

authors think of the way those discussions have been resolved. It is a tribute to their achievement that a reader of their dictionary is already looking forward to the next edition.

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THE WAY OF IGNATIUS LOYOLA: CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES. Philip Sheldrake S.J. (ed.). SPCK 1991. Pp.xiii + 269. £15.00.

This book is intended partly to deepen the understanding of those who have already had some experience of retreats based on the Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, and partly to help potential guides or directors of such retreats. The book's purpose is avowedly practical rather than scholarly, (p xi). All but two of the essays have been published before, though they have been revised for this publication.

Some of the contributors frankly acknowledge the limitations of Ignatius' theology to a point where outsiders must wonder whether the claim implicit throughout that the Exercises are suitable for use by modern Christians can be sustained. Recognition of the need for a renewed theology of grace, the human person, sin, social consciousness and justice suggests a very substantial agenda, but these points are not pressed home and sometimes dissolve into high-flown rhetoric of dubious theological content. Thus in opposing the privatisation (*sic*) of spirituality in the contemporary world chapter twelve claims by way of comment on the calming of the storm (Mk 4. 35–41) that Jesus 'commands the winds of consumer exploitation and the waves of political oppression'. (p 152). In the chapter on social justice the underlying problem is said to be 'the inordinate human hunger for wealth, honour and power (pride)'. Such easy moralism mistakes the symptom for the disease, and is in any case no substitute for serious analysis.

Much more earthed is the observation of Martha Skinnider who writes of giving the Exercises in an area of multiple deprivation. She tells us that what gave most hope was the suggestion that God could be found in the problem rather than being merely an instrument for its removal (p 133).

The book as a whole is indigestible. It is intermittently laborious and sometimes strained in its exposition of the appositeness of the Ignatian format. Some very sensible things are said about prayer, as exemplified in the previous paragraph, but

the dependence of these insights on practising or presenting the Exercises is not clear. A clue as to what is going wrong here occurs very late on, when it is at last overtly stated that the privileged status of the Exercises must be taken as axiomatic (p 238).

From this starting-point questions which might otherwise be farcical have a logic of their own, e.g. 'How long should the First Week last?' (p 64). This is described, straight-faced, as a question to which there is no simple answer. The potential for oppression also manifests itself: '. . . I would expect that some decisive reorientation or renewal *should have been occurring* towards the end of the Second Week' (p 103 — my italics). There is a quaintness about those tell-tale capital letters.

There is also a tendency to evade hard questions. Thus it is argued that if the Ignatian approach is followed 'there will be evoked what can be termed a resurrection-experience; that is, *in some sense*, an encounter with the risen Christ. . .' Such encounters are said to happen in a way "*not at all dissimilar* to that in which the disciples encountered the Lord after his resurrection' (p 129 — my italics). No further elucidation is offered.

There are traces of a rather comfortable and question-begging élitism, as for instance in the bald statement that the contemplative stance is beyond many people (p 98). How does the writer know? What kind of expertise could conceivably qualify anyone to make such a judgement? Alternatively, what is the understanding of contemplation which entails such a conclusion?

Apart from Martha Skinnider's remark mentioned earlier, two things in this book moved me. The first is the mention of the time in Ignatius' life when his own story and the gospel story 'began to speak to each other' (p 18). Out of this, for better or for worse, came the Exercises, an attempt to facilitate a comparable experience in others. The second point, also historical, is the mention of the stark fact that in sixteenth-century Spain Melchior Cano had his fellow-Dominican, Cardinal Carranza, imprisoned for sixteen years on a charge of illuminism (p 249).

If these two points are considered together it would be hard to illustrate more graphically the continuing miracle of grace on the one hand and on the other the persistence of attempts within the church to prevent Christians from growing up. Whether modern use of the Exercises contributes more to the promotion of the former process than to the latter is a question implicitly raised but hardly resolved by this book.

The chapter by Gerard W. Hughes comes closest to grasping this

nettle, but having summarised some arresting criticisms of contemporary practice he immediately backs off, relegating cries of pain, frustration and disillusionment to the comforting status of 'grumbles' (pp 28–29, a category which of course leaves the basic structure in place. Later we are told that 'Ignatius gave those he trained to give the Exercises no theory of prayer or spirituality'. (p 252). I cannot help wondering whether for some at least of the contributors to this book allegiance to the Exercises is at the price of a comparable wisdom. There is something a bit claustrophobic about most of it.

NICHOLAS PETER HARVEY

JEWISH LAW FROM JESUS TO THE MISHNAH; Five Studies by E.P.Sanders, SCM. London/Philadelphia, Trinity Press International, 1990, £17.50.

The Twentieth Century has seen a growing number of Christian scholars taking a serious interest in rabbinic literature, either for its own sake or as a means for better understanding the intellectual milieu of the time of Jesus, in order to gain a more accurate insight into the New Testament and the origins of Christianity. On the Christian side studies have often been hampered by the presupposition that the Pharisees were the powerful villains that the gospel traditions make them out to be. Opinions shift again and again, but certain-basic questions remain. To what extent can the rabbinic literature (now aided by the Qumran and related texts) be used to reconstruct a Judaism which existed two hundred years or more prior to the rabbinic texts? To what extent does the New Testament reflect first century Palestinian Judaism? To what extent did Palestinian Judaism (and the Pharisees in particular) influence the Greek-speaking Diaspora? What were the real concerns of the Pharisees and how much influence did they really have? How did the different parties within first century Judaism regard one another? Professor Sanders touches on all these questions in a series of five independent but related studies, which are characterised by meticulous scholarship, carefully thought out arguments, and a healthy dose of common sense. The work as a whole turns on questions of methodology. It is no surprise to find that the secondary theme running throughout this work is Sanders' ongoing debate with Jacob Neusner, which by now has taken on the quality of Sanders' David going up against Neusner's Goliath. Dealing with this secondary issue first it is good to note that