

resurrection of Our Lord, the pattern for all Christian martyrs. For in Jesus' dying we learn that we must hold fast to doing no evil, that we must suffer evil rather than do wrong. The willingness to do evil, to harm an innocent person, is exemplified by the utilitarian Caiphas, the one who condemns Jesus on the grounds that the benefit of the many is worth the suffering of one innocent. (Jn 18)

Although in refusing to do evil, Christians may be called to suffer greatly, Christians know that God vindicates this manner of life. In resurrecting Jesus, God has shown us definitively that it is in the unwillingness to do evil that true life is found, that God honours and raises those faithful to God's way of peace and nonviolent love. We can thank John Paul II for reminding us of this in *Veritatis Splendor*.

## Reviews

**THE EUCHARISTIC MYSTERY: REVITALIZING THE TRADITION** by David N. Power. *Gill and Macmillan*, 1992. Pp.xiii + 349.

Father Dermot Power O.M.I., is Professor of Systematic Theology and Liturgy at the Catholic University of America. He has also served on the editorial board of *Concilium*. He has previously written on Ministry and on the eucharistic doctrine of the Council of Trent. This, his most recent work is situated in the context of a dialogue between Tradition and traditions. It is into an encounter with history that Father Power invites us, at the same time prompting us to uncover the intellectual and cultic genealogy of much of our eucharistic practice. To that end he presents a series of historical readings of particular periods in the Church's history, ranging from the pre-Nicene Church through Nicaea and the period after, to the high middle ages and St Thomas Aquinas.

Father Power demonstrates considerable facility with the latest liturgical and theological research. His assessments are judicious and his historical judgements well-informed. His treatment of the medieval patterns of piety and eucharistic devotion provides a useful and well-balanced survey of the time. In this context it is particularly useful to have a concise but rich presentation of the interlocking themes of

architecture, art and eucharist in the section devoted to the role of the eucharist in medieval Church and society. Fr Power is quite right to protest that too little attention is paid to the setting of eucharistic celebration. The theological priorities of each age may be distilled from the public works of art and architecture they produce. This is as true for contemporary forms of celebration as it is for those of the past.

If Father Power's historical scholarship often stimulates, his more speculative insights provoke a number of questions. It is almost a commonplace to claim that we live in a situation of near total social and symbolic breakdown. As Father Power uncompromisingly states at the beginning of his book, 'The memorial of Christ's death and resurrection is today celebrated amid the ruins.' Devastation has been visited on what has often been understood as traditional Catholic piety; although such traditions are basically of Tridentine vintage refocused in the light of nineteenth century post-revolutionary Europe. In Father Power's view this model of experience was bound to collapse, even without its confrontation with the Second Vatican Council since it was the product of an attempt to protect people against modernity and a post-Christian society. However, this fragmentation must be situated in the context of a wider rupture, that of the ruination of an 'idyllic age of civilization marked by the conviction of progress in things human'. There are many stepchildren of Marx and Nietzsche around today. Many of our contemporaries would have grave hesitations about the view of history as continuous progress. However, it may be asked if we need to follow this philosophical road, as Father Power implicitly invites us to do, by agreeing that no contemporary history is possible without the history of victims.

In the last chapter of his book Father Power advances some suggestions for a practical agenda directed toward revitalizing the eucharistic tradition. He admits that his agenda might cause some adverse comment, and not only in Rome. He recommends, for instance, the reconstruction of the eucharistic prayers to include penitential and lamentational themes associated, for example, with the anti-Semitic activity of Christians over the centuries. He is surely right to claim that it is inadequate to record the violence against the Jewish people as one more instance of outrage of human against human. The Holocaust and its antecedents do have their own devastating religious and historical significance for us who claim Abraham as our father in faith. However, these theological and spiritual questions, despite Father Power's claims, are not necessarily solved by their inclusion on a universal liturgical agenda. Similarly with his remarks about patriarchy and the liberation of women.

Father Power's book raises a number of interesting questions, many of them philosophical. He makes an honest attempt to come to terms with post-modernism, but in attempting to engage in a fruitful dialogue he is in danger of being imprisoned by that same cultural and social insularity which he implicitly condemns.

BENET FISHER

**THE POEMS AND PSALMS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE, by S E Gillingham. Oxford University Press, 1994**

This book is part of the Oxford Bible Series, and is intended for those with some knowledge of the Old Testament, but it is hoped that it will be of use also to beginners in Old Testament studies. As the title suggests, it is concerned with the poetry of the Old Testament, to be found principally in the Psalter, but also elsewhere. Given its intended audience, much of the material has an introductory quality, and it deals with standard topics in a fairly standard way. It is divided into three parts. Part Two deals with poetry outside the Psalter, and Part Three with the Psalter itself. The various categories of poem, such as lament and hymn, are clearly explained and many examples are given. Most of what Ms Gillingham says here is reasonable and useful, and should serve its purpose well as an introduction to biblical poetry for students.

There are though, some slips of reasoning in this part of the book. For example, she makes the point that it is likely that liturgical formulae have been incorporated into the biblical text, and takes as an instance the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:24–6. She claims that it was originally used in the liturgy; its actual liturgical setting, however, is unclear (p. 137). Yet barely a sentence later she claims that the priestly author of Numbers "has transformed the liturgical setting for the blessing so that it now serves a different purpose: that of emphasizing the rewards due for... ritual propriety" (p. 138). But, of course, if we do not know the normal liturgical setting of the blessing, we cannot know that the priestly writer has transformed that setting.

It is Part One of the book that contains potentially the most interesting material. This is entitled "Identifying Hebrew Poetry", and is devoted largely to a discussion of the characteristics of Hebrew poetry, though other important matters are also discussed. Here Gillingham raises a number of questions, such as the nature of the inspiration of biblical poetry and the relation between poetry and music. It is one of the merits of this book that Gillingham is prepared to try to deal with such wider matters which are often neglected in scholarly works on the Old Testament. She signals her broader interest right at the outset,