that I ought always to trust in my own judgment except when it is untrustworthy. There are some cases when the "dialectical relationship" between traditional authority and my own moral conclusions turns into a simple contradiction. I might then appeal to some more basic principles of the tradition in order to justify my deviance from authoritative statements. But once again, that judgment is mine. But what if the authority claims infallibility p. 99 ff? If we can say with Fr Hughes that "anything we can independently discover to be false cannot possibly have been infallibly taught", what is there to stop us continually questioning anything that is said to be infallibly taught in order to find out if it really is? Surely we need some firm criteria set out – infallibly, of course – which allows us to be certain about what is infallibly taught and what isn't. These can't be the general tests for moral truth, otherwise there would be no need for any infallible teachings in morals – other than the most general Christian principles such as those listed above. Fr Hughes seems indeed to arrive at this conclusion on p. 109.

The book ends with a helpful discussion of ethical pluralism and relativism. If I hadn't been given this book for review, I would certainly have bought it for myself and recommended it to anyone who wants to start thinking seriously about the role of authority in christian morals.

ROGER RUSTON O. P.

IN HABIT by Suzanne Campbell-Jones. *Faber & Faber,* **1979 pp. 229**

This study compares two congregations of sisters, the Teachers and the Franciscans. Both originated at about the same time; both have missions. Both have met the challenges of recent change but approached them in terms of their own traditions. The first have changed in many ways: dress, style of house, enclosures; the second remain conservative in these things but have changed in a more subtle way.

The author writes as a social anthropologist with a method. The method allows her to order a large amount of descriptive material, to make comparisons between the nuns and society in general and to ask interesting questions. That the method has a useful result is clear, but whether the method relates to the ordering in the way described, I wonder. The explanation that a method of constant and independent variables is being used (p.23) does not look very plausible with only two congregations at one point in time to

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quote and the observer not having seen the pre-change state. However, this explanation falls within a wider explanation of 'science as gossip', so there seems to be a wider methodology involved.

As a general reader of a technical work agility of mind is called for in discerning various modes of talk; the sisters reporting in their own terms; the observer reporting the sisters in her terms; the observer talking to other observers; the observer talking to the general reader. A sisters' world, 'Canon Law', becomes a surprisingly wide concept. An observer's word, 'magic', which I tend to interpret as 'vain signs' is defined here as 'ritual acts whose efficacy is unquestioningly believed by both actors and audience'. I do not understand how young sisters (p. 186) on this definition have belief in ritual symbols but not a magical belief in the efficacy of the sacraments. I feel the observer may have switched channels here. A quote speaks of the Eurcharist as 'dazzlingly magical'. In which frame of reference is this?

I felt the strongest part of the book was the comparison of the Teachers with the English and European background of their time. I would have liked to know why so many Irish girls joined such a congregation against such a background. The book leads to further questions, especially as the author had only limited access to information. The background of general social change is better portrayed than the background of general Church change.

The end of the analysis shows the problem of the initial presuppositions, especially the one that the startling difference between the congregations was the 'conservatism' of the Franciscans. They were shown to have flexible, problem-solving approaches to change. However, to say at the end that the two congregations have different forms but the same ideology goes beyond the evidence. The personal responses of the Franciscans were not so available as those of the Teachers. It is also difficult to assess what constitutes change of ideology, The book points to the subtlety of interplay between form and ideology; in that lies its value.

JONATHAN FLEETWOOD O. P.

JESUS: AN EXPERIMENT IN CHRISTOLOGY by Edward Schillebeeckx *Collins, London, 1979 pp. 767 £9*

Edward Schillebeeckx, with his (untranslated) study of St Thomas's theory of the sacraments, together with his books on marriage, on Christ as primordial sacrament, and on Our Lady, not to mention scores of essays on various subjects, is among the finest theologians, and certainly among the handful of important Catholic theologians, of our day. This book is the first volume of his attempt to rethink the main lines of classical Christology in the light of modern New Testament exegesis. It is, as he says, an "experiment", and it is not surprising that he sometimes falters. For that matter, as he also says (p. 34), "even failures – especially failures, perhaps – make one wiser". That the book has been delated to the Holy Office is a sad waste of his time and energy; but this will not stop his work from fertilising theological studies for many years to come. The Catholic Church shows a capacity to

tolerate almost any kind of craziness in the realms of devotion and spirituality, but attempts to translate doctrine into terms that might be intelligible to people who are still waiting to hear the Gospel are regularly greeted with suspicion. After all, St Thomas himself, posthumously, had propositions drawn from his works condemned by the Church on the grounds that he conceded too much to the philosophical fashion of his day. The missionary thrust of Schillebeeckx's book is very evident, and it has already proved capable of deepening many people's Christian faith. But it is hard going. In fact no one who could not make a discriminating judgment on the arguments would get past the first ten pages of the extremely dense and pretty jargon-ridden text. The sequel, which I have read in German, is even longer (890 pages!). It is required reading, for those who wish to follow Schillebeeckx's argu-

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