

friendship with the Triune God'. It is a theme which belongs to both dogmatic and moral theology—Jones' book makes this wonderfully clear. Perhaps the reason why there are so few books explicitly dedicated to forgiveness is because for classical theology *agape*, charity, is the fundamental reality of Christian living of which forgiveness, received and bestowed, will always be an essential expression.

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MARY MACKILLOP'S SISTERS: A LIFE UNVEILED by Anne Henderson, *HarperCollins, Australia, 1997, 287pp.*

Behind this book lies an interesting tradition. The late Tony Parker's *The People of Providence* (1983) is a founding classic of that tradition. Parker's book was made up of a remarkable series of interviews with a wide variety of tenants in one particular housing estate in south London. He clearly had a warm and generous personality that enabled people to speak to him with amazing frankness about their lives. His other books have recorded interviews with people who live in lighthouses, people in a small town in the American mid-west, a coal-mining community in County Durham in 1985, the year of the miners' strike, soldiers in an infantry regiment in the British army, and, most memorably, in *Life after Life*, twelve murderers. Tony Parker must have had the knack of asking the right questions, of nodding his encouragement at the right moment, of helping his speakers to forget all about the tape recorder in front of them and to tell him everything. He knew instinctively how to select, edit and arrange his raw interviews, seldom speaking himself but letting each person tell his or her own tale without interruption.

Mary Loudon's book, *Unveiled: Nuns talking* (Chatto and Windus, 1992; Vintage 1993) is a brilliant series of interviews in that Parker tradition. In fact she wrote to Tony Parker in 1991, when she was working on her book, asking his advice about how she could give shape and structure to her collection of interviews with ten nuns whose lives had all been so very different. His prompt reply was published just recently in *The Author, The Journal of the Society of Authors* (Spring 1997). He describes how he went about deciding on the order of the interviews with his twelve murderers. It was, he says, "like a jigsaw. I tried a dozen different orderings over six weeks but finally the best I could do was say to myself with some confidence, 'Yes, that's the right order'. This involved, of course, leaving out some people altogether (I had 17 to play around with) and also a great deal of thinking, going for long walks with the dog, and listening to music. Music is always very important to me, as a kind of background or sub-text structure."

Anne Henderson's book, follows in the tradition of Parker and Loudon, though with some crucial differences. Its publication comes in the wake of the beatification in Australia (January, 1995) of Mary

MacKillop (1842-1909), one of the co-founders of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, well-known in Australia and New Zealand as the "Josephites". Whereas Mary Loudon's interviews were with just ten nuns, some Roman Catholic and others Anglican, some enclosed and others apostolic, Anne Henderson has concentrated on the members of one community, the Josephites, and has interviewed more than forty of them. Mary Loudon was fortunate to be able to spend a preliminary day with each of her chosen Sisters and then to return later to interview each contributor over a leisurely period of a whole week. Anne Henderson was herself educated by Josephites so she knew some of them already and was familiar with their community, but her interviews do not seem as long, as leisurely, as uninterrupted as Mary Loudon's. She speaks much more herself. She sometimes *tells* the lives of the Sisters in her own words. We do not hear so often the direct, uninterrupted voice of each Sister. The result is that Anne Henderson's book is rather uneven in its quality. Some of the fuller interviews are sensitive and revealing (Sister Mary Leahy; Sister Juanita Scari and Sister Shirley, for example) but the shorter ones often seem rushed and scrappy. She organizes her book not like pieces of a jigsaw, nor to the strains of some symphony as Tony Parker did, but under the headings of Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience. These sometimes prove to be a strait-jacket, since many of the Sisters' experiences, naturally enough, reflect the influence of all three vows intertwined. She places some of the interviews, somewhat arbitrarily, in one category or another. So her book does not have the natural, organic structure of Parker's or Loudon's.

Another striking difference is that whereas Mary Loudon's nuns come from an extraordinary range of families, and almost all of them have had a broad education and several years of secular work before they entered their community, often as late as their thirties, Anne Henderson's nuns come from families that are rather alike. As children, these Sisters were often taught by Josephites themselves or were Irish girls, schooled at a Josephite Juniorate in Ireland and then shipped out to Australia. Most of them entered very young, at seventeen or even sixteen. They knew little of the world they were renouncing.

The result of these differences is that Mary Loudon's book is certainly the better read. In her *Unveiled: Nuns Talking*, the sheer variety of women and of communities, the vibrant strength of their personalities, the wide range of their experience and their greater command of language, make each of her ten interviews a deep exploration of one person's response to a mysterious call from God. Nevertheless, the more I read *Mary MacKillop's Sisters: A Life Unveiled*, the more admiration I discovered in myself for these valiant women in Australia and New Zealand. Their lives make up a pattern of quite astonishing perseverance and adaptability in a world that was changing or even collapsing around them.

Many of these Sisters were drawn into the Juniorates of the order

when they were far too young, some of them only thirteen. The reason they did so was often, quite simply, extreme poverty. They came from large, poor families in Ireland or Australia. The Juniorates offered them a free basic education in a boarding school. Their families saw that offer as a great opportunity. The girls were not *compelled* to enter the Josephites at sixteen, of course, but each family's hopes and the Sisters' high expectations were quite strong persuaders. Then the moment they entered, the young postulants were generally flung straight into primary-school teaching after only four or five years of secondary education. This was often a nightmare experience, in remote country schools or inner cities, with classes of over a hundred pupils, often made up of immigrants of many different nationalities, squeezed by fours and sixes into desks intended only for two. No wonder that the education the postulants and novices imparted often seems to have been very limited and even misguided. Sister Mary Cresp, the Congregational Leader of the Josephites from 1990 to 1996, remembers proudly how in 1957 she was "a postulant, sixteen at the time, and had a kindergarten class at Norwood (South Australia), of four-to five-year-olds. By the end of the year they knew all their times-tables except for three and seven, and they did tens and units, add-ups, dictation and spelling." This strange concept of a suitable education for such young children went on flourishing among the Josephites even later than the 1950s, even when they had been to a teachers' college. They taught as they had been taught themselves.

One of the harshest customs the Josephites had to endure, until changes came in the 1960s, was the day when the "postings" or "destinations" were read out to them without any consultation with the Sisters themselves about where they would like to go or what work they felt they could best do. Bags had to be packed on the morning of destination day, and once the postings had been announced the Sisters set off, travelling often hundreds of miles to another school in an unfamiliar town. To be a Josephite in those days involved much heartbreak and loneliness.

I am impressed and moved by the lives of these Josephites. Often poor themselves, they were called to serve the poor, particularly in the years before any State aid was granted to Catholic schools. The eventual provision of that aid, from the mid-1960s onwards, meant that Catholic schools were properly funded at last and were staffed more often by fully-trained, lay teachers. Gradually the need for Josephites to teach the poor Catholic children of rural Australia began to wane. Many Sisters left the community at that time. The lives of those who stayed on changed dramatically. Many of them had the opportunity, in their thirties or forties, to qualify for university entrance and then to undertake a university degree. Some went on to tackle higher degrees in America or Ireland. As they enjoyed the more demanding education that had never been contemplated when they had entered at sixteen or seventeen, so the work they undertook began to diversify. Today some

Josephites still choose teaching and they do it well, but others are found working in spirituality centres, retreat houses, counselling, family care, in parishes, the care of the elderly, community support to aboriginal people, and in professions as varied as chef, psychologist, archivist, and chaplain to seamen from all over the world in the ships in Sydney Harbour. What comes through in so many of the interviews is the resilience of the Josephites, their sense of humour, their affection for each other, their willingness to start learning all over again, their courage in adapting to changed times. Anne Henderson's book is rather too crammed and cramped; it offers the reader too brief a probing of each woman's life, but it does give a vivid picture of an Australian religious community and of the people they serve.

JUDITH O'NEILL

HEART OF THE WORLD, CENTER OF THE CHURCH: *Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism and Liberation* by David L. Schindler, Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, and T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996, 322 pp., £29.95.

The first half of this book deals with 'Catholic liberalism', in politics, economics and the universities, in the United States. John Courtney Murray SJ, whose work on religious freedom shaped Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom, never escaped from a nature/grace dualism which secretly colluded with Enlightenment philosophies of the autonomous self and the privatization of religion (chapter 1). Neoconservative Catholic theorists like Richard Neuhaus, Michael Novak and George Weigel have done much to mediate Catholic thought to American liberal institutions but in the end they propose an account of freedom, creativity, entrepreneurship, etc., which has no grounding in the *Fiat* of Marian love (chapters 2 and 3). Theodore Hesburgh CSC, effectively the creator at South Bend, Indiana, of a great Catholic university, never understood that no university will be Catholic unless it emerges from participation in the triune life of the Godhead through the eucharist — which does not mean having Mass celebrated all round campus (chapter 4). American Catholic liberalism has achieved a lot, but it is not rooted in an authentic Catholic anthropology (chapter 5).

The outlines of a properly Catholic anthropology peep through these chapters of critique, which is developed in the second half of the book. The 'death of God' as heralded by Nietzsche and Derrida is a good story: the deistic-mechanistic God of Enlightenment liberal humanism should be allowed to die in order to make way for a trinitarian-God-centred view of the cosmos in terms of a logic of love (chapter 6). There is no way out of it — sanctity is *required* for Catholic academics, not an extracurricular concern (chapter 7). The action/contemplation dualism has to be displaced in favour of a proper understanding of the priority of contemplation in *all* human action (chapter 8). What that means, in turn, is that we have to recover a