

Dominicans of the 'PAX' movement provoked direct conflict with local bishops about the social policy of the Church while remaining unquestionably loyal to the ecumenical Body of Christ and to the Order. Aidan Nichols and Carlos Pinto, writing on Herbert McCabe and the Church in Brazil respectively, continue the tradition by expressing explicit disapproval of their confreres' errors.

Preaching Justice is not, therefore, a panegyric about possible saints. It is, on the other hand, more than biography, more than mere intellectual history, more than an account of controversial and even heroic figures. It is a description of a way of being, a way of being Dominican, certainly, but, more generally, a way of being truly Catholic and Christian, of assimilating a tradition of thought so completely that the tradition transcends itself in its diversity, its creativity, and its unity in the world. The result is something that goes beyond the conventional antinomies of the individual and society. This is, it seems to me, the real 'Dominican patrimony of social thought': not a single idea or theory of the world, but a continuous struggle to understand the world in its relation to God. This is justice that is real, a justice that accepts personal injustice for the sake of justice.

MICHAEL BLACK

CHRISTIAN BIOETHICS: A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED by Agneta Sutton
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'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10). Inspired by these words of Jesus Christ, the Church has long cherished the gift of life and, increasingly, all of creation. The Catholic Pro-Life movement is well known but what it means to be Christian, and so abundantly pro-life, is perhaps often less apparent.

Following the lead of official Church documents like the Vatican's *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004) and *Cherishing Life* (2004), a teaching document of the Bishops of England and Wales, Agneta Sutton's book on Christian bioethics encompasses everything from the conventional issues concerning reproduction to climate change and vegetarianism. This is a welcome broadening of the scope of bioethics because it is all too easy for us to allow the great importance of the debates concerning issues of medical and sexual ethics to dominate and even restrict the scope of life issues. As Sutton puts it, then, 'besides medical issues, bioethics concerns issues such as our relationship with other creatures and even our environment as a whole... Bioethics is concerned with the question of how we should care for creation in general' (p. 3). The ethics of life thus concerns human beings, whom we believe to be created in the image of God and to be held in being by God, as well as the world in which human beings live and interact.

Life issues are often debated in Parliament and they generate passionate responses. But not all bioethical questions figure with equal prominence in the public consciousness. While many people are now aware of carbon footprints or animal rights, few talk about the sanctity of human life or embryo rights. While Western society has progressed in protecting the rights of the child many hardly even think about the rights of the unborn child. In this situation, the Church has to take a prophetic stand, to look beyond the superficial good that some aspects of modern medical technology presents and look deeply into the fundamental questions of life, its goodness and its foundation in God, the giver of Life.

Modern medical and reproductive technology is advancing speedily and they present us with new ethical challenges, notably 'questions about the value of the human life both in its early and in its later stages' (p. 2). Perhaps one of the reasons why so few Catholics engage in these questions or are able to challenge

some of the developments in modern medicine is because they feel intellectually ill equipped to dialogue with scientists. Consequently, questions of science and morality are left to politicians and the legislature, with the understanding that whatever is permitted by law is somehow also morally acceptable.

Sutton's book comes to the aid of those who are perplexed by the complex scientific questions involved, and she does this masterfully by examining the philosophical issues that underpin the science. In an area that sometimes produces more heat than light, Sutton shines a calm unwavering beam on bioethical issues such as the moral status of the human embryo, abortion, IVF and cloning technology, gene therapy, euthanasia and organ donation. She presents the contrasting arguments given by various people both for and against each issue in a manner that is lucid, concise and easy to follow, thus ably guiding the reader through the moral maze. I particularly appreciated her conclusion to each chapter, which clearly summarised the key concerns covered, and the helpful glossary at the back of the book.

For Sutton, bioethical issues are divided between two contrasting positions: those who argue from 'a secular and utilitarian perspective and those adopting positions in line with the older Christian and Hippocratic tradition of medical ethics' (p. 6). As key representatives of these camps she contrasts Peter Singer with Pope John Paul II. From their contrasting world-views arise divergent claims on what it means to be a human person, the value of human life, and what compassion requires. For example, she quotes John Paul II concerning euthanasia: 'True compassion leads to sharing another's pain; it does not kill the patient whose suffering we cannot bear' (p. 55). This distinction between a utilitarian approach to life and the older medical tradition is central to Sutton's presentation, and it is a crucial one to understand. For, as she also points out, the modern approach to bioethics can lead to some very de-humanising conclusions.

For Sutton the central point in bioethics, then, is what it means to be human and in medical ethics what personhood means. She argues that Singer's approach to bioethics is reductionist, of the embryo to just a conglomeration of cells, of human beings to just pre-determined genetically-coded beings, of humanity to the animal. In response she offers an abundant vision of the human person and of human life based on the Christian vision as enunciated by the Church. It is a strength of the book that she presents this vision in a way that is accessible, reasonable, well-argued and clear.

It is, then, what it claims to be, an excellent guide for the perplexed, because she elucidates the many life issues that challenge us today and through an examination of the fundamental principles that underlie two contrasting positions, equips us with the tools to defend the sanctity of human life and to respond to future issues in bioethics.

This is a fine introduction to Christian bioethics and fundamental reading for anyone who wants to understand the moral concerns behind contemporary life issues. With its comprehensive bibliography it is also an invitation to delve deeper into what it means for a Catholic to be pro-life and so to embrace the abundance of life that Christ came to give to all people.

LAWRENCE LEW OP